



European Region Newsletter No 4. 2007

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Once again we've come to the end of the year – a year that has been quite interesting and important for ICSW Europe. We had our successful regional Conference in Vilnius on equal opportunities with a great variety of excellent presentations and workshops, and highly interesting expert meetings in Jerusalem, Paris and Madrid. ICSW representatives have been active in the Social platform, the Council of Europe, the European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN) and ENSACT, the overarching European platform of universities, professionals and social services and social interest organizations in social welfare.

We have established a European ICSW legal body and different European members were active and creative in restructuring processes of the global constitution, leading to a more transparent and effective global ICSW. Contacts with the Black Sea Region are leading to membership of a number of new countries and to the establishment of a strong sub-region. In Berlin the German, Japanese and French delegations, meeting to discuss their involvement in ICSW, decided to continue and renew their investment in ICSW.

I think it is very important to see ICSW as a global and regional association that invests in the fight for social justice, in improving the quality of social services, in an international and national professional expertise in social policy and the interconnection between economic policies and social cohesion and protection. By investing time, budgets, energy and commitment we get a high return –

gaining more information and expertise, stronger relationships, in-depth knowledge and inspiration. ICSW's strength is in representing an independent third sector, not only in Europe but also in other regions of the world, where ICSW also supports citizenship and social justice.

The year 2008 is looking promising as well. The ICSW global conference in Tours next July can be a landmark in the history of ICSW and its sisters IFSW and IASSW. In Tours we hope to discuss the new programme for ICSW-Europe and to engage even more people and organizations in standing for and strengthening ICSW Europe.

I wish everybody an inspiring and productive 2008.

Hans van Ewijk
President ICSW Europe

The Lisbon Treaty

By Uta Stitz

On 18 October 2007, the leaders of the 27 EU member states agreed on a final text of the new EU Treaty at an informal summit in Lisbon. Heads of state and governments plan to sign this Treaty formally on 13 December 2007 in Lisbon; therefore the Treaty will get the name "Lisbon Treaty".

A long lasting reform process might come to its end for the time being. This process started in 2001 when a convent was constituted with the task to work on a "Constitution for Europe". Two negative referendums in France and in the

Netherlands in 2005 stopped this process and after a period of reflection the German EU-Presidency in the first half of 2007 tried to find a new agreement with all member states. An intergovernmental conference was installed in summer this year and came up with proposals which were agreed on in mid-October.

Which changes do await us in the social field? And what is the difference between the Lisbon Treaty and the Constitution?

The Lisbon Treaty is based on most of the reforms agreed on when negotiating the constitution. However, the word "constitution" is not used any longer. Instead, we go back to the traditional method of Treaty change amending both the EC and EU Treaties. Also, there is no reference to the symbols and the anthem of the EU any longer. And the full text of the Charter of Fundamental Rights was replaced by a short cross-reference. Despite this replacement, the Charter will have the same legal value, but it will not be legally binding in the United Kingdom. Poland also has requested an opt-out of the Charter, but it could be that the new Polish government steps back from this decision. At the request of France, a reference to "free and undistorted competition" as one of EU's goals was taken out of Article 3 of the EU Treaty arguing that competition was not an end in itself. That does not mean however that the European Commission will step back from her general competition policy competence.

The most important institutional innovations are:

- A permanent Council President, elected for two and a half years, will chair EU Summits instead of the existing six-month-rotation.
- A High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is going to replace the current EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and the external relations commissioner. However, due to national reservations, he or she will not work under the label of "Foreign Minister" as foreseen in the constitution.
- The double majority rule for Council decisions (55 % of member states and 65 % of the EU's population need to support a proposed EU legislation to pass by qualified majority) will come into force only in 2014 with an extra transition period until 2017 due to Polish opposition.
- The number of Commissioners will be reduced from 27 now to 15 by 2014.

- The number of Members of Parliament is reduced to a maximum of 750.
- National Parliaments are going to be strengthened. They have to be informed in a better way by the EU and they get the right to raise objections against draft EU-legislation.
- A so-called exit clause was introduced which will make it possible for members to leave the EU.
- The petition for a referendum is going to be introduced: One million citizens of the EU can ask the Council and the Parliament to work on a political issue.

