



# News Letter

1/2008

## Observatory for the Development of Social Services in Europe

### The activities of charitable associations within the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

This year the EESC is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its establishment. It is a consultative body of 344 members organised in three groups: "employers" (group I), "employees" (group II) and "various interests" (group III). The "various interests" group includes representatives of the trade professions, farmers' organisations, the liberal professions, consumer and environmental protection groups, the social economy, young people, families and senior citizens, people with disabilities and disadvantaged population groups.

Drawing on the expertise of its members, the committee prepares opinions on all relevant European topics. It may be requested by the Council or the Commission to submit an exploratory opinion, and it can also present opinions on its own initiative. Own-initiative

opinions constitute a particularly well-suited instrument for the EESC to contribute its own topics to the general European discussion. They are a small but effective tool for shaping European policy, as evidenced by the initiatives of the German Federation of Non-Statutory Welfare Services (BAGFW) on the importance of welfare organisations and, using hospice work as an example, on volunteer work.

The opinions are drawn up in six different expert groups who in turn appoint study groups to do the job.

For charitable associations, involvement in the SOC section (employment, social issues, citizenship of the Union) has always been of particular interest. It is in this context that important social topics

are discussed: employment policy, young people and families, demographic development, the situation of the elderly and of people with disabilities, health, migration and refugee policies, volunteer work etc.

#### Representatives of organised civil society

The committee's efforts are geared particularly towards achieving more convergence in organised civil society with regard to European unification and towards intensifying civil society's involvement in this process both at national and at European level. Moreover, the committee wants to strengthen the role of organised civil society in non-EU countries and/or regions through cooperation with local organisations and by setting up advisory bodies.

Amendments made to the treaties also reflect the EESC's views on civil society. The EC Treaty, for instance, now states that the EESC, in addition to representatives of organisations of employers and of the employed, should also include "other parties representative of civil society, notably in socio-economic, civic, professional and cultural areas". By giving itself this structure, the EESC also assumes a role in transforming the European economic community into a social and civic community.

#### Charitable associations and social services

The German Federation of Non-Statutory Welfare Services has been represented on the EESC since 1994. Its initial interest was to increase the visibility of its welfare work and to contribute its experience and competence in the social area to European institutions. In the early days no comparable partners were available.

### Editorial

DEAR READER,  
THIS IS THE FIRST NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW FUNDING PERIOD OF THE OBSERVATORY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN EUROPE. THE TOPICS ON THE OBSERVATORY'S AGENDA FOR THIS YEAR ARE PRESENTED BY HANNA STEIDLE AND BIRGIT SITTERMANN IN THE "NEWS FROM THE OBSERVATORY" COLUMN.

IN OUR MAIN ARTICLE, SOSCHA GRÄFIN ZU EULENBURG PRESENTS THE WORK OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE. SHE EXPLAINS HOW SOCIAL SERVICES AND RELATED ISSUES ARE HANDLED IN THE EESC. OUR GUEST COLUMN IS DEDICATED TO THE CURRENT EU DISCUSSION ON CARE FOR THE ELDERLY. ISABEL BORGES EXPLAINS THE PROBLEM OF ELDER ABUSE AND THE CURRENT STATE OF THE DEBATE AROUND THIS ISSUE AT EU LEVEL.

TO MARK THE SLOVENIAN EU PRESIDENCY IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2008, THIS ISSUE PRESENTS THE SITUATION OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN SLOVENIA. ZINKA KOLARIČ DESCRIBES THE CHALLENGES FACED BY SLOVENIA IN THIS TIME OF TRANSITION TO A DEMOCRATIC STATE WITH A MARKET ECONOMY.

HANNA STEIDLE CONTRIBUTES AN ARTICLE UNDERLINING THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF FAMILY POLICY. SHE POINTS OUT THAT A FAMILY-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT DOES NOT JUST DEPEND ON PUBLIC POLICIES BUT THAT COMPANIES SHOULD ALSO CONTRIBUTE THEIR SHARE.

AS ALWAYS, OUR ARTICLES ARE SUPPLEMENTED BY NOTES ON CURRENT NEWS.

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THE EDITORIAL TEAM



The aims of its early initiatives were therefore to bring greater precision, also within the scope of the EESC, to declaration no. 23 of the 1993 Maastricht Treaty regarding the importance of cooperation with charitable associations and foundations as institutions responsible for social welfare establishments and services, to examine the sector from a European point of view and to determine its importance for economic, employment and social policy. However, many Member States found it difficult to acknowledge the role of charitable associations and of other social welfare organisations. Differences in traditions made some of them suspicious of voluntary work in social welfare organisations. There were fears that paid jobs could be lost.

A breakthrough was achieved when the EESC drew up its own-initiative opinion on "Cooperation with charitable organisations as economic and social partners in the field of social welfare". This opinion, which was issued in October 1997, analysed the situation of the welfare sector in the various Member States and evaluated it in terms of its role as an element shaping the European welfare state and as part of the "third sector". It gave reasons why cooperation should be strengthened and made proposals as to how this cooperation might be implemented.

