

May 2009

## Policy news



### Czech Presidency Conference on Social Services: A Tool for Mobilizing Workforce and Strengthening Social Cohesion

The Conference “Social Services: A Tool for Mobilizing Workforce and Strengthening Social Cohesion” took place in Prague on 22-23 April and was organised under the auspices of the Czech Presidency.

The conference gave an opportunity to analyse recent developments that took place in the social services sector across the EU and to discuss the potential role of social services to help overcome the consequences of the economic and financial crisis, also considering the demographic evolution of the European population.

The conference was attended by representatives of the European Commission, the Czech Presidency, the Trade Unions, academia and civil society organisations, among which EASPD. Unfortunately, participation from Member States and specifically regional and local Government was scarce.

Topics covered included sustainability, quality and accessibility of social services; employment opportunities in the sector of social services, social service as a tool for Active Inclusion. EASPD Secretary General Luk Zelderloo gave a presentation on “Invest in Social Services and kill 2 birds with one stone” in the plenary panel

“Social Services – Creating New Job Opportunities”.

In his presentation, Mr. Zelderloo described the impact of the financial crisis on the sector of service providers for people with disabilities across Europe and proposed strategic ideas to overcome it while paving the way to building the services of the future. He also steered the discussion towards the need to address adequately the pre-conditions for quality of social services, which was picked up in the concluding remarks to the conference delivered by the representative of the Social Platform. Finally, he outlined the importance of including organisations such as EASPD in all employment discussions attended traditionally by the social partners only, given that over 90% of social services for people with disabilities in Europe are either not-for-profit or governmental bodies, and employers from these organisations have a right to be represented in these meetings as well.

The draft conclusions of the conference, which are available on the web site of the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs:

[http://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/7031/Conference conclusions.pdf](http://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/7031/Conference%20conclusions.pdf), underlined the fact that social services are an essential instrument for social policies that play a

vital, preventive and socially cohesive role in European society. Their role has been heightened by the current crisis given that they help cushion its impact and act as a springboard for people hit by the economic downturn. Social services, moreover, need to be integrated with other services of general interest provided at local level so as to be capable of providing comprehensive, personalized and high quality solutions in order to tackle multiple disadvantages.

It is the responsibility of public authorities to organise and provide social services, which need to be accessed by all citizens. "In order to support sustainable social services, special (local and regional) strategies should be developed to tackle the tension between equal access, quality and financial sustainability; a suitable framework should be created and adequate financial resources provided. To ensure quality and efficiency of services, quality standards should be determined at the appropriate level in accordance with European quality framework." (Draft Conference Conclusions).

Social services are already one of the big employers of Europe; however the offer of job opportunities and enabling possibilities of employment and social integration will be increasingly important going forward. Civil society organisations and trade unions have mentioned the importance of creating high quality jobs, providing adequate training, salaries and working conditions as well as lifelong learning opportunities in order for social care workers to be able to enjoy proper employment and career conditions. Additionally, EASPD called for the

European Commission and national authorities to promote careers in this field and work on their attractiveness to ensure an adequate growth of workforce in social services so as to make sure that they will prosper in future years.

Investing in social services is another priority, especially in these times of crisis when they can give a real and concrete contribution to the growth potential and the cohesion of our economies and societies. Investments would help services to better respond to increasing demands and they would also contribute to improving the quality of the services delivered, thus allowing them to better play their preventive and socially cohesive role.

The importance of informal care was also underscored, and it was agreed that conditions for an informal care of high quality should be created, through instruments such as adequate training, guidance and financial support.

A system of life-long training and capacity building should be promoted so as to ensure a high quality of services.

Finally, protection of rights, dignity and special needs of social service users is also necessary.

In parallel to the main conference, the Czech Presidency organised a "Forum of Best Practice", a platform that allowed NGOs, both Czech and International, to showcase their work. EASPD participated in the Forum where it presented the "Stakeholder Approach."

Please contact the EASPD office to request a copy of the presentations if you are interested.

A *downgraded* Employment Summit took place in Prague at the beginning of May to discuss how to tackle rising unemployment and find ways to soften the impact of the economic crisis on EU citizens. Only the social Troika, i.e. Employment and Social Affairs Ministers from the Czech Republic, Sweden and Spain (who hold the current and upcoming Presidencies, respectively), together with social partners and representatives of the business sector participated in the meeting. The Social Platform actively contributed to preparing the Summit but was unfortunately not invited to the Summit itself.

The results of the meeting were somewhat disappointing. Ten actions were agreed upon, however representatives of employers and the Trade Unions refused to sign the final document, an indication that no real consensus could be found. The ten actions focus on the economic agenda and do not seem to deviate from tried and tested strategies such as increased mobility, flexicurity and the creation of a favourable environment for enterprises, but fail to really tackle the social agenda.

