

July 2009

## Policy news



### Swedish EU Presidency: Priorities in the Social field

From 1 July 2009 and for six months Sweden holds the Presidency of the EU. The three major priorities of the Swedish EU Presidency in the social field will be:

1. full employment through an active labour market policy and active social insurance policy,
2. on care and health
3. on anti-discrimination, especially gender.

Important social meetings:

- Conference: Healthy and Dignified Ageing, Solna/Stockholm, 15-16 September.

- 8. European Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion, 15-16 October in Stockholm
- High-level Conference on Labour Market Inclusion, Stockholm, 26-27 October.
- High-level conference on the significance of gender equality for economic growth and employment, Stockholm, 15-16 October.
- Equality Summit, Stockholm, 16-17 November.

More information on  
<http://www.se2009.eu/en>



### Informal EPSCO Council held under the Swedish Presidency in Jönköping, Sweden

#### **The Social Platform presented the position of social NGOs on labour market inclusion**

The promotion of labour market inclusion is one of the highest priorities of the Swedish Presidency of the European

Union. The Swedish Presidency aims to tackle employment policies in connection with the financial and economic fields so as to prepare the EU to overcome the crisis effectively, and to realise full economic recovery as soon as possible

while at the same time creating an opportunity for the EU to strengthen its competitiveness and create new jobs.

The Presidency will therefore prioritise labour market measures that limit unemployment, reduce exclusion and return people to work while laying the foundation for a high level of long-term, sustainable employment across the Union. The EU can add value to policies undertaken by Member States (employment is a national competence) by ensuring an exchange of experience and commitments to take measures at national level that increase employment for both women and men throughout the EU. It is important to facilitate a quick return to work in the short term, but also the long term employability of the individual and their strengthened position on the labour market.

It is on this premises that an informal Council meeting of Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs (EPSCO Council in short) was held at the beginning of July. The Social Partners and the Social Platform were invited to participate in the meeting, which constituted a great opportunity to outline the position of social NGOs.

The starting point of the meeting was a realisation of the fact that more Europeans joining the workforce would translate in greater prosperity and higher standards of welfare for all, and that full employment is the primary solution for growing social divide and injustice.

There was also an awareness of the importance of avoiding mistakes of the past like combating rising unemployment by locking people into passive benefit systems that often lead to permanent exclusion from employment: a usage of disability benefits and early retirement schemes is detrimental and leads to long term exclusion from the labour market without creating new job opportunities e.g. for young workers trying to enter the job market. Efficient reforms should aim at increasing labour supply and encouraging hiring, retention and re-training of older workers and workers with reduced work capacity.

Training and education are crucial to ensure employability and adaptability of people outside of the labour market.

In its contribution to the common position of the Social Platform EASPD suggested a number of measures to bring the labour market closer to those excluded from it and to tap into the employment potential of social services:

- Promoting training schemes to prepare people coming from other sectors to start a new career in social services: there is a lot of potential in training people on their second career as social workers allowing them to combine their skills and commitment with real life experience.
- Promoting the attractiveness of careers in the social care sector and recruiting young workers into this field. Given the rate at which technological and scientific advancements take place, it is also essential to ensure lifelong training opportunities for care staff.
- Promoting the set up of supported employment agencies to work alongside mainstream agencies, to help people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups to choose, find and keep a job in the open labour market. The set up of these schemes would also open up employment opportunities for job coaches.
- Promoting investments in the infrastructure of health and social services: this type of investment would help countries to better prepare for increased future needs and to modernise their service offers and would also stimulate job creation.
- De-linking disability benefits from the employment situation of the individual with a disability: benefits are needed for disabled people to manage their impairments and

therefore should not be lost once paid employment is taken up. This would encourage increasing numbers of disabled people to take up employment.

For further information on the Informal EPSCO Council, please see:

[http://www.se2009.eu/en/meetings\\_news/2009/7/9/press\\_release\\_from\\_the\\_informal\\_ministers\\_meeting\\_in\\_jonkoping](http://www.se2009.eu/en/meetings_news/2009/7/9/press_release_from_the_informal_ministers_meeting_in_jonkoping)

The Position presented by the Social Platform is available at:

[http://cms.horus.be/files/99907/MediaArchive/Events/Troika\\_meetings/20090701\\_Social%20NGO%20contribution%20to%20EPSCO.pdf](http://cms.horus.be/files/99907/MediaArchive/Events/Troika_meetings/20090701_Social%20NGO%20contribution%20to%20EPSCO.pdf)



## 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

2010 will be the European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion. The initiative aims at informing European citizens but also to give a voice to people in a situation of poverty and social exclusion.