Parallel to expanding cooperation in other European networks (e.g. the Platform of Social NGOs, established in 1996), here, too, Member States gradually recognised that social issues and the social welfare organisations representing them in the EESC should be taken into greater account. Since 1998, the governments of Portugal, France, Sweden, Spain and Italy have been appointing representatives of the pertinent organisations in their countries to the EESC.

The close cooperation that has ensued from this development has encouraged greater mutual understanding, fostered common interests within the Committee and resulted in concerted activities outside the Committee. One example of this cooperation is a letter written jointly by the German Federation of Non-Statutory Welfare Services and its French partner organisation, UNIOPSS, to the President of the former Constitutional Convention. In this letter, the two organisations suggested that private, non-profit services in

the social and health area should be exempted from the competition rules of Article 86 (2) EC.

An interest group has also been created to represent the social economy, and meanwhile this group includes 37 Group III members. Its objectives are to give the sector a common voice, to improve group members' knowledge about each other and to foster exchanges of information.

The EESC has been closely following the debate on the development of social services in Europe, and it has published several opinions on this subject:

- Own-initiative opinion on "Private social services for non-profit purposes in the context of Services of General Interest in Europe" (2001)
- Services of general interest (2002)
- Green Paper on services of general interest (2003)
- State aid and public services (2004)
- White Paper on services of general interest (2005)
- Own-initiative opinion on the "Future of services of general interest" (2006)
- Implementation of the Lisbon Community programme – Social services of general interest in the European Union (2007)
- Own-initiative opinion "An independent evaluation of services of general interest" (2008)
- Own-initiative opinion "Guidelines for services of general interest and globalisation" (currently in preparation)

The EESC hopes that a European Directive will be passed to ensure greater legal certainty with regard to Community law as it applies to the provision of social services – a position rejected or viewed with some hesitation in Germany.

All agree, however, that the concept of general interest must be protected from a purely market-driven, economic consideration. This is particularly true in the area of social services, but it also applies to other essential services of general interest, for instance energy supply.

The EESC – in what to a certain extent is as much an expectation as a definition of such services – has stated that they need to meet "the fundamental principles of equality, universality, affordability, accessibility, reliability, continuity, quality and effectiveness, while guaranteeing users' rights and achieving

economic and social profitability" while taking account of "the specific needs of certain groups of users such as disabled, dependent and disadvantaged persons".

### The conceptual context: a European Social Model

In its own-initiative opinion on "Social cohesion: fleshing out a European Social Model" (2006), the EESC aptly describes this concept with the sentence: "The European Social Model provides an idea of a democratic, environment-friendly, competitive, solidarity-based and socially inclusive welfare area for all citizens of Europe."

The example of social services shows how the activities of charitable associations within the EESC set important, highly topical impulses. Social issues and their implications for both Member States and other countries will remain of utmost relevance for the work of the EESC. Indeed, the EESC provides a central forum for civil society players to exchange knowledge and opinions on the development of laws and policy in this area. The importance and topical relevance of the EESC's activities is well evidenced by the title of its exploratory opinion on "Quality standards for the contents, procedures and methods of social impact assessments" (2007).

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## Guest Column

### Elder Abuse is a serious concern across the European Union

On 17 March 2008 the European Commission organised the first European conference on the prevention of elder abuse and neglect. This high-level EU conference in Brussels gave decision-makers and experts from across Europe the opportunity to discuss the quality of care for older people and pool ideas on the best ways and strategies of dealing with the problem of elder abuse.

*"Elder abuse is a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person"* (Toronto Declaration on the Global Prevention of Elder Abuse, 2002). It can take various forms: physical, psychological or emotional, sexual, financial or simply reflect intentional or unintentional neglect.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Network of the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) have recognised the abuse of older people as a significant global problem.

At the European level, AGE – the European Older People's Platform – considers elder abuse to be a much neglected issue that tends to be derided. It is an infringement of Article 25 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights which recognises and respects the rights of older people to lead lives of dignity and independence, and to participate in social and cultural life.

Although the perceived risk of elder abuse varies among EU countries, protecting the dignity and fundamental rights of older people are becoming a major challenge for societies across Europe. Recently, Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe acknowledged that older people are too often ignored and their human rights denied<sup>1</sup>.

While abuse can take many different forms it is more often the consequence of incapacity to cope on the part of stressed and overburdened carers than intent to exploit or harm vulnerable older people. A recent Eurobarometer survey<sup>2</sup> showed that almost half (47%) of

EU citizens consider the phenomenon of elder abuse and neglect to be a widespread problem in their country. These findings are clear evidence that the EU must take action. The challenge is only likely to increase as the EU population gets older. The share of the EU population aged over 80 is due to increase to 12% of the population as a whole by 2050. More and more people will depend on the care of relatives or professional carers and be vulnerable to neglect or even abuse.

