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A Message from the President

On the 16th of May I attended the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe (CoE) at the Finlandia Hall, in Helsinki. The President of Finland, Mr Sauli Niinisto, opened the event and reminded us all of the pan-European core values: Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law. These were, are, and will be the foundations of the European identity and societies. CoE membership covers 47 countries, together 830 million people. Unfortunately, these foundations seem to be questioned by some Member States and some new political movements. One reason might be that there are people and groups that feel that they have been “left behind”.

These core values are the corner stones of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the European Social Charter (ESC) both of which are CoE legal treaties. The ECHR guarantees civil and political rights and the ESC guarantees fundamental social and economic rights. They constitute also the reference point of EU legislation that applies in 28 countries of Europe. However, the big difference is that the CoE, unlike the EU, has also juridical mechanisms to enforce the human and social rights.

The European (Union) Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) is much narrower than the Social Charter. It is also only a recommendation. ICSW has been supporting the idea that EU Social Pillar should broaden its scope beyond the current, largely labor market focused-approach. However, many EU member states do not want deep EU level regulation in social affairs because the social policy systems are so different around the EU.

So, the European Pillar of Social Rights cannot be implemented by a legal approach. Therefore we need a political approach. This is where the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) such as ICSW are key players.

Next, there is one example:
In a few month’s time, on 16-17 September the EU’s NGO coalition, Social Platform (SP) will have its second Flagship “Social Europe” Conference to monitor the European Pillar of Social Rights in Helsinki, Finland.

It takes place during the Finnish EU Presidency. ICSW has been instrumental in facilitating the partnership between Social Platform and the Finnish Government. The result has been that the Social Europe conference takes place just before some high level EU meetings and some joint activities (CSO and government representatives) are planned. The Finnish partner in organizing this “Social Europe” Conference with SP is Finnish Federation for Social Sector and Health (SOSTE) that is the Finnish ICSW Europe member and host of the Finnish ICSW Committee.

Furthermore, we helped to build bridges between the Social Platform agenda and the main (social) theme of the Finnish Government: “Well-being economy – making the economy work for people”. Finland wants to concretize the social dimension of the EU but, at the same time, “respecting Member States’ competence in social policy”.

Comprehensive social policies – the core of ICSW – are the instruments to make human and social rights real for all people. We are needed in ‘putting people first’ and putting economy to its servant position, not the other way around, as it tends to be in many contexts.

Furthermore, climate change and other environmental concerns are part and parcel of policies based on social values. New risks are there but “leave no one behind”. ICSW is needed to promote the balance of social and economic considerations in the context of environmental constraints – while ensuring that the anchor, the ethical values, hold. A “sustainable future report” should have four main chapters: First ethical sustainability, then the social, then the environmental and last (but not insignificant) the economic. This order would certainly result in a different report than those that start with the economy.

On Friday the 14th of June we have our General Assembly in Chisinau, Moldova at the kind invitation of our Moldavian member, the Project Casa Mare and partners. On Thursday the 13th of June we will have
Seminar. There we will discuss our strategic orientation and build the base for the next work program until 2024.

Looking forward to meeting in Chisinau, Moldova, a member of the Council of Europe since 13 July 1995.

(Ronald Wiman, ICSW Europe President)

These days ICSW Europe is concentrating on preparations of important annual events – the General Assembly and a Strategic Seminar (Capacity Building Seminar). ICSW Europe members and Board members will gather in the Republic of Moldova in its capital city Chisinau. The General Assembly meeting will take place at the Free International University of Moldova (ULIM) (http://cci.ulim.md/about-ulim-515).

A time plan for different meetings is as follows:

**June 12 (Wednesday):** A substantive event

**June 13 (Thursday):** Strategic Seminar

**June 14 (Friday):** ICSW Europe General Assembly

**June 15 (Saturday):** Social program

The events will be organised in the cooperation with ICSW Europe member Project Casa Mare.

Future of Europe Publication Stimulates Debate on Social and Health Issues at EU Level

The European Union is faced with an exceptional year: in addition to the European Parliament elections and the start of a new Commission, Great Britain, one of the biggest member states, might leave the Union in near future. For Finland, this year is particularly interesting, as from July till the end of the year, Finland will be the President of the Union, only a few months after the Finnish Parliamentary Election and under the leadership of the new government.

SOSTE Finnish Federation for Social Affairs and Health and Finnish Anti-Poverty Network EAPN-Fin have published online publication **Future of Europe – Reforming the policies of the European Union**. The purpose of this collection of articles is to stimulate debate on social and health issues at EU level and activate advocacy activities.

Social and health NGOs wish to put the wellbeing economy in the centre of the EU discussion. The actions of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health during this year’s Presidency fall under the wellbeing economy theme. Social and health NGOs hope that the discussion on social Europe and the wellbeing economy will continue and grow.

"The wellbeing economy should be the starting point of the future strategy. It means that increase in individual resources and participation of people will be emphasised; fortifying the basic elements of wellbeing and good life. The civil society is a major player in the wellbeing economy, and the strengthening thereof should hold a key place in the strategy", says SOSTE’s Chief Economist Jussi Ahokas.

