The October Global Cooperation Newsletter presents a panorama of recent European activities. Some lessons learned from the EU Social Protection Systems initiative, launched in 2014, are presented and analyzed in the article by Ronald Wiman. An update on activities of the AGE Platform in Europe is provided by Jean-Michel Hôte. We are also publishing some highlights from the most recent world forum convened by a new entity called Convergences and some activities of the alliance of European NGOs called SDG Watch Europe.

Please also note the announcement of the forthcoming November conference entitled “Building Social Europe” convened by European Social Platform in Portugal.

The content of the October Newsletter was prepared by ICSW Europe.

Sergei Zelenev, ICSW Executive Director and editor of the Newsletter

continued on page 2
Many of today’s wealthy countries, such as Finland, started building social protection systems already when they still were poor countries. When I was a child on a small farm in Finland in the 1950s we had two cows, thirty chickens, two pigs, a small area of forest and a couple of fields for potatoes and oats. At that time shortly after WW II Finland was an agricultural country with per capita GDP level similar to that of Namibia today. The modest, volatile incomes from milk and eggs sold to the cooperative were stabilized by bi-monthly cash flows from universal child grants and disability pensions – and remittances from America. This is a familiar combination of income sources in many lower income countries today, isn’t it?

It was understood by governments that social protection was a powerful tool to combat poverty, to keep rural areas and subsistence farms viable, to bridge gaps between population groups, to promote equality, to invest in people and, paradoxically, to improve their self-reliance. And, not least, to boost economic growth and enable the structural transformation of the economy. Social protection has been an underused tool for development. In fundamental economic thinking social protection was long labelled as an expense, or as a charitable handout hampering economic growth. At the same time, ample evidence has been accumulating, both from history and from more current evidence, that social protection has been – rather than an expense – a profitable investment in human and social capital and sustainable development.

Social protection jumped onto the global agenda in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008. Furthermore, the European Union started increasingly directing its development cooperation investments into social protection in partner countries. Apart from direct budget support, the EU Commission decided to support investments in the systematization of partner developing countries’ social protection schemes through technical assistance.

The European Union Commission, in partnership with the OECD Development Centre and the Finnish Government’s Institute for Health and Social Welfare (THL), launched in 2014 the EU Social Protection Systems (EU-SPS) programme to work for 4 years with ten developing countries. Last year GIZ, the German Development Cooperation Corporation, joined the initiative. The EU-Social Protection Systems initiative now supports 11 lower- and middle-income countries and works closely with many UN Agencies.

European Union, Finland, Germany and OECD support systematization of social protection
By Ronald Wiman, ICSW Europe President

EU Social Protection Systems Initiative

By Ronald Wiman, ICSW Europe President
Many of the partner countries have had various social protection projects. It must be realized that often the fragmentation has partly been caused by do-gooders from the donor community. These countries themselves had realized that their SP map was fragmented, coverage was low and unsystematic, targeting was poor and administration ineffective, and the system as a whole unsustainable. The focus of cooperation within EU-SPS has been on analytic research and assessment and capacity development on an ‘on-demand’ basis.

The EU-SPS initiative has worked with partners on such areas as reform of SP policies and action plans, extension of SP to the informal sector (SPIREWORK), African Social Protection leadership and transformation curriculum (TRANSFORM), university and TVET curriculum development for social work and social protection training, disability inclusion, etc. See the website for details www.thl.fi/eu-sps. The Programme will come to an end next April. One of the end products will be a compilation of lessons learned and guidance for future programming in the SP sector.

Ageing is a world-wide phenomenon, and the growing number of older persons in the structure of the population of all regions brings both opportunities and challenges to societies. In the Global Cooperation Newsletter of December 2016 we profiled the activities of AGE Platform Europe and the ICSW at the UN level in the field of ageing. Here we can provide some updates.

AGE Platform Europe was founded in July 2001 as an international non-profit organization. Its objectives is to give voice to and promote the interests of citizens aged 50+, mainly in the EU and the European Economic Space. To mark the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), on the 1st of October, AGE Platform, with partners active in the promotion of human rights, launched a 70-day awareness campaign against agism entitled "Ageing Equal". (blog: http://ageing-equal.org/).