*"Each of us faces the possibility of becoming dependent on the help of others when we get older, and currently we cannot be sure that we will be treated with dignity,"* said Vladimír Špidla, EU Social Affairs Commissioner at the event on the 17 March. *"Member States are starting to support the carers and relatives better through training and guidance. They have started to protect the elderly by creating support groups and telephone hotlines and are creating transparent and patient-oriented monitoring systems for the quality of long-term care. I welcome this and at the same time much more needs to be done all across Europe!"*

To launch the discussion at European level the Commission presented a discussion paper: "What can the European Union do to protect dignity in old age and prevent elder abuse?" AGE considers this as a first step in the right direction but the work is just starting. The European Union should show more commitment. Due to the complex nature of elder abuse, its prevention requires the development of integrated measures that can help tackle its causes. Awareness needs to be raised on this crucial issue and a pan-European strategy on elder abuse is urgently needed. AGE feels that the issue of quality elder care and the fight against elder abuse should be an integral part of the renewed Social Agenda and should be addressed in the framework of EU Demography cycle.

AGE is therefore calling for the development of voluntary quality guidelines for long term care and the setting up of a stakeholder group to help the European Commission work on such guidelines. Furthermore, with a group of 11 partners, AGE submitted an application under the European DAPHNE programme for the development of a European Charter on the Rights of People in need of long term care and of a toolkit

with concrete recommendations and examples of good practice in the prevention and treatment of elder abuse. If our project is granted funding by the Commission, it will provide valuable input to the work to come at EU level on quality of long term care.

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1 See <http://www.egovmonitor.com/node/18500>.  
2 See [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_283\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_283_en.pdf).

## Main Report

### Family policy and family friendliness in Europe – current developments, concepts for action and corporate strategies

Family policy has been shifting into the limelight of European policy, particularly as a result of the "European Alliance for Families" that was launched by the German Council presidency in 2007. The Observatory, too, has recently been giving intensified attention to this topic. On 15 and 16 November 2007, an international conference on "Current developments in European family policy – Service concepts and policy approaches in new and old Member States" took place in Berlin.

#### Challenges of a "European family policy" – the role of the EU and of the Member States in coping with social change

In terms of family policy, Europeans are facing challenges that need to be met jointly. In addition to demographic development and continuing poverty and social exclusion (particularly among high-risk groups such as single parents and large families), these challenges also include changes in social structures (e.g. new family and partnership models) and in employment forms (e.g. more frequent changes between various forms of work).<sup>1</sup> Increased calls for flexibility and mobility in the European internal market may on the one hand offer families opportunities to increase their prosperity. But on the other

hand, families continue to face severe problems in their efforts to reconcile work and family life and are often unable to fulfil these mobility expectations. European governments and European professionals are currently discussing and evaluating the idea of expanding infrastructure for child-care services as a central factor towards improving compatibility of family and career. Alongside infrastructure measures, increased attention is being paid to time policies.<sup>2</sup>

In principle there is no common EU family policy, as this is a policy area falling within the competence of individual Member States. Nevertheless, there is more and more talk of an "European family policy", as the common problems outlined above have given rise to numerous inter-governmental agreements on policy objectives and to common legal provisions that have a major effect on the life situation of families.

The EU gives impulses in several fields of family policy, for instance in the areas of equality, employment, social protection, social inclusion, young people and education.<sup>3</sup> Family policy challenges take a particularly concrete form in the area of "demographic change", for instance in a Communication published by the Commission on 10 May 2007<sup>4</sup>, where, among other things, the European Commission announces the institutionalisation of the "European Alliance for Families". But until now, EU documents have avoided speaking of a "European family policy" out of deference to national interests.<sup>5</sup>



From l. to r.: Ralf Jacob, department head, European Commission; Brigitta Dewald-Koch, Rhineland-Palatinate Ministry for Employment, Social Affairs, Health, Family Affairs and Women; Wilhelm Schmidt, President of the German Association for Public and Private Welfare; Christoph Linzbach, section head, German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth





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### Current trends in “European family policy” – Results of the international conference held in Berlin on 15/16 November 2007<sup>6</sup>

In the opinion of conference participants, family policy impulses from the European Union as well as prospects of cooperation and mutual exchanges, for instance within the scope of the “European Alliance for Families”, offer opportunities for a worthwhile European debate (e.g. the position of families in the European internal market, strategies for the expansion of care infrastructures, impulses for a continued change of awareness in family policy with regard to gender roles in Europe). However, concrete family policy measures must be adapted to national and regional peculiarities and developed and implemented locally.

The conference also suggested that there should be clearer distinctions made between the various target groups of family policy, as for instance poor families with a low educational background need different measures from families of academics. Above all, integrated approaches and concepts for action where various operators cooperate locally within user-oriented networks were seen as being particularly worthwhile. Following along this line of argumentation, it would be useful in the long term to create stronger links between family and educational policies as well as between youth and health policies. The most important approaches include:

- services and cooperation structures by various local operators in the area of early support for children and young people from socially marginalised families
- integrated, one-stop-shop family services
- greater involvement of companies: greater focus must be placed on companies as actors in the family policy area to encourage more family friendliness, particularly in terms of work time policies. We need more cooperation structures between local and regional authorities, welfare federations and companies, so that greater attention is paid to workers' family needs.

