



# EASPD NEWSFLASH

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# ***EU NEWS***



## **Editorial: SIP, the morning after**

For months, social sector representatives, NGOs and activists waited for the launch of the Social Investment Package (SIP). At the end of February, the package was finally launched.

What is the political message we can distillate from it? At first, I was a bit intimidated by the amount of documents and papers included in the package: more than 400 pages, including 8 Staff Working Documents, for a total of 1 kg of paper. This leads us immediately to the most important weakness of the SIP. It is a package and not a pact. It is not binding and Member States are free to use it as a benchmark or gently ignore it. But Member States should not ignore it, for the simple reason that it is a rather good package. It illustrates how to use structural funds in a positive way, it gives a clearer orientation on child care and an impulse to further the development of an innovation agenda in the social sector focusing also on the fight against youth unemployment. Many topics relevant for our sector are included, with a correct use of words and concepts. The different documents describe how we should move forward and promote a social agenda for Europe. So what's the catch? What did we miss?

It is self evident that hard figures and tangible targets are missing and that there is room for improvement. Nevertheless, we have to admit that after five years of austerity, the Commission is changing its tone and approach when it comes to social issues. A social Europe is not framed as a cost anymore, but on the contrary, as an investment in the future. Active social policies targeting children, persons with disabilities the homeless and poor people are a guarantee for the future of our societies. Finally the message given by research proving that all well performing economies go hand in hand with well organised and performing social protection systems came across. The social sector and social investment are not part of the problem, but part of the solution.

But now... The morning after. What now? How can we build on this quite good evidence based set of documents and policy objectives? A more detailed analysis will be produced by many lobbyists, NGOs and researchers. Our proposal is to make the best out of it. The first objective should be to make the package more “pact-like”, in other words to use the existing European machinery to help Member States to implement the SIP in a not too narrow minded way.

What can we use? At this stage, Member States breach the EU treaties, especially referring to Article 9, the social clause<sup>1</sup>. Austerity damages the EU2020 strategy, as the goals set by this strategy are not achievable in the actual ‘cutting mode’. The SIP should become part of the reformed OMC (open method of coordination) instruments. So lots of work is coming for our policy officers and activists.

There is more. We’re 18 months before the end of Commissioner Andor’s mandate. With the SIP he added a remarkable package of policy objectives and a huge potential for social Europe to his legacy. Dear Commissioner, please prepare the ground for making the package more “pactish”... The needed evidence is there, there seems to be light at the end of the crisis tunnel, you have 18 months left and today might be the day to make a difference.

*Luk Zelderloo*

## **Social policy framed as an investment**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of February, the European Commission delivered the Social Investment Package for Growth and Cohesion (SIP), setting out a framework for policy reforms to improve the sustainability of social protection systems. The SIP gives guidance to Member States on more efficient and effective social policies in response to the significant challenges they currently face. These challenges include high levels of financial distress, increasing poverty and social exclusion, as well as record unemployment, especially among young people combined with the challenge of ageing societies and smaller working age populations, which test the sustainability and adequacy of national social protection systems.

The SIP focuses on ensuring that social protection systems respond to people's needs at critical moments throughout their lives, on simplifying and better targeting social policies in the Member States.

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<sup>1</sup>CONSOLIDATED VERSION OF THE TREATY ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, Article 9: In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health.

The **Communication on Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion** is accompanied by:

- A Recommendation on **'Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of 'disadvantage'** containing an integrated policy framework to improve children's opportunities;
- A Staff Working Document (SWD) containing evidence on **demographic and social trends and the role of social policies in responding to the social, economic and macro-economic challenges the EU is facing**;
- A SWD following up on the 2008 Commission Recommendation on **Active Inclusion for people excluded from the labour market**;
- The **third Biennial Report on Social Services of General Interest** to help public authorities and stakeholders understand and implement the revised EU rules on social services;
- A SWD on **Long Term Care**, presenting challenges and policy options;
- A SWD on **confronting homelessness**, explaining the situation of homelessness in the European Union and possible strategies to consider;
- A SWD on **Investing in Health**, containing strategies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of health systems in a context of tighter public healthcare budgets and discussing how health can contribute to increasing human capital and social inclusion; and
- A SWD outlining how the **European Social Fund (ESF)** will contribute to implementing the Social Investment Package.

Particularly relevant for our sector are the SWD on Long Term Care and the one with guidelines on the use of the ESF, as well as the Biennial Report on SSGI, which includes many of the messages developed in the last years by EASPD together with the Informal Network of Service Providers (INSSP). EASPD is working on a policy reaction to these documents which will be available in the following months. A **press release** on the overall communication has been released on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, giving a first analysis to the package.

All documents of the SIP can be found following this **link**.

## **Towards greater understanding of the special characteristics of Social Services of General Interest**

The Third Biennial Report on Social Services of General Interest (SSGI) is one of the documents of the Social Investment Package that we've read with particular interest. It is much slimmer than the previous issues also because it focuses specifically on clarifying the legal framework on SSGI, introducing the reform brought about by the so-called "Almunia package" which included new State Aid rules applicable to SSGI, and on the Commission's proposed Directives on Public Procurement and Concessions – which still need to be adopted.

