

October 2009

Policy news



José Manuel Durao Barroso's Political guidelines for the next Commission: What place for Social Policy

On the 3rd of September last, before being reelected as President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso published his political manifesto for a second term in office. In his 'Political guidelines for the next Commission' he declared that 'values', the empowerment of European citizens, and the advancement of a 'people's Europe' should become the guiding principles of EU policy and decision making from now on. He called attention to what he believes has been the failure of the EU to make its motives clear to citizens in the past, and appealed for a new and increased dialogue between the two sides. The challenges currently facing Europe extend well beyond the economic sphere he said, and although economic recovery must be a priority, the far broader social, political, and humanitarian implications of the crisis need urgently to be addressed. He asserted that a comprehensive strategy centered on the long-term goals of social cohesion, justice and solidarity needs to be adopted in order to ensure that Europe becomes a place in which every citizen's rights are protected and enshrined. All individuals should be

enabled to realize their full potential in an environment free from discrimination and prejudice he said, and EU policy must become more clearly focused on people's needs and on the promotion of easier access to rights for all.

Calling attention to the EU's responsibility with regard to the vulnerable members of its society President Barroso highlighted the need for higher standards as well as modernization measures in the service sector. There is a need to boost development in the social and health care services as a whole he said, and investment in this sector is essential if it is to be enabled to meet the needs of Europe's increasingly ageing and dependent population. He suggested that the establishment of a quality framework would be one way of actively acknowledging the central role that these services play in our society, and reminded that investment in this area would also serve to create jobs and boost the economy as a whole. Indeed there is big growth potential in the "white jobs" sector (jobs in the health care and social service sectors), where "millions of new jobs" could potentially be created.

President Barroso also stated that the EU needs to develop clearer guidelines regarding the setting down of common rules for member states; that it must define more clearly the instances in which it is necessary for it to be specific in its directives, and the instances in which it should be possible for member states to operate more independently within the context of a more general EU framework.

For the full text of President Barroso's guidelines, please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/pdf/press_20090903_EN.pdf



8th European Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion: urgent actions are needed

On 15th-16th October, the 8th European Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion was held in Stockholm, organized by the Swedish Presidency of the EU.

Around 300 participants representing European institutions, national governments, NGOs, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders came together to discuss how to tackle poverty especially in times of recession. New challenges have to be faced in drawing up an effective active inclusion strategy. Bearing in mind that 78 million people live at risk of poverty and that the economic crisis is aggravating the situation further, the EU and the Member States urgently need to undertake concrete actions.

The need for a renewed social agenda, for a reinforced OMC as a driving force

for action and for new quantified indicators which will focus on wellbeing rather than GDP per capita, were priorities shared by speakers and rapporteurs; the aim being to conceive a post Lisbon Strategy which will actually reduce the poverty rate and create equal opportunities for all.

EASPD was also present at the conference and pointed out the clear link between poverty and disability as poverty can cause disability and disability causes poverty.

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US-President Barack Obama proclaims October 2009 as National Disability Employment Awareness Month

On 5th October, Barack Obama proclaimed October 2009 as National Disability Employment Awareness Month and announced that his Administration is taking several steps to ensure that there is fair and equal access to employment for all Americans, particularly the 54 million people with disabilities.

This year's theme of National Disability Employment Awareness Month is "Expectation + Opportunity = Full Participation". The Federal Government (the nation's largest employer) and its contractors will implement effective employment policies and practices that should increase opportunities and help workers with disabilities achieve their full potential. The US Department of Labour wants to ensure access to a full range of employment choices for people with disabilities in order to maximize their talents.

In early 2010, the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) will collaborate with other agencies to sponsor and organise a day-long federal government-wide job fair for people with disabilities. This action is a federal response to the historic underemployment of people with disabilities. In collaboration with other government agencies, public and private employers, and additional stakeholders, ODEP will facilitate the development and implementation of innovative policies and practices necessary to achieve a fully inclusive workplace. In order to identify and respond to a number of common myths held by employers about workers with disabilities the Department of Justice will release a special video which should help to overcome the prejudices.



The state of sign language in Flanders

We would like to add some information to last month's article on the status of sign languages in Europe.

Flanders in Belgium is another region which has granted official recognition to sign language – in this case to Flemish Sign Language, or VGT. Before this goal was achieved in 2006 a lengthy campaign had been underway in the region. In 2004 Ms. Helga Stevens, a deaf member of the Flemish Parliament, decided to place the recognition of VGT on her main political agenda, and during

her election campaign she worked to gather the support and recognition of other political parties for the cause. At the end of 2004, 7000 people signed a petition in favour of official recognition of Flemish Sign Language and Ms. Stevens and others moved to draft a proposal for a parliamentary vote on the issue to take place. This eventually occurred in April 2006, and resulted in the Flemish Parliament unanimously agreeing to confer official status upon VGT, and recognising it as the first

language of the Deaf Community of Flanders. The establishment of a governmental advisory committee was also agreed upon, half of whose members were to be drawn from the Deaf Community of Flanders, and a centre of research for VGT was set up.