At the global level AGE Platform has been keen to take part in the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA), a consultative intergovernmental forum set up by the UN General Assembly by its resolution 65/82, dated 21 December 2010, to strengthen the protection of the human rights of older people. The mission of the OEWGA is “to consider the existing international framework of the human rights of older persons and identify possible gaps and how best to address them, including by considering, as appropriate, the feasibility of further instruments and measures”. Its mandate was renewed by GA resolution 67/139 on 20 December 2012. Any UN Member
State can participate in an OEWG. They are also open to the participation of UN agencies, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and NGOs with consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In practical terms, the Working Group's activity could potentially lead to the creation of a new (and binding) legal instrument on the rights of older persons. Many participants in the discussions from both governments and NGOs hope that such a rights-based international convention could be similar to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted on 13 December 2006 by the UN GA (took effect on 3 May 2008), following eight sessions of an “ad hoc Committee” that met from 2002 to 2006.

Sessions are convened once a year at UN Headquarters in New York. The 9th Session took place from 23 to 26 July, 2018. Chaired by the Ambassador of Argentina to the UN and led by a Bureau of four other country representatives (Qatar, Austria, Slovenia and Namibia), the OEWG focused on specific areas, in accordance with the decision taken at its 8th session. In 2017, two issues were on the agenda:

a) equality and non-discrimination of older persons;
b) freedom from violence, abuse and neglect.

In 2018, the topics considered were: autonomy and independence; long-term care and palliative care.

As can be expected, Member States play a pre-eminent role in the discussions of these issues at the OEWGA.

At the same time more than 40 NGOs took part in the preliminary discussions on the day before the official opening of the meeting; some of them organized side events. Many international NGOs use the work of the OEWGA for advocacy and networking and for strengthening their collaboration. We could mention, for example, the involvement of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP) whose specific purpose is to strengthen the protection of the human rights of older people.

GAROP was established in 2011 as a network of over 200 members worldwide, thanks to the collaboration of nine organizations: the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse; the ILC Global Alliance; the IFA; the International Association of Homes and Services for the Ageing; the IAGG; Help Age International; Age Platform Europe; Age UK; the AARP. The alliance has been instrumental in articulating the concerns of its partners and putting forward the contrasting proposals for the discussion.

In order to move forward after a nine-year period of deliberations, the civil-society organizations express their disappointment with the lack of visible progress and expect member States to provide a clearer direction on how better to protect and promote the human rights of older people.

The two topics selected for the 10th Session of the OEWGA in 2019 are as follows: a) education, training and lifelong learning, and b) social protection and social security (including Social Protection Floors).

The last theme will, of course, be of central interest to ICSW. All the preparatory contributions of the 9th Session can be found at the following UN website: https://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/.
To know more about **Age Platform Europe** positions, please go to www.age-platform.eu: tag "Older People' Rights".
To know more about **GAROP**, go to http://www.rightsoforderpeople.org/.

### Convergences World Forum

The 11th **Convergences World Forum**, took place in Paris (France) on **September 3-4, 2018**. Launched in France in 2008, **Convergences** was conceived as a platform for thought in Europe that aims at building new convergences between public, private, and solidarity-based actors with a view to promoting the Sustainable Development Goals and the development of a world “Zero Exclusion, Zero Carbon, Zero Poverty.” Around 35 organizations from the private, public, social and academic sectors, as well as the media, came together at the nave of the Palais Brongniart to discuss five selected SDGs: No. 3: “Good Health and Well Being”, No. 4: " Quality Education", No. 8: “Decent Work and Economic Growth”, No. 11: “Sustainable Cities and Communities”, and No. 17: "Partnerships for the Goals". These specific goals were discussed from the three different perspectives mentioned above.

**Convergences** seeks to engage with various stakeholders in order to disseminate good practices and “co-construction” approaches aiming at creating high-impact and innovative partnerships. Its scope of interests is wide-ranging, embracing such issues as sustainable development, international development, solidarity-based and inclusive finance, corporate social responsibility (CSR), social and solidarity economy and new technologies for change. Every year, the Forum in Paris gathers more than 5,000 attendees. Seeking new solutions to fight poverty in all countries, **Convergences** has also initiated regional forums, such as in September 2016 in Myanmar (Burma) and in May 2018 in Tunisia. The forthcoming regional forums are scheduled in Colombia in 2018, then in the Philippines (2019).

Among its publications, one could mention the “**Social Entrepreneurship Barometer**” published in France and worldwide since 2011, with the presentation of best practices and available in French and English. The 5th edition (dated January 2017) focuses on the role of social entrepreneurship in the transition towards sustainable cities and territories.

Another publication issued in both languages since 2010 is called the **Microfinance Barometer**. The 9th edition (2018) presents key figures in this area and focuses on the topic of profitability in its multiple dimensions. Annual Reports are also issued in English and French.


