
April 2009

Policy news



European Parliament opts to extend Anti-discrimination Directive

The European Parliament voted on 2 April to extend Anti-discrimination protections beyond employment to cover goods, facilities and services. Previously, provisions only applied to discrimination on sexual orientation, age, disability or religion in the workplace. The extension on legal protection will apply to areas such as healthcare and commercial services. It is designed as an addition to existing rules which currently only protect certain groups from discrimination or only in certain situations.

The Swedish government, which will be next to take up presidency of the EU, signalled it intended to implement the new provisions. Emine Bozkurt, a Dutch member of European Parliament described the win as a "wonderful victory" for human rights. She said: "Throughout the EU people are still discriminated, they are denied insurance, education or a home just because of their age, religion or sexual orientation." Furthermore, at the

moment only three countries in Europe have legislation against multiple-discrimination. "This means for example that a gay woman in a wheelchair who is discriminated will usually be forced to choose on what ground she suspects the discrimination took place when she files a formal complaint."

Jean Lambert, MEP, said: "I am very proud that we succeeded in getting a Parliament majority to support this extension of legal protection against discrimination beyond the labour market. This is a long overdue victory for the millions of people across Europe at risk of discrimination on grounds of their age, disability, sexual orientation or faith or belief."

EASPD advocates actively for the right to receive social support. This should be included in the directive.



No Final agreement on Working Time Directive

During the last round of talks between representatives of the European Parliament and the European Council on the Working Time Directive that took place on 27 and 28 April no final agreement was reached. The representatives could not find a compromise on three crucial points: the opt-out, on-call time and multiple contracts.

This is the first time that no agreement could be reached at the Conciliation stage since the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty which significantly extended the scope of the codecision procedure. The main stumbling block was the opt-out.

"Unfortunately, after five years of negotiations, it was not possible to reach an agreement. The EP negotiation team made several proposals on the opt-out so that it would become 'exceptional and temporary'. The opt-out cannot be forever. On the Council side, any attempt to put an end to the opt-out was not acceptable", said Mechthild Rothe (PES, DE), leading the EP delegation.

No substantive agreement on the issue of multiple contracts could be reached either. For workers covered by more than one employment contract, MEPs considered

that working time should be calculated per worker and not per contract.

Since there is no agreement, the current directive remains into force, though the Commission can draft a new proposal from scratch. Such new legislation would need to take into account the rulings of the European Court of Justice on on-call time.

The agreement on the Working Time Directive, especially the definition of working time has a major impact on EASPD members, especially those providing 24-hour care and support to people with a disability. EASPD agrees that staff working in the social services sector should have good working conditions, including rest periods and proper compensation. However, additional funding will have to be made available by authorities to help services pay for the additional costs that the new legislation will bring about. Unless proper funding is provided, service offers might have to be reduced and small community settings might have to give way to larger institutions as a way to reduce the cost increase, which would represent a huge step backwards for the sector.



DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities / Disability Unit will launch two studies on disability in 2009

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities will launch two important studies for the disability sector in 2009:

1. Study on the economic impact of European disability policy;

2. Study on supported employment for persons with disabilities.

EASPD has no further information about the exact dates of publication but we will inform you in due time.

EASPD news



Barriers to Healthcare Services for People with Mental Disorders

On the 22nd of April, the European Health Management Association (EHMA) organised the first of three planned policy seminars on disadvantaged groups. The topic of the seminar was barriers to healthcare services faced by people with mental disorders. A study on “Quality in and Equality of Access to Healthcare Services” (HealthQUEST), recently published, was presented. The study focused on a number of barriers to healthcare faced by three disadvantaged groups: people with mental disorders, migrants and older people with functional limitation.

Poverty and social exclusion continue to be serious challenges across the European Union and for health systems in Member States. People with mental disorders are at high risk of poverty, stigmatisation and social exclusion. They are also more likely to face physical health

problems and to die prematurely, and there is evidence that they do not receive the general health care that best responds to their needs. Improved access to general health care is therefore essential to minimise disadvantage for people with mental disorders.

EASPD attended this event and introduced the ROSE project, a Leonardo da Vinci funded project in which EASPD is closely involved, aiming at reducing stress and burnout amongst people working in the mental health and intellectual disability occupational support sectors.

For more information please contact Goedele Avau on

Goedele.avau@easpd.eu or see: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/sp/si/docs/social_inclusion/2008/healthquest_en.pdf



High Level Group on Disability meeting on 1 and 2 April

On 1st and 2nd of April the High Level Group on Disability held its first meeting of the year 2009. The key element of the discussion was the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A report on the state of play with regard to the implementation of the Convention in all EU countries was discussed.

EASPD warmly welcomes the very active role of the European Commission in the implementation of the Convention.