In accordance with the European principles of solidarity and social justice, the Year will have four guiding principles.

1. Recognition of the fundamental right of people in a situation of poverty to live in dignity and to play a full part in society. In particular, the aim is to guarantee access to resources, social services, culture and leisure.
2. Promotion of social cohesion, in the form of actions to enhance quality of life, social welfare, equal opportunities and sustainable development, by promoting an employment market that is open to all and the principle of equality in education and training. In particular, these actions will target victims of discrimination, **people with disabilities**, children and situations of family poverty, vulnerable groups or groups in a situation of extreme poverty.

3. Shared responsibility and collective and individual participation, to expand the role of all public or private actors in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.
4. Commitment and political action by the Member States and the EU, and the intensification of actions taken at all levels of authority.

In each Member State a National Implementing Body (NIB) has been appointed, which will organize the country's participation in the year. The NIB will also select national, regional and local initiatives that will receive funding. Consultation and dialogue mechanisms with NGOs should be put in place at Member State level in the design of national programmes and for the implementation of the Year.

### Funding possibilities

The total EU budget is of EUR 17 million, including 6, 5 to be spent already in 2009 (covering mostly EU level preparation activities, including meetings, and a EU wide communication campaign). The EU budget for national, local and regional activities is of EUR 9 million.

Activities in Member States will be co-funded by the Commission, i.e. national, regional, local projects will be financed up to 50% by the EU budget. This means Member States have to commit public or private sources for at least 50% of the costs of activities.

A specific web site for the mobilisation and visibility of civil society actions in the run

up and during 2010 will be launched in September 2009.

EASPD and its members and partners are preparing for the Year by building coalitions to make sure that the Year contributes to the shaping of more effective European and national policies against poverty and social exclusion of persons with disabilities and their families.



### **High Level Group on Disability meeting: EASPD warns of effects of financial crisis on persons with disabilities**

On 22 June 2009 the High Level Group on Disability of the European Commission met in Brussels for the second time this year to discuss a variety of topics to do with persons with disabilities and related issues.

The meeting started with an introduction of the results of a survey carried out by EASPD on the effects of crisis on our sector. Four different ways on how the crisis hits the sector were presented, including the fact that more persons with disabilities are unemployed. Service providers for persons with disabilities suffer of staff reductions and of the fact that modernisation plans are on hold. This discussion concluded with EASPD asking the EC to promote investment in people, both persons with disabilities and staff, and investment in infrastructure for services.

Furthermore, the Disability Unit of the EC launched an interesting discussion on the new disability strategy, which stated that a formal consultation process will be organised for the autumn. The main aim of

this will be the implementation of the UN Convention. Before this, stakeholders will have the opportunity to contribute to the strategy. EASPD stressed the importance of an empowered High Level Group, including other DGs such as Education and Culture and Health and Consumer Affairs.

A discussion on the state of play with regard to the implementation of the UN Convention in the Member States concluded that by the end of next year all countries will be ready with the formal processes.

Finally, the MDAC (Mental Disability Advocacy Centre) and the EFC (European Foundation Centre) introduced the work done on legal capacity. It was decided that in some countries a revision of the legal frameworks is needed, and in all countries services facilitating “supported discussion making” and “supported network building” are needed. This will be the main focus of a future conference.

For more information, please contact Luk Zelderloo on [info@easpd.eu](mailto:info@easpd.eu)

# EASPD news



Conference “**Breaking the Barriers between Stakeholders**” on 21-22 September 2009: registration now open!

Registrations are now open for the “**Breaking the Barriers between Stakeholders**” conference organised by Nottingham Community Housing Association with the support of EASPD. The conference will take place at the Britannia Hotel in Nottingham, U.K. on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009.

Bringing together Service Users and Service Providers, Academics, Policy Makers and Suppliers of Information and Communication Technology for People with Disabilities, this conference is supported by the **ImPaCT in Europe** project which aims to raise awareness of the benefits of Person Centered Technology (PCT).

The conference programme has been designed to deliver a demanding agenda bringing together key people from across Europe to demonstrate how assistive technology can significantly support. The full conference programme and registration form are available on: [www.ncha.org.uk](http://www.ncha.org.uk) and [www.easpd.eu](http://www.easpd.eu).

independence for people with disabilities in a person centered way.