(source: http://www.convergences.org/en/world-forum/)

SDG Watch Europe is an EU-level, cross-sectoral alliance of civil society organizations (CSOs) from the development, environment, social, human rights and other sectors. Its goal is to hold governments to account for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the UN in 2015. The alliance comprises around 100 members and observers.

SDG Watch Europe's work is coordinated along the lines of the four interlinked work strands discussed below. Some of the member organizations are especially involved in the facilitation of the activities of the Strands, such as the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), the Friends of the Earth Europe (FOEE), the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP), the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), Global Health Advocates (GHA), the CEE Web for Biodiversity, Solidar, etc. However, the work of the alliance goes beyond merely observation but includes also advocacy and campaigning. The most recent statement of the alliance dated 25 September 2018 called a “Manifesto for a sustainable Europe for its citizens” was also endorsed and signed by ICSW Europe.

The four key strands presented on the alliance website are as follows:

**Strand 1: Joint high-level policy and coordination for ambitious and integrated EU SDG implementation**

Involves examining the adequacy of existing EU strategies, policies and practices in light of the need to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. This includes the demand to carry out a “gap-analysis” of EU policy frameworks and processes, with a call for their revision or replacement where appropriate.

**Strand 2: Monitoring, accountability, and review of European SDG implementation across all sectors**

Closely follow and report on how the EU and its member States are dealing with the SDG implementation. The questions discussed: Do they have a strategy and a plan of implementation. Is there institutionalization of civil society engagement? Are they covering all the goals? At which level?

**Strand 3: Engaging CSOs and citizens at the local, national and EU levels**
The alliance is supposed to reach out to CSOs across Europe, both EU and non-EU member States to raise awareness, promote engagement and help build the capacity towards the implementation of the SDGs at all levels. The need to engage with people and get them involved is recognized. The importance of bottom-up action and linking with national platforms for building legitimacy is recognized.

**Strand 4: Reflection, innovation, experimenting and learning together**

Civil society in Europe might not be fully SDG-ready itself. The questions to be answered: Are our ways of working, cooperating and implementing sufficiently advanced, integrated and coherent? If we demand this from other actors, we need to take the lead, walk the talk and set the example to follow.

The ICSW joined the SDG Watch Europe Alliance two years ago. It is important to bring in the perspective of the comprehensive social policy that we endorse into the dialogue about sustainable development. The ICSW is also a full member of Social Platform, which is a coalition of European social-sector civil-society organizations. We participate in the work of SDG Watch Europe also through Social Platform.

More information on SDG WE and the 2018 campaign [https://www.sdgwatcheurope.org/our-work/](https://www.sdgwatcheurope.org/our-work/)

---

**Message by the President of Social Platform**

Dear friends,

I am delighted to present our first official conference mailing and to invite you to Social Platform’s “Building Social Europe” conference, which will take place on 29-30 November in Lisbon and which is being organized in cooperation with the government of Portugal.

The purpose of the conference is to mark the one-year anniversary since the Proclamation of the EU’s Pillar of Social Rights – an important milestone in shifting the compass of the EU towards being more social and inclusive.

We want to ensure that our conference is a platform not just for debate but also for translating the commitments in the European Pillar of Social Rights and in the Sustainable Development Goals into tangible political goals, given upcoming European elections and the institutional transitions in 2019.

We aim to welcome around 80 participants representing equally our membership at the European and the national levels. Besides our membership, we aim to engage EU and national decision-makers, social partners, civil-society organisations and academics.

The conference offers two panel debates with participation of high level speakers, three workshops, numerous study visits and meetings with the local projects in Portugal, “Made in Social Europe” exhibition of practices from across our membership, and also a chance to discover the charm and beautify of Lisbon. I very much hope many of you and other representatives of your organizations will come to Lisbon with us to what is promising to be a lively, stimulating conference!
Jana Hainsworth, President of Social Platform

Read about the conference and the programme: http://www.socialplatform.org/events/made-in-social-europe-flagship-event-by-social-platform/

The editor is thankful to Gabriela Siantová for her assistance with this issue of the Global Cooperation Newsletter.
The content of this Global Newsletter may be freely reproduced or cited provided the source is acknowledged. The views do not necessarily represent policies of ICSW.

Newsletter Editor:
Sergei Zelenev, Executive Director
E-mail: szelenev@icsw.org

Address:
ICSW, 5700 Arlington Ave.,
Bronx, New York, 10471 (US Office)

icsw@icsw.org
Website www.icsw.org

If you wish to cease receiving this newsletter, please click 'here' providing your name and email address