“This is an important step forward in ensuring that disabled people across the world can enjoy the same human rights as everyone else and setting international human rights standards for disabled people. Nevertheless, we call for an

empowered High Level Group with a stronger mandate for Member State representatives is guaranteed. This is needed to a real, positive impact on persons with disabilities, their social networks and their services.” Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General of EASPD said.

During the meeting, EASPD stressed again that service providers should be included in the national monitoring committees of the European Social Fund and Regional Development Fund to ensure that they are used to boost the development of community based services as alternative for large segregating, low quality institutions.

Furthermore, the multi annual disability action plan (2003-2010) was evaluated

and the European Commission asked the members of the High Level Group for input for the new action plan (2011-2020).

Currently, the High Level Group on Disability monitors the latest policies and priorities of Governments concerning people with disabilities, to pool information and experience, and to advise the Commission on methods for reporting in future on the EU-wide situation with regard to disability.

Also see the EASPD press release on the High level group on www.easpd.eu



EASPD publishes Manifesto on 2009 European Parliament elections

EASPD has published its 2009 European Parliament Elections Manifesto, in which it outlines the key priorities for services providers for people with disabilities for the coming years. We call for:

1. Investment in social services, to avoid that they bear the consequences of the financial and economic crisis;
2. The swift ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol;
3. Better targeting and monitoring of Structural Funds;
4. A sector specific legal instrument on Social Services of General Interest;
5. Better working conditions for social care staff, and proper legislation to regulate migration;
6. A bettering of public procurement rules;

7. A comprehensive Directive on equal treatment that explicitly recognises the right to receive support services;
8. The creation of an Intergroup on Social Services in the European Parliament.

A special section on the European Elections has been created on the EASPD web site, including the full text of the manifesto as well as information on all related activities carried out by EASPD. We ask all our members to contact the parties and candidates in their respective countries to voice the requests of our sectors and promote our manifesto.

<http://www.easpd.eu/EUROPEANPARLIAMENTELECTIONS2009/tabid/5128/Default.aspx>.

On 14th of April, EASPD participated in a conference on “Participative Democracy and Civil Dialogue” organised at the European Economic and Social Committee by the European Civic Forum and Various Interest Groups at the European Economic and Social Committee. About 20 European Networks, including EASPD, are signatories of a manifesto for a Genuine European Civil Dialogue and during the event, called on European political parties to work for the promotion of an active role for civil society organisations within a more participatory democratic system at EU level.

Conference participants discussed how to make the best use of the instruments of civil dialogue that are provided within the Lisbon Treaty so as to improve the

exchange of ideas between the European Institutions and civil society. The need to develop a structured, sustainable and effective framework for European civil dialogue emerged. Representatives of the 5 major European political parties participating to the event mostly welcomed this initiative and suggested it should be carried forward so that these recommendations could be properly addressed during the next parliamentary term.

The text of the Manifesto for a Genuine European Civil Dialogue is available on the European Parliament elections section of the EASPD web site: <http://www.easpd.eu/EUROPEANPARLIAMENLECTIONS2009/tabid/5128/Default.aspx>.

Understanding EU and social policy documents can be hard with all the abbreviations in place. Therefore EASPD has published a list of European Union abbreviations and acronyms that are relevant to EASPD.

You can find the alphabetical list on the EASPD website to search the abbreviation you are looking for.

If you cannot find the abbreviation in our list, please send an email to Charlotte Boetticher at charlotte.boetticher@easpd.eu so that we can add it.

Programme

8-10 June 2009: Employment & Training:
Study visits

10 June 2009: Project Development
Workshop

11-12 June 2009: 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

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**

News from EASPD Members



BAG:WfbM Workshop Fair 2009: Record Attendance!

The BAG: WfbM Workshop Fair 2009 that took place on 19 to 22 March 2009 in Nürnberg/Bavaria ended with a new record result. During four days, 15,124 visitors came to hall 12 of the Congress Centre Nuremberg. This represents an increase of 25 per cent compared to the previous year. Not only did the number of visitors increase, the number of exhibitors also rose from 213 to 226. In addition, the programme of lectures expanded significantly. Almost 3.600 (3.100 in 2008) participants came to see the nearly 80 presentations.

Apart from figures, booths were particularly impressive. Workshops presented themselves and their work in a professional and appealing way. In doing so, they were able to interest and inform many people on their work. Günter Mosen, chairman of BAG:WfbM, also confirmed that this year's fair was the most successful so far. "This success is based on the great dedication of the exhibitors, but also on the excellent cooperation between BAG:WfbM and the NürnbergMesse GmbH", he stated.

The fair's project manager Leander Krummrich was particularly charmed by the increased creativity of the presentation and appearance of the products – which are especially interesting for consumers: "The traditionally high-quality products from workshops are increasingly supplemented by exclusive design ideas. This mixture evidently makes for an irresistible offer."

Next year's Workshop Fair will open its doors again from 11 to 14 March 2010.

For more information about BAG:WfbM, please visit their website www.bagwfbm.eu.

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