



EASPD NEWSFLASH

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EU NEWS



EDITORIAL

A few weeks ago, EASPD's governing bodies gathered in Greece to discuss the sector's current situation and to prepare our future strategy. We chose to go to Greece to show solidarity with the Greek civil society and those suffering most from the crisis and austerity.

It was very encouraging and heart-warming to hear the many reports from across the continent demonstrating how support services have continued to contribute to the enjoyment of human rights for people facing particular barriers and problems, in particular in times like these. It was particularly moving to see the commitment and determination of so many sector leaders to not give up however terrible the situation on the ground is.

While discussing the strategic orientation that EASPD should take over the next few years, one overarching theme became increasingly clear to us: the need to reach out to others.

- Reaching out to those social service organisations active at grassroots level,
- Reaching out to other actors in the social sector and civil society as a whole,
- Reaching out to the public and private sector,

- Reaching out to persons with disabilities and their friends and families

It was an easy decision for us to decide that 'reaching out' to others should be our main focus in the years to come for the simple reason that building a more inclusive society is a shared responsibility; and not only the sole responsibility of disabled people's organisations or specialized support providers.

Our discussions in Greece also highlighted a second overarching objective to our future work. Indeed, it became painfully clear to us how wide the gap is between the policy language used by the European institutions and the people active at local and national level, even though these professions are sector leaders within their own respective countries. Over the next few years, it will be our aim to try and diminish this gap. However, it is not our responsibility alone to do so: the European institutions must also act towards fighting this issue.

Although we all know how important the public procurement legal framework, the state aid regulation, the European semester machinery and the social dimension of the European Monetary Union are, the institutions are failing to successfully communicate this to their citizens. If our sector's leaders already find it difficult to understand what the EU is doing for them, how can the average European do so?!

A key problem could be that the European institutions fail to even involve their citizens and representative organisations in the design and development of their relevant policies. It is a problem that we often encounter as an organisation, yet we also believe that we could bring a lot of added value to the work the European institutions do, based on our decades of expertise on the matter.

For this reason, I propose that the European Commission starts to work on a strategy focused on "Reaching Out", after an agreement has been made on the multi-annual financial framework!

Such a strategy would bring the EU closer to its citizens and ultimately help to fight the increasing success of eurosceptic and europhobic parties

in Europe. Only by getting the EU out of its ivory tower can we ensure the long-term success and understanding of European policies!

Luk Zelderloo

Country-Specific Recommendations 2013

One of the main instruments to implement the EU 2020 Strategy and the Social Investment Package (SIP) is the European Semester, a governance mechanism in place for the past two years that should facilitate cooperation between the EU and Member States.

The Semester has mainly 3 phases:

- The publication of the Annual Growth Survey by the Commission in December;
- The publication of National Reform Programmes (NRP) by Member States around March;
- The publication of Country Specific Recommendation (CSRs) proposed by the Commission in May and adopted by the Council in July.

On 29th May the European Commission published the CSRs to Member States, discussed by ECOFIN on 21st June, endorsed by 27-28th June Council and that should be adopted by the Council on 9th July.

The CSRs are recommendations to each national government on "how to boost their growth potential, increase competitiveness and create jobs". They are, thus, an instrument that should lead Member States to fiscal consolidation through budget cuts according to the Stability and Growth Pact but also boost employment and social cohesion, according to the EU2020 Strategy and the SIP. These are ambitious and contradictory objectives and it is unlikely that they will be achieved through only four to nine non-binding country-specific recommendations.

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EASPD joined in January a coalition of NGOs, created with the objective of assessing the implementation of 2012 CSRs and of influencing the Commission in the draft of the 2013 CSRs. The coalition between January and May consulted their members leading to the publication of a [report on Alternative CSRs](#), presented during a hearing held at the EP on 14th May. The coalition continues to meet in order to continue to follow the process.

During its board meeting in Thessaloniki EASPD briefed its members on the European Semester and is collecting reactions to the Commission's draft CSRs in order to influence the process.

With regard to the upcoming 2013 draft CSRs, what is most worrying us after a first analysis is that the main influence of the SIP in the draft CSRs appears to be the call to cost-effectiveness in the healthcare systems (to Germany, The Netherlands, France, Finland, Czech Republic and Bulgaria). This looks to us like a call to public cuts in a sector that is not responsible for the crisis and already suffering considerably from its consequences.