### Corporate strategies for more family friendliness

The problems we have sketched show how workers often find it increasingly difficult to reconcile their professional life with their family life. The causes are often seen as being related to time issues:<sup>7</sup> as a result of the increasing equality between men and women, fathers in particular are coming under more and more social and family pressure to assume more responsibility for child care. At the same time, they often face a greater challenge than women when it comes to communicating this to their company and structuring their working hours so that they are free to assume family obligations.<sup>8</sup>

European companies are giving more and more thought to how they can help their employees fulfil their family obligations. Human resources departments are increasingly realising that family-friendly

measures do not automatically lead to higher costs but that – if properly applied – they can even have positive economic effects.<sup>9</sup>

Examples of family-friendly measures by companies are:<sup>10</sup> flexibilisation of working hours (e.g. part-time work, flextime, annual work accounts), review and adjustment of work processes, flexibilisation of the place of work (e.g. tele-working), additional support services for families (e.g. advice and information on child-care options).

Corporate commitment in the area of family-friendly measures varies widely from place to place in Europe. Companies in Scandinavian countries, with their excellent child-care system, seldom offer in-company solutions as additional options, also because other pragmatic, flexible solutions often dominate; British companies, in contrast, have a long tradition of offering such services. On the one hand, the British approach hopes to encourage corporate commitment in the field of compatibility of family and career, but on the other it also stresses the voluntary aspect of corporate measures (e.g. instruments such as tax relief for companies, support for companies' infrastructure or time-policy measures).

In 2008, the Observatory – for instance within the scope of the “European Alliance for Families” – intends to look extensively at corporate strategies for more family friendliness in Europe.

Hanna Steidle, DV e.V.

1 Cf. Steidle, Hanna 2007: Aktuelle familienpolitische Entwicklungen in Europa am Beispiel der familienunterstützenden Dienstleistungen, Berlin ([http://www.soziale-dienste-in-europa.de/Anlage/Bericht\\_Familienpolitik\\_FuD.pdf](http://www.soziale-dienste-in-europa.de/Anlage/Bericht_Familienpolitik_FuD.pdf)).

2 Cf. European Foundation for the Improvement for the Living and Working Conditions 2007: Work Life Balance – Solving the Dilemma, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0789.htm>; Bertelsmann Stiftung (Ed.) 2002: Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Beruf. Benchmarking Deutschland aktuell, Gütersloh, [http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID-0A000F14-EC3C2294/bst/hs.xsl/prj\\_5149\\_5158.htm](http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID-0A000F14-EC3C2294/bst/hs.xsl/prj_5149_5158.htm).

3 Cf. Steidle, Hanna 2007: Aktuelle familienpolitische Entwicklungen in Europa am Beispiel der familienunterstützenden Dienstleistungen, Berlin ([http://www.soziale-dienste-in-europa.de/Anlage/Bericht\\_Familienpolitik\\_FuD.pdf](http://www.soziale-dienste-in-europa.de/Anlage/Bericht_Familienpolitik_FuD.pdf)).

4 Cf. European Commission 2007: Promoting solidarity between the generations, COM (2007) 244 final.

5 And yet families in all their forms and manifestations are viewed as a system of care-oriented generation and gender relationships, so that for instance so-called “double-front care” family constellations and intergenerative aspects of family policy are also taken into consideration. (cf. Steidle/Possinger 2007: Documentation of the international conference of 15/16 November 2007 on “Current developments in European family policy - Service concepts and policy approaches in new and old Member States”, [http://www.soziale-dienste-in-europa.de/Anlage/Entwicklungen\\_europ\\_Familienpolitik.pdf](http://www.soziale-dienste-in-europa.de/Anlage/Entwicklungen_europ_Familienpolitik.pdf)).

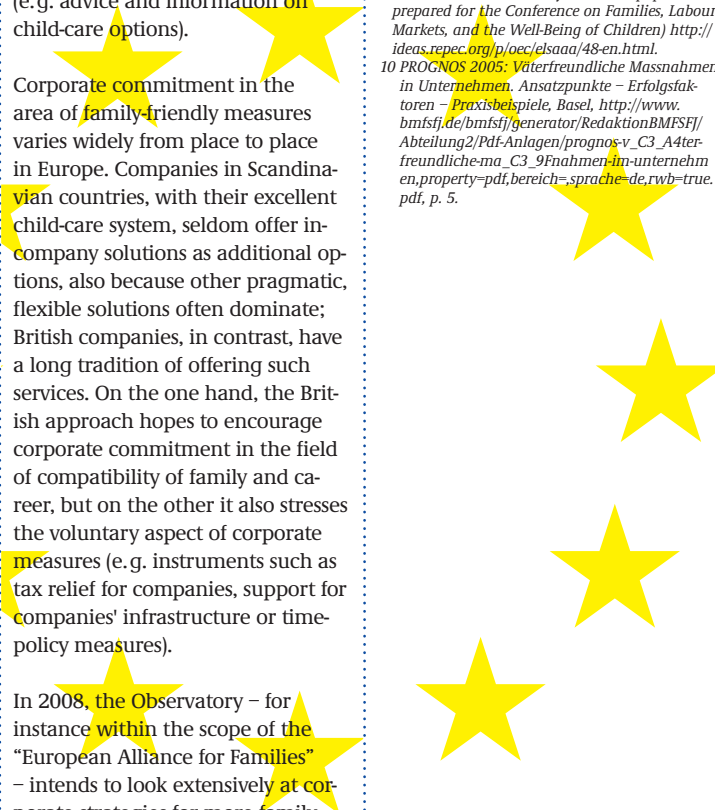
6 Cf. Steidle/Possinger 2007, cf. above.