Qualified majority voting will be extended to 40 policy areas, especially those relating to police cooperation, immigration and asylum, new political priorities such as energy solidarity and climate change. Also, new opt-in and opt-out provisions are made for the UK in new policy provisions like police and judicial cooperation.

The Lisbon Treaty should enter into force on the 1st of January 2009 ahead of the elections for the European Parliament in June 2009. Most of the member states will pass the new EU Treaty through their national parliaments. Some governments could come under pressure to hold public consultations. Ireland is the only country with a constitutional obligation to a referendum, but countries like the Netherlands, Denmark and the United Kingdom discuss this option, too.

Recent Developments in the Demographic Policy of the European Union

By Florian Bauckhage-Hoffer

For many years Europe has witnessed a demographic change that will impact many sectors of public policy. The demographic change is caused primarily by low birth rates and longer life expectancy in all European states. The effect of these trends is that the proportion of elder people in the population – especially those of 65 years and older – will further grow until 2020, and that the ratio between employed persons and pensioners may change to one retiree per employee. The predicted impact of these developments on the social systems in all member states of the European Union, from pension systems to

health and long term care, and the according challenges, have induced the European Commission in 2005 to start a long-term political process addressing the demographic change and its effects. The foremost aim of the Commission has been to develop strategies that counteract the causes of the demographic change and address the accompanying economic and social effects.

From 2005 until 2007, the Commission launched three documents and focused its policy in so far on improving the work-life-balance and increasing the proportion of older employees in the workforce as well as on strengthening the economic development of the EU and a sustainable increase of the birth rate in Europe. The mentioned documents were the Green Paper "Confronting demographic change: A new solidarity between the generations", COM/2005/0094 final, the Communication "The demographic future of Europe – From challenge to opportunity", COM/2006/0571 final, as a follow-up to the previously mentioned Green Paper and at last the Communication "Promoting solidarity between the generations", COM/2007/0244 final, where the Commission mentioned the European Alliance for Families that was initiated by the German EU-Presidency. The Commission emphasized its commitment to foster and facilitate the exchange of experience regarding family policy among the EU-Member States. For this, a consultation committee consisting of family policy experts sent by the national governments should be established. It shall consult the Commission in all questions of demographic change. Furthermore, the Commission intends to organize and initiate European, national, regional and local discussion forums and networks on family policy.

For the year of 2008, the Commission has announced a further Communication which will take its policy yet a step further. In this paper, the Commission will submit suggestions on how the challenges of an ageing society can be better addressed in other policy areas such as land use and regional planning, environment or access to new technologies. There shall be a particular focus on the framework that needs to be established in order to better support persons in need and their families. Furthermore, the potential role of the structural fund in this area shall be outlined. Whereas the Community has primarily addressed the needs of younger people in the past, it will focus its activities in

the coming year also on the needs of older people.

The German National Committee of the ICSW (GNC-ICSW) has so far commented on all Green Papers and Communications on this issue. In its commentary, the GNC-ICSW explained that the Commission was correct to assume that the necessary policy measures to address the challenges posed by the demographic change are subject to the exclusive competence of the respective member states of the EU. The GNC-ICSW further supports the Commission's statement to limit its role in addressing the challenges of the demographic change to the facilitation of a mutual exchange of best practice in the area of family policy among the member states. Therefore, the GNC-ICSW has been very supportive of the European Alliance of Families and is prepared to participate in a further development of the Alliance. The GNC-ICSW also pointed out that the political impetus of the Commission regarding the role of older people is too much focused on questions of economic growth and labour markets. The advancement and participation of older people entails much more than their remaining in the work force for a longer period of time. Older people who may look back to a life full of hard physical labour are particularly entitled to look forward to retirement. A mere prolongation of their working life does not do these people justice. On the other hand, even such people could likely be motivated to extend their working life if they are given the opportunity for active learning and further education even in later years of life. Their commitment and ability to learn is not to be questioned, in particular, experience shows that an increased life expectancy typically leads to an increase in the number of so-called "active years". The increase of the so-called "active years", namely those years that older people spend independently and without use of formal support services, will have to be considered by the Commission in its announced Communication. The Commission will not do justice to the needs of the older generation unless it recognizes older people generally as active people willing and able to fully participate in all parts of society.