EASPD and its members will continue to monitor this process and try to influence it in the direction of a fairer and more social Europe.

Here you can find: [2013 Draft Country Specific Recommendations](#)

For more information you can contact: Irene.Bertana@easpd.eu

EASPD response to the consultation on a draft General Block Exemption Regulation (the GBER) on state aid measures

Article 107 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) defines what State Aid is and when it is compatible with the internal market. According to Article 108 the Council may determine additional categories of aid that are compatible with internal market or allow the Commission to do so through regulations.

In 1998 the Council enabled the Commission to declare compatible with the internal market aid in the following categories: small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), research and development, environmental protection, employment and training, and regional aid.

The General block exemption Regulation (GBER), in force since 29 August 2008, simplifies the procedures for aid granting authorities. In 2012, the Commission launched a broad review of State aid rules that should facilitate sustainable, smart and inclusive growth. The review of the General block exemption Regulation ("GBER") is at the centre of this reform and shall contribute in particular to its simplification.

The review of the GBER will ensure that Member States and stakeholders have a clear set of rules as of 2014 as a reference point for the development of their policies and aid interventions.

As it includes employment services, the GBER regulation has consequences on EASPD members delivering employment services, and in particular on sheltered workshops. For this reason we commented on the draft regulation and contributed to the second consultation.

For more information you can contact: Irene.Bertana@easpd.eu

The EP political groups joined forces to support the rights of persons with disabilities

On Wednesday 5th June the leaders of the main political groups of the European Parliament (EPP group, S&D group, ALDE group, Greens/EFA group and GUE/NGL group) joined forces to support the rights of persons with disabilities in Europe.

In preparation of this event, EASPD participated in a meeting with the European United Left and the Nordic Green Left. The meeting tackled the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the European policy-making process and the impact of the crisis on the situation of persons with disabilities.

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After that the political groups met the European Disability Forum and adopted a declaration expressing their commitment for the rights of people with disabilities in Europe.

The political groups committed to:

- Adopt a comprehensive antidiscrimination legislation and the fully implement the UN Convention of the Right of persons with disabilities (UN CRPD). To achieve that aim, new institutional and effective mechanisms within the EP could be created;
- Protect people with disabilities from the impact of the crisis. The concrete proposals in this domain are the adoption of EU policy instruments such as the Social Investment Package, the European Semester and the Social dimension of the EMU;
- Involve citizens with disabilities in the European Elections through, for example, the accessibility of documents and information;
- Directly and actively involve people with disabilities in the decisions, policies and decision-making processes that concern them.

EASPD welcomes this commitment and offers its cooperation to transfer this declaration into reality

Reserved contracts in public procurement

Together with major actors in the European social policy and disability scene, EASPD is lobbying for a more equal legislation in the public procurement directive – which is currently being discussed by the European institutions. We are particularly concerned about the revision of Article 17 dealing with reserved contracts. To this purpose, EASPD, in cooperation with the European Disability Forum (EDF), has sent an open letter to the Permanent Ambassador of Ireland to the EU to raise our shared concerns on the potential harmful consequences the new legislation might have on persons with disabilities if it remains unchanged.

The new provision on reserved contracts suggested by the Council of the European Union (Art. 17.2) is putting in direct and unfair competition social enterprises that aim to integrate both socially and professionally persons with disabilities and disadvantaged persons (covered by Article 17.1) with companies that would employ experienced workers in the same fields.

EASPD and EDF call for careful consideration of the deleterious consequences the proposed amendment (Art. 17.2) might have on provision 17.1 as it is essential to ensure the survival of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities who cannot access the mainstream labour market without putting additional obstacles on the enablement of their right to work.

For more information on the state of the negotiations, please contact Ms Sabrina Ferraina at sabrina.ferraina@easpd.eu.

You can find the open letter on reserved contracts in public procurement here.

Welcome Croatia!

Croatia became the 28th Member State of the European Union on the 1st July.

Following its international recognition on 15 January 1992, Croatia began to develop its relationship with the European Union.

An important first step was the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) in October 2011, which came into force on 1st February 2005.