7 Total working time per week – particularly in the new Member States – is often viewed as being too high. In addition, working hours are often not flexible enough to allow parents to adjust to the opening hours of child-care institutions, for instance. (cf. European Foundation for the Improvement for the Living and Working Conditions 2007: Work Life Balance – Solving the Dilemma, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0789.htm>).

8 PROGNOSES 2005: Väterfreundliche Massnahmen in Unternehmen. Ansatzpunkte – Erfolgsfaktoren – Praxisbeispiele, Basel, [http://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/generator/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Abteilung2/Pdf-Anlagen/prognos-v\\_C3\\_A4terfreundliche-ma\\_C3\\_9Fnahmen-im-unternehmen-property=pdf,bereich=de,rwb=true.pdf](http://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/generator/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Abteilung2/Pdf-Anlagen/prognos-v_C3_A4terfreundliche-ma_C3_9Fnahmen-im-unternehmen-property=pdf,bereich=de,rwb=true.pdf).

9 So-called “high commitment management”, where companies seek to bind their employees to the firm as closely as possible, is becoming an increasingly popular trend. (cf. John M. Evans 2000: Firms' contribution to the reconciliation between work and family life. Draft paper prepared for the Conference on Families, Labour Markets, and the Well-Being of Children) <http://ideas.repec.org/p/oc/eelsaa/48-en.html>.

10 PROGNOSES 2005: Väterfreundliche Massnahmen in Unternehmen. Ansatzpunkte – Erfolgsfaktoren – Praxisbeispiele, Basel, [http://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/generator/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Abteilung2/Pdf-Anlagen/prognos-v\\_C3\\_A4terfreundliche-ma\\_C3\\_9Fnahmen-im-unternehmen-property=pdf,bereich=de,rwb=true.pdf](http://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/generator/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Abteilung2/Pdf-Anlagen/prognos-v_C3_A4terfreundliche-ma_C3_9Fnahmen-im-unternehmen-property=pdf,bereich=de,rwb=true.pdf), p. 5.



## Voluntary commitment on the EU agenda

A new initiative of various European umbrella organisations hoping to have 2011 declared the European Year of Volunteering is calling attention to the topic of voluntary workers and their impact. This topic is also relevant in the area of social services in the EU, as it is part of the debate on the special characteristics of social services of general interest and can serve as an important feature to distinguish SSGs from other types of services. The European Commission has clearly stated that "non-profit providers as well as voluntary workers often play an important role in the delivery of social services, thereby expressing citizenship capacity and contributing to social inclusion, the social cohesion of local communities and to intergenerational solidarity."<sup>1</sup>

Information on the campaign for the European Year of Volunteering 2011 can be found on the web site of the European Volunteer Centre: <http://www.cev.be>.

Birgit Sittermann, ISS e. v.

<sup>1</sup> Commission of the European Communities 2007: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Accompanying the Communication on "A single market for 21st-century Europe". Services of general interest, including social services of general interest: a new European commitment. COM(2007) 725 final, p. 8.

## Social Services in Europe

### The Slovenian welfare system

*In her article, Zinka Kolarič, Professor for Sociology at the University of Ljubljana, describes the changes within the Slovenian welfare system during the country's transition to democratic structures. In the former Yugoslavia there were three different types of social service provision. First of all, there were public social services provided through state institutions or at the work place. Secondly, gaps in public service provision were filled to a large extent by mutual aid within informal social networks such as families, friends or neighbours. Thirdly, there was also an intermediary space between public social services and informal social networks. This intermediary space was partly filled by employees of public institutions and organisations who illegally carried out services for direct payment. At the same time, the work of informal social networks was complemented and supported by voluntary organisations that provided voluntary and unpaid or partly unpaid services. According to Zinka Kolarič, this peculiar "tripartite system" was the starting point for the transformation of the Slovenian welfare system.*

In the context of Slovenia's transition from a socialist to a post-socialist society, the Slovenian welfare system "got rid of its peculiarity", and in the first half of the 1990s it was restructured in formal legal terms as a dual model combining elements of a conservative-corporate

rate system on the one hand with elements of a social-democratic welfare system. First of all, the compulsory social insurance systems based on social partnership and as such the basic constitutive elements of conservative-corporate welfare systems became fully transparent and are now the primary instrument for the provision of social protection for employees and their family members. On the other hand, the strong public sector has maintained its status as the dominant provider for all types of services to which all citizens are equally entitled. Furthermore, a complementary relationship was gradually established between the public and the non-profit, voluntary sector, and state support for the informal sector was increased. All these aspects are distinctive elements of a social-democratic welfare system.