Approximately 6,000 people use Flemish Sign Language as their first language, and it is estimated that about 10,000 people in total employ it on a regular basis. It too has been affected by Belgium's federalization process and linguistic divisions. In the 1970s the National Deaf Federation divided into a Flemish and a Wallonian division, and the cultural and linguistic activities of the

two have become increasingly separate ever since. This growing sense of separate identity has been reflected in the various name changes of VGT, which has at different times been known as both 'Belgian Sign Language' and 'Flemish-Belgian Sign Language', but is now referred to uniquely as Flemish Sign Language.

For more information see:

<http://www.fevlado.be/>

<http://www.fevlado.be/nieuws/media/erkenning%20vgt/Eng%20recognition%20VGT.pdf>

<http://www.eud.eu/Belgium-Fevlado-i-173.html>

EASPD news



Open to All: A month of events, a full month of social and cultural events on the topic of disability in the beautiful Northern Italian city of Turin.

EASPD was proud to participate in the "Beyond Paralympics" events organised by Fondazione CRT in the framework of Open to All. From 13th to 17th October a variety of workshops, seminars, presentations, sports, shows, exhibits on disability and inclusion took place. EASPD had the opportunity to meet with a variety of service providing organisations and to introduce our work as well as European legislation of relevance to social services and disability. Funding opportunities were also discussed and advice on networking and creating local, national

and international partnerships was shared.

For more information on this important initiative please see:

<http://www.fondazioneCRT.it/paralympics/>

Videos from the events can be seen on <http://www.fondazioneCRT.it/paralympics/category/videogallery/>

Project news



EASPD involved in new project on acquired brain injuries

Since the 1st October 2009, EASPD is involved in a new project, called ABI. ABI is an EU project, funded by the Leonardo Da Vinci programme of the European Commission and will last 25 months. The initial meeting took place in Ljubljana (Slovenia) at the 15th October. Acquired brain injuries (ABI) cause huge medico-social problems in the western countries. Many of the individuals, who have suffered a severe brain injury and who are living in the community today, would have likely not survived their injuries 25 years ago. They are facing, however, the often extensive and wide ranging consequences of ABI.

ABI is a lifelong injury, which has a huge impact on a persons' functioning across the lifespan. The long-term care these people need, poses new questions and problems, not well understood or treated. As, so far, no formal specialized training is available for long-term ABI service providers in the partner countries, this project will respond to the growing need for training at European, national and institutional level, in order to improve the quality of services for persons with an acquired brain injury.

European experts in the field of long-term rehabilitation & support for persons

with a brain injury and in the field of vocational education and training will develop a training programme in order to support care givers. This new training programme will offer an apprentice aspect, allowing staff to receive intensive, contextualized training enabling them to better serve persons with ABI. The programme will ensure transparency and comparability, guaranteeing its mutual recognition while not excluding specific national characteristics, and will enhance and promote equal standards in service providers training. The programme as well as all training materials (the European Manual on ABI training) will be available on CD-ROM in all partner languages to ensure the linguistic diversity and transferability. Apart from that, a trans-national synthesis transferability report will directly address the issue of further implementation and will provide an action plan for activities beyond the scope of the project.

This project will be the first step towards a common European pathway in long-term care and support for persons with ABI.



EU-project CARERS final conference: “Content materials to Raise Employability and Reinforce Skills of carers”

EU Stakeholders in the field of care, care provision, political decision makers, operative care providers, representatives of informal carers, and project stakeholders from Austria, France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, and Spain met at a roundtable for the CARERS final conference to share the final results of the project and further developments.

The discussion led to some major considerations:

- The need of development of the tools currently available
- The need of training programmes for the informal carers provided by highly qualified personnel with proved competencies in the sector of interest
- The need for a strengthened collaboration between the informal carers (i.e. volunteers, family members and others) and the professional carers, being aware that the excellent work provided by the former should not

replace others' competencies and responsibilities

- Cooperation between different experts of the social care sector must be promoted in order to improve and implement methods, tools and knowledge and share good or bad examples of practices in the social care sector.

The general objectives which the project has aimed to are to facilitate trainers of carers and family members themselves with access to structured and practical education and training resources that can help carers in their efforts of providing care in dependent persons. Issues like the concept of informal carer and a general shift from a paternalistic caring view to the provision of care and support in the respect of the individual rights are slowly getting more and more attention and need to be strongly focused to reach important improvements in the social care sector.