(source: https://www.soste.fi/uutinen/future-of-europe-publication-stimulate-debate-on-social-and-health-issues-at-eu-level/)

Read the online publication **Future of Europe**.
ICSW Sweden’s annual meeting, which was held on the 26th of March 2019 started with a presentation by Axel Ågren, who is a PhD student at Linköping University. Information about the event (in Swedish): http://www.icsw.se/2019/04/arsmote-2019/

In the presentation Ågren focused on his findings from studying how loneliness among older people is constructed in the Swedish news-press. In one study focus has been on how loneliness is described, given meaning, which societal contexts are related to loneliness and types of media contexts which writes about loneliness. The timeframe studied was 2013-2014.

Ågren has reached the following conclusions:

- Focus in the news articles were on elder care and the need for more resources and political change to improve this sector.
- Volunteer work was also addressed in Swedish newspapers. However, focus was mainly on the volunteer and the volunteer organisations, and not older people participating in the activities.
- Loneliness was primarily written about in local newspapers where the author was a local politician, person from the civil-society or journalists.
- There was, seemingly, taken-for-granted understandings of loneliness as a problem that needs to be solved. Thus, little space was used to elaborate what loneliness is, as focus was on how to reduce loneliness.

In another study by Ågren and Cedersund has analysed how responsibility to reduce loneliness is designated in the Swedish news-press. The study had a detailed focus on articles from October 2016.

The main findings where the following:

- The designation of responsibility, in Swedish newspapers, was mainly addressed within the contexts of politics and the welfare state, where politicians, municipalities and care-units both admitted to not doing enough and simultaneously emphasising on all efforts done to reduce loneliness.
- Several in-depth articles focused on how societal and evolutionary leads to loneliness. both these types of developments were considered to be beyond the control of older people. However, when the need to reduce loneliness was discussed, it was “we” in “society” who should perform activities to reduce loneliness. Thus, a “us” and “them” was created, where older people are the recipients of activities carried out by “us”.
- In one article senior-organisations efforts was addressed. In the article, an old woman described that she participated in actitives in order to “get out” and reduce her own loneliness. Thus, both the senior-organisation and the old woman were described actors with abilities to reduce loneliness among old people.

Axel Ågren has published a licentiate thesis and two articles published in international scientific journals.

Links:


Social Platform's General Assembly

At its annual General Assembly meeting on 4th April 2019, Social Platform members gathered to network and think collectively on the development of political priorities in Europe. Members also held a series of important votes, including the election of new member – the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and the appointment of its new Management Committee.

The Social Platform new Management Committee will lead the 49-member network during the 2019-2021 period:

**President** – Piotr Sadowski (Volonteuurope)
**Vice-President** – Catherine Naughton (European Disability Forum)
**Vice-President** – Maciej Kucharczyk (AGE Platform Europe)
**Treasurer** – Heather Roy (Eurodiaconia)
**Ordinary Member** – Michele LeVoy (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants)
**Ordinary Member** – Shannon Pfohman (Caritas Europa)
**Ordinary Member** – Leo Williams (European Anti-Poverty Network)

The elections marked the end of mandate for former President Jana Hainsworth (Eurochild) and former Treasurer Jorge Nuño Mayer (Caritas Europa), who oversaw the adoption of Social Platform’s 2018 accounts.

Director Kélig Puyet conveyed the General Assembly’s thanks to Ms Hainsworth, remarking on her perseverance being instrumental in advancing the EU’s social agenda and securing Social Platform’s place among high-profile EU influencers.


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General Survey concerning the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)

The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations has just published its annual General Survey on member States’ national law and practice concerning social protection floors.

The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations publishes annually an in-depth General Survey on member States’ national law and practice, on a subject chosen by the Governing Body. This year the General Survey focuses on social protection floors.

General surveys are established mainly on the basis of reports received from member States and information transmitted by employers’ and workers’ organizations. They allow the Committee of Experts to examine the impact of Conventions and Recommendations, to analyse the difficulties indicated by governments as impeding their application or their ratification, and to identify means of overcoming these obstacles.


The day before, a preparatory meeting was managed by **GAROP**, “the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older people”. GAROP has been established in 2011 as a network of over 200 members worldwide thanks to the collaboration of **nine international organizations**: The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse; ILC Global Alliance (International Longevity Centers); IFA (International Federation on Ageing); IAHSA (International Association of Homes and Services for the Ageing); IAGG (International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics); Help Age International; Age Platform Europe; AGE UK (member of AGE Platform Europe); AARP (initially, American Association of Retired Persons).

In its final statement, Age Platform Europe considers that a common feeling was shared by participants of “hope and frustration, progress and stalemate”, “something is moving but stronger political commitment is now urgent”.

From an EU point of view, Age Platform Europe underlines that the 28 EU Members remain divided. That division is related to the appropriateness of a specific Convention as a new “international binding instrument”. Some member states, as a prerequisite, are asking for clarification about the effectiveness of the existing Conventions. The question remains open on the adequacy of the **UNCRPD** to the situation of older persons when they become disabled. The UNCRPD has been ratified by the EU in 2011 while all EU Members were progressively doing so.