The Slovenian political elite decided to gradually introduce reforms in individual fields of social policy.

- In the field of health care policy, which is based on a compulsory health insurance scheme, a privatisation process of health services was initiated and the possibility of supplementary private insurance provided by for-profit insurance agencies was introduced.
- In the field of educational policy, which is based on the principle of universality, curriculum reforms were introduced, but the system of public educational institutions at all levels of education has remained practically unchanged. It must be noted, however, that although formal obstacles for the establishment of private educational institutions

(by private natural and legal persons, for instance the Catholic Church) have been removed, private educational institutions can only complement public institutions: they do not provide a substitute for them.

The Slovenian welfare system can therefore now be described as having the following structural elements:

1. The foundations of the overall system are the compulsory social insurance systems that are based on social partnership. They represent the principal instrument for the provision of social protection for employees and their family members in the sense of maintaining their relative social position. The disability pension insurance and the unemployment insurance schemes are based on the equity principle, while the health care insurance system incorporates the principle of solidarity in the sense of universality and equality. These schemes are complemented by the instrument of social assistance for those who cannot enter the labour market or are excluded from it for a longer period of time. Social assistance is means-tested and, more and more, linked to the principle of activation.
2. A network of public, state-operated institutions still holds the central place in the provision of a range of services accessible to all citizens on equal terms. However, in a complementary relation to the public sector, the importance of private non-profit organisations is growing. These are emerging not only in the



The Bled Lake in Slovenia



formal legal form of associations or federations, but also in the form of private institutions, cooperatives, social enterprises and foundations. Their founders are private natural or legal persons, and among them the Catholic Church should be given special mention as the founder of several secondary and higher educational institutions, pre-school institutions, homes for the elderly, maternity centres, help communities for drug and alcohol addicts, etc. In this way the private non-profit sector is gradually developing and taking on a stronger role, usually under the terms of concession agreements that allow it to complement the range of services offered by the public sector in all the fields where provision is not ensured to a sufficient extent or in an adequate quality.

3. The privatisation process taking place in certain fields, especially in the field of health care, has also triggered the emergence of private for-profit organisations. Together with the private insurance schemes described above, these constitute the early stages of a market offering the possibility of choice of services to those individuals who can afford them.
4. As the most important unit of the informal sector, the family still carries a very important share of the burden in the provision of social protection and welfare for its members. Its role is supported by positive family policy measures.

The structure of Slovenia's welfare system thus incorporates the principle of social justice in the sense that it offers equal opportunities for accessing a certain level of social protection and certain numbers and types of services. This social justice is consolidated by the application of meritocratic principles and the principles of solidarity and equality. These are principles widely accepted by the country's citizens and in accordance with their value orientations.

Hence, the central question for the future development of the Slovenian welfare system should not be how to replace one instrument for the provision of social protection with another, one sector with another, one principle of social justice with another, but how to combine and bind together different instruments, sectors and principles. Only then can we avoid reducing free-



Preators Palace in Koper

dom to freedom of choice (among competing providers of services and insurance systems) and solidarity to charity (of individuals and church organisations).

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#### News from the Observatory

### The priorities of the Observatory's work in the new subsidy period since 1 January 2008

It was eight years ago now that the Observatory – with the support of a project management group (the “coordination group”) consisting of representatives of non-profit and public providers of social services as well as of federal and state government representatives – took up its work. In the course of the years that followed, our priorities and areas of involvement have gradually developed and expanded.

One focal point of the Observatory's work has been monitoring and analysing EU-level policy processes that directly or indirectly impact on the German system of social services. In the last few years, for instance, the Observatory has been keeping a close watch on the policy process surrounding the issue of social and health services and the Services Directive, but also on the more fundamental debate on a social Europe, for instance, in connection with fundamental social rights, modernisation of social protection or the European Social Model. We have also conducted increasing numbers of national comparisons on current issues in an effort to identify successful service concepts and approaches that could also be profitable for us here in Germany. Examples of these areas are family policies and family support services, non-profit status or Public Private Partnerships. Individual

projects have led to the publication of a host of expertises, working papers and conference documentations that can be downloaded from the Observatory's web site. And finally, the Observatory also carries out a number of ongoing tasks, for instance Europe-wide networking with European partners or publishing the six-monthly newsletter.

1 January 2008 marked the start of our new two-year subsidy period, and a number of changes to the Observatory's structure and content have been and will be taking place. For instance, project content management is no longer handled by the coordination group but by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth alone. In terms of the content of its work, the Observatory will continue to act in close coordination with the German Association for Public and Private Welfare in its work on European affairs and European bodies. The committee for “International cooperation and European integration” now exercises a consultative function vis-à-vis the Observatory. Regular meetings are held to allow presentation of work results in the individual projects and to facilitate an ongoing exchange of views. The Observatory sections (formerly: the “Monitoring Unit” and the “Office of the Coordination Group”) have now been renamed the “Frankfurt Project Team” and the “Berlin Project Team”.

