

EASPD Newflash February 2009 1 February 2009

Priorities of the Czech Presidency of the European Union (1st January 2009 - 30th June 2009)

The Czech Presidency of the European Union, the second time that a 'new' Member State from Eastern Europe holds the rotating Presidency, has unveiled their motto: "Europe without Barriers", which reflects the four basic freedoms: the free movement of goods, capital, workers, and services, while the logo adds a symbolic fifth freedom: free movement of information and knowledge. The main priorities of this Presidency can be summed up as the 3 Es: Economy, Energy and External relations. The Czech Prime Minister, Mirek Topolánek, made this choice clear by explaining the ambition to increase Europe's competitiveness, to enhance consumers' confidence and well as the confidence of small and medium sized enterprises, to deal with the financial crisis in an effective and reasonable way. The energy policy is seen as a source of balance between the demands of the environment and the preservation of competitiveness and energy security on the continent. External Relations means an emphasis on Euro-Atlantic relations, considered fundamental for our security and economic cooperation, as well as a furthering of the integration of the Balkans. Luckily, this does not mean that social policy will not be on the working programme of this Presidency. The following Policy areas will be dealt with during the coming months:

- Workers' Mobility in the EU Labour Market;
- Increasing Employment and Labour Market Flexibility through General Flexicurity Principles;
- Horizontal Support for Families within EU Policies;
- Social Services as a Tool for Active Social Inclusion of the Most Disadvantaged Persons and as an Employment Opportunity.

The full working programme of the Czech EU Presidency can be found at the following web site: <http://www.eu2009.cz/en/czechpresidency/programme-and-priorities-479/>, while a full calendar of events including information on conferences and events relevant to the social services sector is available on <http://www.eu2009.cz/en/calendar/caleNDAR-850/>.

The Czech Presidency has also announced that it will hold 2 additional summits to tackle the consequences of the financial crisis. The first of these 2 summits will take place on 19th and 20th March, and it will be dominated by financial matters, with the EU preparing a common position on, among other things, changes to the architecture of the global financial system ahead of a meeting of the G20 group of leading economies. The second meeting will focus on the impact of the economic crisis on jobs.

The Czech Prime Minister has mentioned that the economic crisis is affecting all countries in the Union and the loss of jobs in the last few months has been very deep. The President of the Commission Barroso declared that the social aspects of the economic crisis are "the first concern now" for the EU. Exact dates for this summit have not been yet decided, it is however known that it will be held in May. A full article on this topic can be found on <http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/2009/02/eu-to-hold-jobssummit/63901.aspx>. The timeline of EU summits is as follows: - 1st March: European Council on protectionism and financial markets (Brussels); - 19th and 20th March: EU Spring Council (Brussels); - 2nd April: G20 Summit (London); - May: European Council on unemployment (Prague); - 18th and 19th June: European Council (Brussels). **Prepare the post-Lisbon - 2009 Participatory campaign to ensure that the next decade is green and social**

The next decade will be critical to deciding whether the EU wants to lead on sustainable development: Will it limit climate change and manage its negative impact on people and prosperity? Will it provide all human beings a decent life on the basis of resources that are not being depleted but maintained and renewed? Will it guarantee social and green progress in times of financial and economic crisis, increased poverty and resource conflicts? The European Environment Bureau (EEB), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Social Platform have joined forces since 2000 to promote an overarching EU strategy that pursues simultaneously economic, environmental and social goals. In this vision, the environment and social goals are not an addendum to the 'growth and job' strategy (the so-called Lisbon strategy) but the cornerstone of a long term development strategy. The EEB, ETUC and the Social Platform see 2009 as a crucial year in setting such an Agenda. A new European Commission will start its work with setting out its five year strategic objectives and the budget implications. These will certainly include tackling climate and energy concerns, responding to changing global economic relations, addressing social and demographic changes. Therefore, the EEB, ETUC and the Social Platform have launched a participatory campaign to develop ideas and create a broad consensus on a Social and Green Agenda for the next decade, for promotion to the new European Commission and European Parliament as well as to the EU Member States. On 29th and 30th January 2009 the Spring Alliance, a civil society initiative for the promotion of a social and green European agenda, was officially launched at a kick off conference in Brussels. The activities of the Spring Alliance can now also be followed on the newly created web-site of the Spring Alliance: <http://www.springalliance.eu>. EASPD participated in the kick off meeting and invites all members to have a look at the web-site to stay involved in the process and to promote the existence of the Spring Alliance among other interested partners. **Lisbon Strategy recommendations adopted by the European Commission**