Implementation of the Lisbon strategy in Lithuania

By Angele Cepenaite and Danute Migaliova

The Lithuanian National Committee of ICSW has looked at the Lisbon strategy and the consequences of its implementation in their own country. The ten years Lisbon strategy aims to prepare the ground for the transition to a competitive, dynamic, knowledge-based economy, modern European social model, preservation, protection and improvement of the quality of the environment and protection of human health. In the social sphere the strategy aims at bigger investment in human resources and fighting against social exclusion and poverty. The Committee pleads for a stronger involvement of local and national NGOs in the implementation of the policies.

Achievements and problems in Lithuania

The experience of strategy implementation in Lithuania in the last seven years shows that bigger investment in human resources today is connected with the task of fight against social exclusion and poverty. Many disabled people got an opportunity to increase their skills and competence by participating in projects financed by EU structural funds. There is a much bigger awareness in our society of the issues of the most vulnerable people: elderly, disabled and women. Lithuanian NGOs paid much attention to the popular forms of information dissemination - TV and posters in public places. Women's NGOs projects, financed by EU structural funds, were very successful in organizing training for many women and introducing to our social service network innovative services to help woman to combine their work career and family opportunities.

However, in the field of EU financed projects for elderly, it should be emphasized that until now the support was used mainly by elderly who live in the cities. There is still a huge need to fight against social exclusion and poverty of elderly in the countryside, due to cultural and economic reasons. It also has to be stated that the measures implemented in our country in the sphere of services for mentally disabled persons or persons with psychiatric disorders only minimally covered the demand (especially for elderly, who have psychiatric health disorders). The abovementioned social groups - mentally

disabled persons and persons with psychiatric disorders - in our country cannot make use of all the advantages guaranteed by the national social security system, because in many cases they are considered incapable.

Proposals

It is very important that the national authorities guarantee that effective social innovations, introduced through projects financed by EU structural funds will become pilots to improve our national social model, especially for the most vulnerable groups of the society - disabled, woman, and elderly.

In spite of achievements in modern European social services model development there are gaps in the field of community empowerment and cohesion. These are especially important for the new EU member states that have to create a system in which all actors participate in decision making process. However, community empowerment and cohesion are not prioritized in the Lisbon strategy. Very often NGOs are not equal partners in decision making processes. In some cases social services units created by NGOs could not survive, although they provided good quality social services, and municipalities are proposing them to change their form of administration - to become part of the municipal structure. It is important that community social sphere activities and self-help movements for disabled be recognized as important partnership models for community empowerment and cohesion.

In order to guarantee real community empowerment and cohesion, and with a view to post Lisbon - "sustainable and social" we propose to prioritize community empowerment and cohesion, especially stressing the use of the principle of subsidiarity in decision making process. Local community action and self help movements should be taken into consideration and be part of the decision making process. The NGOs have to become really important partners in implementing the Lisbon strategy, not only on project innovations level.

Angele Cepenaite is President of the Lithuanian National Committee of ICSW. Danute Migaliova is the Head of the Lithuanian social welfare association for persons with mental disability "Viltis" and Board member of "Inclusion Europe".

EAPN Developments

By Philippe Steck

Since 1990, EAPN has been an independent network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and groups involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the Member States of the European Union.

In October 2007 EAPN produced a report on the implementation of the strategic reports on social protection and social inclusion in the past years, called "Light Year: Hard Work!" in which it assessed the impact on poverty. In this report, EAPN have set out to evaluate progress made during the 'light year' of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), and in particular on the National Action Plans (NAPs) Inclusion in 2007, and to ask what has been the benefit for the fight against poverty and social exclusion?