For its new subsidy period, the Observatory has set itself the goal of continuing to promote professional exchange on current topics.

Furthermore – in consultation with the German Federal Ministry

for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth – four main areas of focus have now been defined. One of these topics is civic commitment and social services. In this context we will be looking at how to encourage more commitment. What state concepts are there to encourage more commitment in the EU Member States? What are the concepts of social services that work with volunteers? Another point of interest will be the increased involvement of senior citizens in civic activities.

This issue is also an interface to the second topic on the Observatory's agenda, the reaction of social services to demographic change. Here we will be examining the question of what concepts can help social services face the challenges of demographic change, for instance the expected increase in cases of dementia.

Thirdly, the Observatory will be working on the topic of family policy, an area given a new EU dimension by the creation in 2007 – under the German EU Presidency – of the European Alliance for Families. On this topic, the Observatory has already held an international conference in cooperation with the German Association for Public and Private Welfare: "Current developments in European family policy", which took place in 2007.<sup>1</sup> This issue now connects nicely with the question of examining what child-care concepts exist in other EU Member States and what role individual operators have – as companies, government and social services – alongside the families themselves in ensuring the provision of child care.

Here as in all the topics it deals with, the Observatory examines the issues from a comparative perspective, drawing in the situation in other EU Member States.

The fourth topic which will continue to be in the focus of the Observatory's work is the question of social services and the EU internal market. The debate on both health and social services of general interest will continue to be monitored closely. In its Communication on "Services of general interest, including social services of general interest: a new European commitment" (November 2007), the EU Commission once again stated clearly that many of the services provided by social facilities do indeed fall under the scope of EC law,<sup>2</sup> even though their special character mayulti-

mately be acknowledged. In early 2008, in an effort to cope with the uncertainties impacting on social services in terms of state aid and contract award legislation, the European Commission set up an Internet portal which it hopes will offer answers to open questions.<sup>3</sup>

Alongside these fundamental issues, current political developments will not be forgotten. The Observatory will pay close attention to the publication of the EU's new social agenda, which is to apply to the next cycle of the Lisbon strategy. And the year 2009 will bring a few changes to the EU: if the Lisbon agreement enters into force as planned, the post of a EU President will be established. Elections will also be held for the European Parliament, and a new EU Commission will take up its work. It will be our job to continue to monitor how these circumstances affect the development of EU-level fields of policy that impact on social services.

*Hanna Steidle, DV e.V.*

*Birgit Sittermann, ISS e.V.*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. extensive report by Hanna Steidle in this issue of our Newsletter.

<sup>2</sup> Commission of the European Communities 2007: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Accompanying the Communication on "A single market for 21st-century Europe". Services of general interest, including social services of general interest: a new European commitment. COM(2007) 725 final, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. [http://ec.europa.eu/services\\_general\\_interest/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/services_general_interest/index_en.htm).

### Staff news

With the new subsidy period there have also been changes made to the team at the Observatory. Anna Englaender has left the Observatory. On 16 June 2008, Cornelia Markowski has taken over the position of director of the department for International Affairs of the German Association for Public and Private Welfare.

**Annette Angermann**

joined the Observatory's Berlin Project Team as a research officer on 1 May 2008.



She studied sociology and political science at the Free University and at Humboldt University in Berlin. In the political science area, she is interested mostly in EU community law, European integration and social policy. Her sociological focus has been on the micro-social area, for instance family sociology, social commitment and networking research.

**Christine Storck-Ratnam**

has been a team assistant at the Observatory's Frankfurt location since 1 April 2008; she is responsible for all organisational issues and in particular for the preparation of the Newsletter. Before joining the Observatory, she was a communications officer for a French service company. She graduated from a translation course for French and Spanish at the University of Saarbrücken.



**Veronika Pfeifer**

also joined the Frankfurt Project Team as a part-time research assistant on 1 April 2008. Before beginning her current masters degree programme in economics and services at Giessen University she completed a course in ecotrophology and was awarded a Bachelor of Science in 2006.



**Kathrin Linz**

has been a research officer with the Observatory's Frankfurt Project Team since 1 May 2008. She studied sociology and social education at the University of Bamberg. Her areas of focus are social management, family policy and the evolution of social policy with regard to "work-life balance" in Europe. She was previously employed as a part-time research assistant at the Bavarian State Institute for Family Research (ifb). Within the scope of a special study project, she participated in a publication on the situation of academic women in certain European countries in terms of the possibility of reconciling a career and a family.