The European Commission has adopted the Lisbon Strategy recommendations which will be endorsed by the Spring European Council. In addition, they have adopted 'country chapters' under the Lisbon Growth and Jobs agenda to help ensure that the European Economic Recovery Plan is implemented. The country chapters assess the progress made in each Member State in implementing the Growth and job strategy and are accompanied by reports on the overall implementation of the strategy. The recommendations also try to consider the impact of the financial crisis on the real economy. Taken together with the measures already put forward in the Recovery Plan and with the report on the Community Lisbon programme adopted on 16th December, the country chapters and the accompanying reports constitute the full Lisbon Strategy Annual Progress Report. **European Parliament launches elections web page**

The European Parliament has launched a new web page dedicated to the European elections taking place in June 2009. The web site features information on the upcoming elections, debate on issues at European level but also press releases with a national perspective and links to the web site of all European parties. The web site is accessible at the following link:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/election_s2009/default.htm?language=EN
Kick-off meeting PASS IT ON and news on the All inclusive project

PASS IT ON The kick-off meeting of the PASS IT ON project funded under the Transversal Programme (Key Activity 4 Dissemination and Exploitation of results) of the LLP of DG EAC was held on the 29th and 30th of January in Brussels. The overall aim of this project is to provide professionals working in the field of service provision to people with disabilities, employers and local authorities with the right information, know how and expertise in order to provide people with disabilities with the necessary lifelong learning possibilities to access the open labour market and to retain their job. Participants from 8 countries represented within the Partnership (the Steering Group) and the experts of the Scientific and Validation Committee (SVC) attended the meeting and set the scene of the project, the work planning for the coming two years and the way these two project actors will cooperate. The SVC is in charge of selecting the training material from 4 previous EC funded projects to be inserted in the compilation summary on the access of people with disabilities in the open labour market. The disability stakeholders (professionals, employers, local authorities, people with disabilities) will have then the opportunity to make use of this instrument which will allow them to act according to a more holistic and synergic approach while dealing with the project's focus topic. The summary compilation, as well as other fruitful and concrete outcomes will be an integral part of the Seminars to be organized in Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria and Malta in 2010, thanks also to the support of the Pool of Experts, a third main relevant actor within the project. **Information about the All inclusive project** The All Inclusive project, funded under the GRUNDTVIG stream of the Lifelong Learning Programme of DG EAC, is currently running the online pilot phase. The project focuses on the situation of migrants with disabilities and their families but it also addresses the disability experts and the Institutions in the disability sector. Within this framework, the Pilot Phase is an useful tool to deepen understanding of migrants with disability by providing relevant documents and information. It also enables the participants to contribute to the discussions within the ad-hoc created online forum. Please contact Sergio Micheleni for further information: sergio.micheleni@easped.eu **EASPD Newsflash February 2009 5**

The European Disability Forum launches campaign for the 2009 European Elections

The European Disability Forums (EDF) European elections campaign website www.disabilityvotescount.eu has been officially launched on 19 January 2009 at the European Parliament Disability Intergroup New Year reception. One page of this website is devoted to EP elections in the EU 27 and will include country specific links to European elections websites and information in your respective countries and languages. So, if you have devoted a page on your own websites about the EP elections you are kindly invited to share the links with the EDF Secretariat, valerie.asselberghs@edffeph.org

Conference on “Bringing people to work” on 11-12 June 2009 in Thessaloniki

Programme 9-10 June 2009: Employment & Training: Study visits **10 June 2009**, 1 pm-4 pm: Project Development Workshop **11-12 June 2009**, 9 am-5 pm: Conference ‘BRINGING PEOPLE TO WORK’ **13 June 2009:** SC, Board and/or General Assembly Starting point of the conference are the Employment Directive, the State Aid Regulation, the HLG paper on Supported Employment & Art. 27 of the UN convention on work and Employment of persons with disabilities The following topics will be covered: Mainstream employment and their barriers: how to help persons with disabilities to find and keep a job Vocational training to help meet the criteria Involvement of employers Role of the providers (how can service providers facilitate employers, including trade unions?) The view of trade unions in employing persons with disability in all types of employment **Registration** Non-members EASPD: € 220.- Members EASPD: € 200.- Eastern European, Central European & Middle East countries: € 60.- Greece: € 80. - (or € 100. - for 10-11- 12 June 2009) Registration fee Project Development Workshop 10 June 2009: € 30.- **THE REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN ON WWW.EASPD.EU** *Charlotte Boetticher EASPD Membership and PR Officer*
charlotte.boetticher@easpd.eu +32 2 282 46 10