The “Special Rapporteur” of the UNCRPD has recently launched a consultation on the specific topic of the **rights of older persons with disabilities** in view of a report to be submitted to the UN GA in September 2019.

You will find useful materials such as preparatory documents of the 10th session, contribution to the 2019 consultation and analyses of AGE on: [https://www.age-platform.eu/](https://www.age-platform.eu/) and interesting inputs from many UN Member States and Civil Society Organizations on the website of the UN: [https://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/](https://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/) where is the access to the 10th session and to the previous ones. Some videos are also available.

*(Jean-Michel Hôte, ICSW Europe Vice-President)*
The Conference of INGOs is the representative body of the INGOs holding participatory status.

The sessions of the Conference of INGOs last a week and are held twice a year in Strasbourg.

This year’s Spring session of the Conference of INGOS was held on April 10th 2019 with the following agenda (abridged):


The second meeting of the Conference of INGOS took place in Strasbourg on April 12th 2019.

Gérard Schaefer (representative of ICSW Europe to the Council of Europe) took part in the Conference.

For the agenda of April 12th see: https://rm.coe.int/conf-ple-2019-oj2-en/168093c42a

The Autumn session is planned for October 28th-31st 2019.

(source: Council of Europe: https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/conference#{%2210850802%22:[0]})
Conceived as a flexible and highly targeted instrument of technical cooperation, SOCIEUX+ offers expert assistance to more than 150 countries for the design and improvement of equitable social and employment systems.

Since launching in 2013, SOCIEUX and its successor SOCIEUX+ have implemented 201 activities across 40 countries, for a total of 4,795 days of expertise sharing.

SOCIEUX+ is established and co-funded by the European Union through the European Commission Directorate for Development and Cooperation (EuropeAid) and the governments of France, Spain, and Belgium. It is implemented by four partners: Expertise France, the implementation partnership lead; the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP); Belgian International Cooperation on Social Protection (BELINCOSOC); and Enabel, the Belgium development agency.

From peers, to peers

SOCIEUX+ uses a peer-to-peer approach to share best practices, experiences, and knowledge. Drawing on expertise available in public or mandated institutions and social partners of EU member states, SOCIEUX+ connects practitioners and institutions by mobilising EU expertise for technical cooperation activities with peers outside the EU.

SOCIEUX+ also collaborates with specialised international agencies and academic institutions in joint actions, and promotes triangular cooperation by mobilising teams of public experts from both EU and partner countries. Private consultants may also complement expert mission teams in SOCIEUX+ actions.

On demand

Individual SOCIEUX+ actions support policies and measures in social protection, labour and employment that are aimed at alleviating poverty, reducing vulnerability, and providing income security and access to essential services and job opportunities. This support includes, but is not limited to, the following areas:

Social Protection:
- Social insurance, contributory pensions, health, accident, and unemployment protection.
- Social assistance, cash transfer programmes, income guarantee schemes, elderly benefits, child and disability grants, public works, social services.

Employment and Labour:
- Employment policy, security and services, vocational education and training and skills development.
- Labour policy and law, active labour markets, information systems, decent work, informal economy workers, working conditions, labour relations, labour standards, and social dialogue.
More about SOCIEUX+

The SOCIEUX+ website offers complete information about the facility and its activities all over the world, as well as the available opportunities for experts and institutions to join in.

(source: Begoña Rodríguez, SOCIEUX+)

It will be an opportunity for Social Platform members and actors from a wider European social movement to debate with national and EU level decision-makers.

Registration

Registration will remain open until the beginning of September. Please register as soon as possible or let Juris Lavrikovs (Communications & Campaigns Coordinator) know your intentions.

Provisional Conference Programme: https://www.socialplatform.org/what-we-do/flagship-conference/

Register here.

Promoting Human Relationships : Bridging the Future Joint World Conference on Social Work Education and Social Development

Rimini, Italy 28 June/1 July 2020

Key dates for SWSD 2020:

- Call for abstract: June 2019
- Scientific programme: September 2019
- Registration online: October 2019
- Hotel booking: October 2019
- Deadline for abstracts submission: December 2019
- Acceptance for abstracts: February 2020
- Early registration deadline: March 2020
- Late registration deadline: April 2020
- Final programme: May 2020
- SWESD conference: June 28th – July 1st, 2020

For scientific programme see:
http://www.swesd2020.org/Web/39/Scientific-
Useful Links

SOSTE Finnish Federation for Social Affairs and Health and Finnish Anti-Poverty Network EAPN-Fin online publication: https://www.soste.fi/future-of-europe/


AGE Platform Europe: https://www.age-platform.eu/


The Conference of INGOs: https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/conference#{%2210850802%22:[0]}


SOCIEUX+ www.socieux.eu

– Registration: https://form.jotformeu.com/82604005066347


Colophon

ICSW Europe registered office is located at the municipality of Utrecht (The Netherlands).

The name of the Association is: International Council on Social Welfare Europe, abbreviated to: ICSW Europe.

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