#### Who Should Attend?

- Providers of services to people with disabilities
- Commissioners of services for people with disabilities
- Developers of assistive technology and telecare
- Service users of assistive technology
- Senior practitioners in services to people with disabilities
- Academics involved in developing ICT for people with disabilities

For more information or to register please contact Sarah Betts, NCHA: [sarah.betts@ncha.org.uk](mailto:sarah.betts@ncha.org.uk) or Miriana Giraldi, EASPD: [Miriana.giraldi@easpd.eu](mailto:Miriana.giraldi@easpd.eu) (for information)

## Partnership in taking care of Children with Disabilities

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In June 2009, EASPD represented the service provider sector in a Conference in Sofia organized by the Council of Europe, DG of Social Cohesion, in conjunction with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The Conference brought together key stakeholders from Bulgaria, and, amongst others, Croatia, Macedonia, Norway and Iceland.

It confirmed the Bulgarian authority's commitment to a programme of deinstitutionalization of services for disabled children, and the creation of new preventive services.

These will be based on the principle of person centeredness, and will be inclusive and community based, as part of the creation of "healthy communities for all."

The plan is to create a network of support and development comprised of the major stakeholders in Bulgaria and external partners.

EASPD is committed to playing an active role in this exciting development. This would complement the extensive work EASPD is already doing in Bulgaria.

## European Social Services Conference on Quality and Performance in Social Services across Europe-Prague, 22-24 June 2009

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EASPD represented the service provider sector in this major annual opportunity for municipal authorities across Europe to meet and exchange ideas. We are exploring opportunities for new partnerships between NGOs and

municipal governments, moving away from a relationship which is over reliant on contractual distance, when in reality constructive working together is the only way forward.

# Project news



## Hearing Group meeting in the framework of “Quality Approaches for assuring the quality of training and service provision”

On 2 July 2009 a Hearing Group was held in the framework of a study on “Quality Approaches for assuring the quality of training and service provision” at the EASPD premises within the Brussels liaison office.

The study is part of the Cedefop’s work on Quality Assurance in Vocational and Educational Training (VET) and is carried out by LUCAS (Centre for research and consultancy in care, Catholic University of Leuven) in co-operation with EASPD and other European organisations. It aims at identifying the changing training needs in the social care sector.

This Hearing Group aimed at presenting the project and the latest findings to stakeholders and experts of the social

sector. More than 20 people, coming from various local and European organisations and institutions, attended this Hearing. It enabled the partnership to get their feedbacks on topics of major interest for the study, such as the societal and policy changes and the competencies that are needed to tackle these challenges and to adapt the training in the sector. They also provided the partners with interesting inputs with regard to some innovative VET good practices. In the end, they approved and validated the current results of the ongoing study and their views will be carefully taken into account and integrated in the follow-up of the project. (Victoria Leroy, EASPD)

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## PASS IT ON project – The summary Compilation will soon be available

In the framework of the PASS IT ON project, one of the main outcomes is a summary compilation comprising training materials from 4 previous EC-funded projects related to Life Long Learning and employment of persons with disabilities. The relevant content from the projects has been selected by the members of the Scientific Validation Committee and has

been put together in one consistent document.

The overall aim of this project is to provide professionals working in the field of service provision to people with disabilities (PWD), employers and local authorities with the right information, knowhow and expertise in order to provide PWD with the necessary lifelong learning possibilities to

access the open labor market and to retain their job.

To that end the summary compilation, which will soon be available in English on the EASPD labor-related website ([www.employmentforall.eu](http://www.employmentforall.eu)), is meant as a tool for service providers, managers and front line staff which will help them in assisting PWD in the development of labour related skills. It will also raise the awareness of local authorities and employers when being presented during different seminars in the partner countries.

Moreover, apart from the training material from the 4 projects, the summary compilation also contains inputs from some members of the Scientific Validation Committee and other relevant stakeholders. These contributions give a

good overview of the situation that PWD face with regard to employment in the open labour market.

The Eastern European partners will then carry out the translation of the compilation in their own language and they will, together with the Ministry for Social Affairs of Malta, publish them on their national portals. Furthermore, the summary compilation will be the starting point of discussion during the Seminars to be held in 2010 in Romania (March), Czech Republic (April), Bulgaria (June), Hungary (September) and Malta (November).  
[Victoria Leroy, EASPD]

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