## D a t e s

2008

**28–30 August/St. Gallen, Switzerland**

4th World Ageing & Generations Congress  
Information:  
[http://www.wdassociation.org/dcPage.aspx?pageid=cms\\_frontend\\_default\\_e&pagetype=file&toolbar=e](http://www.wdassociation.org/dcPage.aspx?pageid=cms_frontend_default_e&pagetype=file&toolbar=e)

**5–8 September/Barcelona, Spain**

Diversities of Ageing: Discourses and Debates and Sociological Research and Public Debate  
[http://www.age-platform.org/EN/IMG/pdf\\_Conferences\\_2008-3.pdf](http://www.age-platform.org/EN/IMG/pdf_Conferences_2008-3.pdf)

**19–28 September/various locations in Germany**

National Volunteering Week 2008  
Organised by Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement (BBE)  
Information:  
<http://www.engagement-macht-stark.de/>  
E-Mail: [aktionswoche@b-b-e.de](mailto:aktionswoche@b-b-e.de)

**22–24 September/Berlin, Germany**

Ifdm 2008, 4<sup>th</sup> International Forum on Disability Management  
Organised by the German Federation of Social Accident Insurance (DGUV)  
Information: <http://www.disability-manager.de/e/ifdm2008/index.html>

**29 September–1 October/ Cardiff, Wales/Great Britain**

International Forum for Child Welfare (IFCW) World Forum 2008 – Early Intervention and Prevention  
Information:  
<http://www.childreninwales.org.uk/areasofwork/worldforum2008/index.html>  
E-Mail: [worldforum2008@childreninwales.org.uk](mailto:worldforum2008@childreninwales.org.uk)

**29–30 September/Berlin, Germany**

Child protection in Germany and Europe – practical concepts and strategies  
Hosted by Deutscher Verein, Berlin  
Information:  
<http://www.deutscher-verein.de/03-events/2008/gruppe2/f-231-08/>  
Contact: Dr. Rolf Faltermeier,  
E-Mail: [info@deutscher-verein.de](mailto:info@deutscher-verein.de)

**15 October/Brussels, Belgium**

The SOLIDAR Silver Rose Awards will be presented by Harlem Desir, member of European Parliament.  
[http://www.solidar.org/Page\\_Generale.asp?DocID=13958&thebloc=17439](http://www.solidar.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=13958&thebloc=17439)

**5–6 November/Nuremberg, Germany**

ConSozial 2008, Fair and conference for the social market in Germany  
Information:  
<http://www.consozial.de>



## News Update

## Current study on the situation of the social economy in the European Union

In late 2007, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the International Centre of Research and Information on the Public, Social and Cooperative Economy (CIRIEC) published a comparative analysis on the situation of the social economy in the European Union. The study takes an in-depth look at the concept of social economy and differentiates it from other terms such as the "Third Sector".

It shows clearly that in individual Member States different ideas are associated with the social economy concept. Statistics and information on the legal foundation of the concept as well as practical organisational examples serve to clarify the situation of the social economy in the individual Member States. In conclusion, the authors of the study suggest that Europe's social economy should be "more visible" and, for instance, recognised as a different institutional sector in national accounts systems so that the economic power of this sector can be identified more easily.

The study is available for download from the CIRIEC and EESC Internet sites:

[http://www.eesc.europa.eu/groups/3/index\\_en.asp?id=1405GR03EN](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/groups/3/index_en.asp?id=1405GR03EN)

[http://www2.ulg.ac.be/ciriec/en/pages/6\\_1ouvrages\\_rapports.htm](http://www2.ulg.ac.be/ciriec/en/pages/6_1ouvrages_rapports.htm)

Birgit Sittermann, ISS e.V.

## New conference papers published

The conference papers of the following Observatory events have now been published:

- documentation of the international conference on "Current developments in European family policy – service concepts and policy approaches in the new and old Member States" held on 15/16 November 2007
- documentation of the conference on "Public-private partnerships in Europe" held on 21 September 2007

Both events were held in cooperation with the Observatory for the Development of Social Services in Europe and the German Association for Public and Private Welfare.

The papers of both events are now available electronically (in German only) from the Observatory's website (<http://www.soziale-dienste-in-europa.de>, under "Aktuelles"). Contact: [h.steidle@deutscher-verein.de](mailto:h.steidle@deutscher-verein.de)

Hanna Steidle, DV e.V.

## Visit by a Finnish delegation to the German Association for Public and Private Welfare on 24 April 2008

On 24 April 2008, the German Association for Public and Private Welfare hosted a meeting of 35 representatives of Finnish non-governmental organisations with staff of the Observatory and of the German Association for Public and Private Welfare. In addition to issues directly relevant to the German welfare state and to the work of the German Association for Public and Private Welfare in general, the meeting focused on policy ap-

proaches and on activities in elder policies and in policies for people with disabilities.

The visiting delegation included Riitta Särkelä, managing director of the "Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health", a Finnish NGO corresponding roughly to the German Association for Public and Private Welfare and also part of the Observatory's "Network on European Policy and Funding". Participants agreed that an opportunity should soon be found to hold discussions on topical social-policy problems in Finland and that – not only within the scope of the debate on the EU's new social policy agenda – professional exchanges on social policy should be encouraged.

Hanna Steidle, DV e.V.



Visit by a Finnish delegation to the German Association for Public and Private Welfare from l. to r.: Antje Welke, head of section IV of the German Association for Public and Private Welfare; Bärbel Habermann, deputy managing director of the German Association for Public and Private Welfare; Hanna Steidle, Observatory for the Development of Social Services in Europe; Barbara Kahler, section IV of the German Association for Public and Private Welfare; Riitta Särkelä, managing director of the Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health



Observatory for the  
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in Europe

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