One of the criteria was for Croatia to provide full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal (ICT) for the former Yugoslavia. Negotiations for Croatia's candidacy were officially launched on 3rd October 2005 following a positive report from ICT.

The European Members States signed the Accession Treaty on 9th December 2011. In a referendum held on 22nd January 2012, 66.27% of Croatian voters supported Croatia's accession to the European Union. The Croatian Parliament ratified on 9th March the Accession Treaty of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union.

Croatia is the first Country affected by the Balkan war to become a member of the European Union.

PROJECT UPDATES

RACE – Corporate Round Table



Corporate Round Table in Belgium, 13th of June 2013



On June the 13th, a successful meeting between several employers from different economic sectors took place in Brussels. During the debate, problems and opportunities that can arise when employing persons with disabilities were discussed and good practices were shared. The experts offered practical solutions and provided answers to the different questions that popped-up during the discussions. In addition to the debate, the employers gave feedback and food-for-thought on the different products from the RACE Project. The results of this corporate round table will be published and will feed the final outcomes of the RACE Project, which will

be presented during the international conference on employment for persons with disabilities in Istanbul, 27-28 of September 2013.

The RACE Project team and EASPD in particular would like to thank all the employers and experts for their support and their constructive opinions on the employment of persons with disabilities on the open labour market. We would especially like to thank Bart Moens, of VOKA (Chamber of Commerce), for co-organising the corporate round table and for his tireless effort to involve different employers.



Here a list of the companies represented at the roundtable:

- Carrefour
- Faculty Club
- JOB-Link vzw
- Lunch Garden
- Open Kennisnetwerk – GTB
- Plastiek Van Wauwe bvba
- Van Os – Sonnevelt bvba + Sonnos bvba
- VOKA (Chamber of Commerce Halle-Vilvoorde)

For additional information regarding the RACE project and the final conference please visit our website: www.employdisable.eu , or contact Sonia.staskowiak@easpd.eu .

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Transfer Employment Support Tools for People with Disabilities



2nd Project Meeting in Miercurea Ciuc/Csikszereda, Romania, 20-21 June 2013



Following a first working period, the T-EST project partners gathered in Miercurea Ciuc/Csikszereda, Romania for its second project meeting. Partners from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy and Turkey were hosted and welcomed by Romanian partners that provided excellent accommodation services and wonderful social programmes.

The T-EST project started in November 2012 and will last until October 2014. It will transfer the concept of supported employment to Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, with effects on labour market participation, vocational training and integration of people with disabilities. This will be done through a toolkit, developed in a previous Leonardo project. In order to guarantee a successful transfer process, an initial analysis in the target countries will be followed by adapting the toolkit for supported employment to the respective national systems and requirements.

The meeting was busy yet successful. Its purpose was to update participants on the progress made by others and help each other out

where needed. The project meeting provided all partners with a new boost to continue working as hard as previously. In order to be successfully implemented in Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, participants decided to adapt the Toolkit of Supported Employment in several ways. Working in little workgroups gave participants new insights and should strengthen the drafting of a practical Toolkit, better suited to guide and assist the concept of supported employment.

Re-energised and loaded-up with work, participants are eager to make the T-EST Project a huge success and realise all of its initial goals and outcomes.

You can find more information in the T-EST project website: www.t-est.eu



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EVENTS NOTIFICATION

The European Song Festival 2014: ORGANISE YOUR NATIONAL CONTEST!



The European Song Festival 2014 (TESF) for people with intellectual disabilities **will take place from 1 till 3 May 2014 in Stockholm, Sweden** and is co-organised by both Upplands Väsby Kommun and EASPD.

EASPD members will soon receive an invitation per country to participate and organise their own respective national contest. In this way, each country can make their national selection and send the winner to the European Song Festival in Sweden. Organisations can also decide to send their application directly; however, the Selection Committee reserves the right to select one among all applicants from each country.

In addition to the contest itself, there will be other various activities such as workshops, open performances, a gala dinner and even a disco party!