These ten actions are suggested for implementation both at national and European levels together with the social partners. They are:

1. Maintain as many people as possible in jobs, with temporary adjustment of working hours combined with retraining and supported by public funding (including from the European Social Fund);
2. Encourage entrepreneurship and job creation, e.g. by lowering non-wage labour costs and flexicurity;
3. Improve the efficiency of national employment services by providing intensive counselling, training and job search in the first weeks of unemployment, especially for the young unemployed;

4. Increase significantly the number of high quality apprenticeships and traineeships by the end of 2009;
5. Promote more inclusive labour markets by ensuring work incentives, effective active labour market policies and modernisation of social protection systems that also lead to a better integration of disadvantaged groups including the disabled, the low-skilled and migrants;
6. Upgrade skills at all levels with lifelong learning, in particular giving all school leavers the necessary skills to find a job;
7. Use labour mobility to match supply and demand of labour to best effect;
8. Identify job opportunities and skills requirements, and improve skills forecasting to get the training offer right;
9. Assist the unemployed and young people in starting their own business, e.g. by providing business support training and starting capital, or by lowering or eliminating taxation on start-ups;
10. Anticipate and manage restructuring through mutual learning and exchange of good practice.

However, there are also some positive aspects, such as the mention that a “coordinated approach integrating economic, employment and social policies” is needed, the recognition that labour market supply should be promoted via measures such as more inclusive labour markets and an increased access to employment. The European Social Fund, the Regional Development Fund and the Globalisation Fund will be made available for the effective implementation of the agreed measures. Specifically, “ESF interventions should provide dedicated assistance for disadvantaged groups, such as persons with disabilities, young people, ethnic minorities and the long-term unemployed, to help them integrate into society and make them as economically independent as possible.”

Concrete decisions on this topic are expected to be taken during the June Summit, an appointment for which the European Commission is preparing a Communication on Employment.

For further information:

Employment summit, main messages:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&langId=en&eventId=173&furtherEvents=yes>



## 2009 Ageing Communication: a renewed strategy for tackling Europe's demographic challenge

The European Commission issued a Communication on ageing, which takes an in-depth look at the economic and budgetary impact of an ageing population over the long-term until 2060. Ensuring sustainable access to social services will be one of the key challenges for EU Member States in the coming decades. A

press release outlining the key messages of the Communication is available at the following:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/656&type=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>



## Council facilitates access to European Social Fund

The Council adopted a regulation on 5 May 2009 facilitating access to grants co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) in order to mitigate the social impact of the financial crisis.

regulation to three additional forms of eligible costs:

The main objective of the new regulation is to simplify the management, administration and control of ESF operations by simplifying the justification of indirect costs (i.e. costs which are not directly linked to the project, but which are necessary for its implementation such as phone or electricity costs) and reducing the workload and number of supporting documents required to justify expenditure.

- indirect costs, declared on a flat-rate basis, of up to 20% of the direct costs of an operation;
- Flat-rate costs calculated by the application of standard scales of unit cost as defined by the member states;
- Lump sums to cover all or part of the costs of an operation, within a limit of EUR 50 000.

In accordance with the recommendations of the European Court of Auditors and following a first reading agreement with the European Parliament, the Council decided to extend the scope of the ESF

Currently, the reimbursement of ESF expenditure is based on the "real cost" principle. This means that EUR 1 of grant must correspond to at least EUR 1 of justified paid expenditure.

The new rules, which form a part of the recovery package, will apply retroactively from 1 August 2006.

Further information is available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=510&furtherNews=yes>, and on the web site of the ESF:

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/esf/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/index_en.htm).

## EASPD news



Still place available for the EASPD Conference on “Bringing people to work” on 11-12 June 2009 in Thessaloniki

### 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 STILL OPEN ON  
WWW.EASPD.EU**

# News from EASPD Members



## High quality support in Austria: Jugend am Werk (JaW)

Founded in 1945, Jugend am Werk (JaW) has the objective to ensure that disadvantaged individuals can lead independent, fulfilling lives without dependence on others. For young people who cannot find apprenticeships, JaW provides high-quality vocational training; for people with disabilities, we provide individual support.

Today, JaW trains **about 1.300** young men and women per year who have been unable to find an apprenticeship on the open job market and offers a wide range of courses for vocational training and qualifications:

- The **workshops and vocational training centres** for young people offer apprentice-training courses for vocational training in a large number of professions. In addition to that, apprentices from other companies can also complete certain training modules in JaW's workshops within the framework of "inter-company apprenticeship training".
- For disadvantaged or disabled young people, JaW offers a scheme called "**Integrative Vocational Training**", where it is possible to extend the apprentice training courses, accompanied by special trained "Vocational Training Assistants".

JaW provides people with intellectual or multiple disabilities with personal support that is necessary to enable them to live as independent as possible:

- About **1.700** women and men with disabilities work at 23 **workshops**. The

activities there form a bridge between work, employment and cultural training. The idea is that people with disabilities should be able to feel that their activity is both productive and meaningful.

- The prime goal of the activities of the "Integration Accompaniment", "Work Assistance" and "Job Coaching" programs is **mainstream employment** for disabled people on the open job market through information, counselling and accompaniment for employees with disabilities as well as their colleagues in the working environment and the companies itself.

### What are our major concerns / problems / needs?

- Ensure productive work and employment of young people and people with intellectual disability in times of the worldwide economic crisis
- Meaningful activities for people with intellectual disabilities that cannot be integrated on the open job market
- Cutting costs in the social sector
- Strengthening self-empowerment of people with disabilities
- Appropriate service for older people with disabilities and those with greater care requirement
- Adequate housing depending on individual needs

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