The Commission has emphasized the benefits of the 'light year' process as enabling greater in-depth analysis and mutual learning between member states in the priority theme: child poverty. However, unless this exchange leads to better engagement and better policies which effectively impact on poverty, it could be seen by many as "hard work" (particularly for EAPN networks trying to engage in the process...) rather than "effective delivery". EAPN has asked its members to assess the benefits and risks of this approach and whether it has undermined the effectiveness of the process at national level, as well as assess progress on the delivery of the broader objectives and priorities of the Open Method of Coordination – to make significant steps towards the eradication of poverty and social exclusion by 2010.

In November 2007, the EAPN Social Inclusion Working Group, produced a report about "Poverty and Inequality in the EU", with the collaboration of Hugh Frazer

Some people imagine that in a rich region like the EU no one can be poor or if they are it must be the result of some personal failings or problems. However, this is not the case. The overall persistent high level of poverty in the EU suggests that poverty is primarily the consequence of the way society is organised and resources are allocated, whether these are financial or other resources such as access to housing, health and social services, education and other economic, social and cultural services. Indeed, the fact that there are very different

levels of poverty in different Member States demonstrates clearly that different approaches to allocating resources and opportunities leads to different outcomes. The least unequal societies in Europe tend to have the lowest levels of poverty. This is primarily because these Governments choose to give priority to ensuring adequate minimum income levels and ensuring good access to services, through the social protection system and through guaranteeing 15 minimum wage levels. They are usually the most effective at redistributing wealth through the tax and other systems. This means that the decisions over how to eradicate poverty in the end are political choices about the kind of society we want.

In terms of individuals, some key factors are seen as making a person more "at risk" of being in poverty such as:

- unemployment or having a poor quality (i.e. low paid or precarious) job as this limits access to a decent income and cuts people off from social networks;
 - low levels of education and skills because this limits people's ability to access decent jobs to develop themselves and participate fully in society;
 - the size and type of family i.e. large families and lone parent families tend to be at greater risk of poverty because they have higher costs, lower incomes and more difficulty in gaining well paid employment;
 - gender: women are generally at higher risk of poverty than men as they are less likely to be in paid employment, tend to have lower pensions, are more involved in unpaid caring responsibilities and when they are in work, are frequently paid less;
 - disability or ill-health because this limits ability to access employment and also leads to increased day to day costs;
 - being a member of minority ethnic groups such as the Roma and immigrants/undocumented migrants as they suffer particularly from discrimination and racism and thus have less chance to access employment, often are forced to live in worse physical environments and have poorer access to essential services;
 - living in a remote or very disadvantaged community where access to services is worse.
- All these factors create additional barriers and difficulties, but should be seen within the overall structural context of how a particular country

chooses to distribute wealth and tackle inequality.

For more information:

<http://www.eapn.org/code/en/hp.asp>

Council of Europe INGO Human rights, the position of women in society and sexual and reproductive rights

*By Marie-Noelle Cotet Plantavid
ICSW representative in the INGO Conference*

The Liaison Committee of International Non-Governmental Organisations enjoying participatory status with the Council of Europe decided to support Amnesty International in their campaign to defend women and their rights. Amnesty will campaign for women to have access to abortion in cases of rape and incest, or where a pregnancy jeopardizes a girl or woman's life or health. Most legislators and the vast majority of people in Europe agree with this stand. But some religious leaders have attacked Amnesty International because of its stand on abortion, accusing it of having 'disqualified' itself as a defender of human rights.

Amnesty International's decision is the culmination of the reflections and actions undertaken within its campaign against violence against women in the home and in conflict. The Agency advocates to protect women from further humiliation and violations of their reproductive rights. A woman in such a situation has to make a decision that would not only affect her health and life but also the life of her family and community. If she decides to continue a pregnancy resulting from rape, this is a courageous choice and she should be able to. But if she does not want to, her choice must be respected and nobody should deprive her of this freedom. Denial of the right of physical integrity and of the sexual and reproductive rights of individuals through religious doctrine that is enforced by law has devastating effects on people's health and freedom.