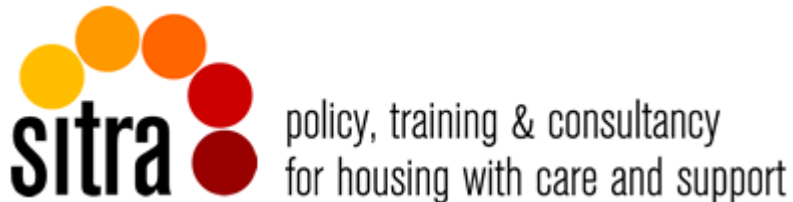
EASPD members will soon receive all the necessary details. If you are not a member, you will soon find more information on our website.

CONTACT DETAILS

FOR APPLICANTS to the European Song Festival in Sweden, please contact Mr. Mikael Valier from Upplands Väsby Kommun: mikael.valier@upplandsvasby.se

FOR EASPD MEMBERS organising their own respective national contest, please contact Katrijn.Dekoninck@easpd.eu

Co-operative agreement with Sitra!



EASPD recently concluded an agreement to increase cooperation with Sitra, an organisation based in the UK.

Sitra is a membership organisation and a registered charity with over 25 years of experience of offering practitioners a range of affordable policy, training, information, conference and capacity building services. Their work covers all aspects of supported housing, together with associated activities such as human resources and staffing issues, financial management and community care.

EASPD and Sitra both participated in the Consultation on integrated housing and services organised by the OECD in November 2012. In Paris, EASPD, FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organisations Working with Homeless People) and CECODHAS (The Federation of Public, Cooperative and Social Housing) established the informal network PUSH Europe – Practice and Understanding in Supported Housing in Europe, in which Sitra is also involved.

Supported housing for vulnerable groups has become increasingly important in Europe. This is reflected in the discussions on de-institutionalisation and the change from institutional to community-based social services.

EASPD and Sitra will look at ways in which to share relevant information, attend each other's events when relevant and perhaps co-operate in the framework of an EU-funded project, which was submitted in January of this year. An answer is expected in August.

We will certainly keep you updated on any developments. If you have any questions meanwhile, please feel free to contact Katrijn.Dekoninck@easpd.eu.

European Social Innovation Competition



The European Social Innovation Competition, launched by the European Commission in October 2012, was concluded on 29th May, with a ceremony that took place in Brussels.

Social innovations are defined by the Commission as “innovations that are social in both their ends and their means – new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations.”¹ The challenge was to present social innovation solutions to help people move towards work or into new types of work.

As it was asserted by Antii Peltomaki from DG Enterprise & industry and Geof Mulgan, CEO at Nesta, the message of the competition was that innovation, creativity and cooperation can contribute to solve problems linked with the economic crisis.

Over 600 ideas were received by December 2012, from a wide variety of organisations from 35 different countries. The diversity of projects demonstrates how broad social innovation can be.

¹ Definition taken by http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/innovation/policy/social-innovation/competition/definition_en.htm

The 10 selected finalists were dealing with different fields: street papers, refugees, worker mothers, intergenerational connections, young unemployed people, Roma workers, students, dissemination of information. And the three winners were:

- **"Economy App"** from Germany, an innovative web and mobile application providing immediate reciprocal transactions generating compensated work without the need for cash or credit;
- **"MITWIN.NET"**, from Spain, an intergenerational professional network proposing that older workers share a job with younger people to share knowledge and reduce youth unemployment;
- **"Success breeds success"**, from the UK, proposes to connect talents in business with talents in communities to create enterprise (and jobs) for social benefit.

The "Success breeds success" project could be particularly interesting for EASPD members as it aims to "help people use their talents and imagination to set-up sustainable, small-scale social care and health services (micro-enterprises)". The action of these micro-enterprises can target a wide range of people, including persons with disabilities.

Finally, it is important to point out that the trophies for the three winners were made by Albert Fritzl, from "Lebenshilfe Salzburg", which is an EASPD member. Lebenshilfe is an independent and charitable association for people with mental disabilities, their families, experts and friends.

Change in EASPD Staff

In June we have seen the departure of two of our staff: Geneviève Crémer and David Alsebach.

Geneviève worked mostly on the INVESTT project, while David was Project and Membership assistant and he worked, together with the EASPD team and members, on the Annual Report 2012.

EASPD thanks them for their precious collaboration and wishes them good luck in their personal and professional futures.