The INGO community stands in solidarity with the victims of abuse and violence. Amnesty International's principles are the same as those of the Council of Europe. Despite different backgrounds and widely different political and

religious beliefs we are united by the determination to work for a world where everyone enjoys human rights.

Social Platform Conference Get ready for the post- Lisbon era

By Thea Meinema

On 26 November the Social Platform organized its annual conference, which aimed to start the debate on the future of the Lisbon strategy: how should social NGOs prepare for the period after the ten-year Lisbon strategy process has ended? The conference aimed to involve the European Commission and other stakeholders in thinking about priorities, next steps and strategies to keep a sustainable and social Europe high on the agenda. It offered ample opportunity for the 100+ representatives of social NGOs to engage in debate with representatives of the European Commission – among whom were the Secretary General of the Commission, Catherine Day, the Commissioner for Financial Programming and Budget, Dalia Grybauskaitė, and the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Vladimir Spidla, but also the Portuguese Minister of Employment and Social Affairs and the DG of the Slovenian Ministry for Employment and Social Affairs. This wide representation reflects the message that the Social Platform and its members wished to convey, namely that social policy issues are not limited to the responsibility of one policy unit, but affect the whole of society and therefore should be the concern of the whole European Union, not just one Directorate General.

The main question raised was "in what kind of European Union do we all want to live in 2020?" 2010 will not be the end of our efforts to create a socially just and cohesive society. Wealth is not equally distributed in Europe, globalization increases pressure on a profit focus that has adverse effects on equal opportunities and solidarity. Migration will remain a challenge in Europe. Commissioner Spidla stated that there could be no immigration without integration and acknowledged that more policy coherence was needed in this area. Solidarity is asked for between generations and between men and women, but at the same time these appeals seem to be directed rather one-sidedly towards young people and towards women. The Social

Platform suggested that instead of focusing on uncertainties, problems and difficulties, thereby scaring people away from the Union, we should concentrate on sharing: sharing knowledge, sharing expertise, sharing wealth and sharing responsibility for a cohesive European society for all.

The other major debate of the conference focused on the role that financial priorities play in Europe's policymaking. The debate on social and demographic change is influenced primarily by economic and financial preoccupations. It was strongly felt that the objectives of social cohesion and social inclusion take second place to economic development and employment. This can also be seen in the wording of EU policy documents. But a truly balanced and cohesive society needs financial, economic and social sustainability. A dialogue is needed to establish synergies between policies and the impact of policies should not be measured only in terms of Gross Domestic Product. The President of the EU Economic Policy Committee, Joe Grice, agreed that indicators should include other aspects of social cohesion and wellbeing. Social NGOs themselves need to acquire more financial education and sophistication to be better equipped to understand and debate the financial choices and priorities. After all, the budget reform agenda of the Union reaches beyond 2020 too, as the Commissioner for Financial Programming and Budget reminded the audience.

This conference may be the start of a sustained debate on the future financial, economic and social sustainability of Europe – a debate in which social NGOs will claim an active part.

Global ICSW conference in France from 30 June-4 July 2008

The dynamics of social welfare in globalization: Lessons from the past, challenges for today and tomorrow

The 80th Anniversary of the International Council on Social Welfare will be held in Tours, France from the 30th of June to the 4th of July. Please reserve these dates in your agenda. The ICSW conference is a great opportunity to look back, to reflect on the current situation and to look forward to the future of social welfare.

Social welfare, in the first decades of ICSW, was restricted to social services and social work. Gradually, the domain was broadened to macro socio-economic issues, with an emphasis on social protection and fighting poverty. In the last decades social development and globalization became important issues within ICSW. Therefore, the ICSW Global Conference will focus on three domains of social welfare: social work, social protection and social development.

Social work nowadays refers to a broad field of social actions, social professions and social services. The change from welfare state to "workfare" state is challenging social work to move from providing activities and services to a more pro-active stance. Civil society and individual citizens are expected to be responsible for their own employability and looking for their own work. But in a society that rewards individualism the state needs to guarantee civil, human and social rights. The state still carries responsibility for guaranteeing equal opportunities, especially for the most vulnerable.

Social protection systems are under pressure all over the world because of the deficiencies in global regulation, high unemployment, "indecent" or unacceptable labour conditions, massive migrations from poor to rich countries, and migration from rural to urban areas. Demographic trends like the ageing of societies are threatening the financial sustainability of many social protection systems. New risks are emerging, such as dependence and the need for long term care, health crises or environmental issues. Social protection needs to be re-oriented for future sustainability.

Social development can be defined as the process of planned social change, designed to improve the welfare of the population as a whole, in conjunction with economic development and environmental protection. Some governments and international financial institutions focus on poverty reduction. This has led to the implementation of policies oriented towards a part of the society instead of the society as a whole. Most experts in social development advocate more comprehensive strategies aiming at community development, strengthening civil society and guaranteeing human and social rights.

The issues raised in the plenary sessions will be explored further in related symposiums, grouped into three main headings:

Social work: from providing activities to activating civil society and promoting human and social rights

Symposium 1: The growing role of civil society, NGOs, empowerment of citizens

Symposium 2: The role of social workers in the struggle against inequality and discrimination

Symposium 3: Individuals, families, communities: What are the targets for social work and social policies?

Social protection: under demographic and financial pressure, leading to workfare and challenging new risks

Symposium 4: The demographic and financial pressure: the ageing of societies, clashes/solidarity between generations, public policies for families

Symposium 5: Work and employment in a global world: decent work, migrations and workfare

Symposium 6: Challenging new risks: dependence, long term care, occurrence of crises in humanitarian, health and environmental fields

Social development: from policies targeted on poverty reduction to human development

Symposium 7: Poverty reduction and minimum income policies: results and limits

Symposium 8: Human development: a well-balanced sustainable development between economic, social and environmental dimensions; human rights, social policies and multiculturalism; illiteracy and basic education

Symposium 9: How to finance human development: taxes, private funds (NGOs, foundations, churches, commercial enterprises), partnership between private and public sectors, international assistance, co-development.

Call for papers – deadline 28 February 2008

Workshops will provide opportunity to examine in-depth the main and the secondary themes of the conference, as detailed in the symposium subjects. Detailed information will be published in the next weeks on the conference website <http://www.icsw2008.org> If you wish to present a paper, please send the following information to globalconference@cnas-icsw.org :

1/ the number of the workshop in which you wish to present your paper (less than 2000

characters) showing the connection with one of the themes of the conference.

2/ The language of your presentation: English or French.

3/ Your CV with full contact address, institutional affiliation, relevant publications and/or professional experience, nationality, age, gender; in one page maximum.

4/ A short abstract of your presentation (less than 2000 characters), or the text itself for a presentation that should not exceed 10 minutes; these documents should be either in French or in English.

For more information, please check the conference website or contact the organization committee of the 33rd ICSW Global Conference, Tours 2008, at globalconference@cnas-icsw.org.

Colophon

The Newsletter of ICSW European Region is published quarterly. Material may be freely reproduced or cited provided the source is acknowledged. Contributions on social welfare from all sectors of the international community are welcome.

Contributions and comments can be sent to:

ICSW Europe

Thea Meinema, Secretary General

Telephone: +31 30 7892148; Fax +31 30 892111

E-mail: t.meinema@movisie.nl

PO Box 19129

3501 DC Utrecht, the Netherlands

ICSW European Region:

President: Hans van Ewijk (the Netherlands)

Treasurer: Uta Stitz (Germany)

Members of Executive Committee: Pierre Alviset

(France), Eva Holmberg-Herrström (Sweden),

Yaakov Kop (Israel) and Romas Lazutka

(Lithuania)

Global Office:

International Council on Social Welfare

Telephone: +31 30 7892226; Fax +31 30 7892111

President: Solveig Askjem

Treasurer: Christian Rollet

Executive Director: Denys Correll

Website: www.icsw.org

E-mail: icsw@icsw.org