These new instruments bring about a clear simplification of the rules applicable to funding of social services, and also explain the interplay between State Aid and Public Procurement. The basic premise of the report is that social services play a fundamental role in our societies and that "investment in high-quality, affordable and efficient social services is needed today more than ever",<sup>2</sup> and due consideration of the requirement for financial support by social services to operate is needed and doesn't necessarily produce a great risk of distortion of competition.<sup>3</sup>

The new rules propose a lighter regime for social services, and also allow the use of public procurement rules, for example, to pursue societal goals such as the promotion of employment and social inclusion for vulnerable groups, by extending the possibilities of using reserved public contracts for certain social economy actors.

The Guide mentions several times that the new rules reflect the requests and dialogue with key stakeholders such as EASPD who, together with the other partners of the "Informal Network of Social Service Providers" (now Social Services Europe) has engaged in an active dialogue with the European Commission to highlight the issues that social services face in the application of the legal framework on SSGI. Though we are still concerned by the idea that the third sector and non-profit social services should abide an internal market logic, we are very happy to see that a lot of our concerns have been taken on board and that the specificities of our sector have been given greater recognition in the new regime.

## **Negotiation on public procurement reform**

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<sup>2</sup> Third Biennial Report on Social Services of General Interest, SWD(2013) 40 final, page 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, page 18.

In December 2011, the Commission published a proposal for a Directive on public procurement reforming the Directive of 2006, with some positive news concerning the status of social services and the importance given to quality as a criterion for awarding contracts. After more than a year of negotiations, it is hoped that the Directive will be adopted in the first half of 2013. EASPD is working in collaboration with the Social Platform on the monitoring of the negotiations, to ensure that the adopted text reflects the needs of social services.

Currently, art. 17 of the proposal is under discussion. This article gives public authorities the possibility to restrict tendering procedures to enterprises that pursue the aim of social and professional integration of persons with disabilities and disadvantaged persons and is a very good example of how public procurement can be used to achieve social policy goals.

However, the Council proposed to enlarge the scope of the Commission's text with a new paragraph on the introduction of "reserved contracts" for organisations whose main aim is the integration of former employees of public authorities into the private sector.

We are extremely concerned about this proposal, and therefore we are calling for the deletion of this paragraph. We think that this is a very important issue that could have a direct impact on the work of service providers in Europe.

The reasons of our concerns are as following:

- The proposal from the Council does not pursue the original aim of reserved contracts, which is the social and professional integration of persons with disabilities and disadvantaged persons and may even create obstacles to the maintenance and development of social enterprises that help the most excluded and marginalised persons.
- Extending the use of reserved contracts to enterprises whose aim is the integration of former employees of public authorities can only happen when public entities are privatised. Therefore, this new paragraph suggested by the Council implicitly encourages the privatisation of public services and public entities.

Since we are now in the last steps of negotiations among the triologue Commission-Parliament-Council, EASPD joined forces with the Social Platform and other NGOs and addressed an open letter with the request to remove the Council's suggestions on art. 17. We hope that our work and our action will lead to a fair and helpful Directive.

## **Spring Council - another missed opportunity?**

*The stagnation of economic activity forecast for 2013 and the unacceptably high levels of unemployment emphasise how crucial it is to accelerate efforts to support growth as a matter of priority while pursuing growth-friendly fiscal consolidation, say the [Conclusions](#) of the EU Spring Council meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> March. The European Council discussed the economic and social situation and set the orientations for the economic policy of the Member States and the European Union in 2013. The discussion focused in particular on the European economic governance and the Annual Growth Survey (AGS) for 2013 and the new Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).*

More specifically the priorities of the AGS aim to ensure differentiated, growth-friendly fiscal consolidation; restore normal lending to the economy; promote growth and competitiveness; tackle unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis; modernise public administration. The biggest social challenge identified by the Council is unemployment, and particularly youth unemployment, that should be addressed through active employment, social and labour market policies. What is not clear is how these objectives would be reached in practice as concrete guidelines are not included in the document.

Once again, the Council missed the opportunity of facing the need for coordinated social policies, beyond employment, as suggested by the [letter](#) sent by the Social Platform, calling for a change in the focus of the AGS towards a coordination of macro-economic policies to support social policies. Once again, the Council doesn't show a concrete path for Member States to follow on how to tackle the social consequences of the crisis and on how to fight poverty. Once again, the agenda of the Council does not seem to be in line with that of the Commission, with no reference to the Social Investment Package, launched at the end of February, which identifies the European Semester as a key tool of implementation.

It was announced that over the coming months the Council will hold a series of thematic discussions on the Europe 2020 Strategy and the review of progress towards its headline targets. Hopefully, these discussions will tackle in a concrete and effective way the EU's and Member States' underperformance on the poverty, employment and education targets of the Strategy.

# PROJECT UPDATES

## Adapting services for persons with disabilities to new users



### WHY THIS PROJECT?

**The boundaries between services for people with intellectual disabilities and mental health problems are breaking down all over Europe.**

The project explores the following questions:

- Why is this phenomenon taking place?
- What are the implications for service providers for people with an intellectual disability and/or a mental health problem? For the entire community?
- What can different specialists learn from each other?
- How can we ensure good quality support when supporting mixed categories of needs?
- What will this kind of support look like?
- Should care staff be re-trained accordingly? If so, what are the key competencies needed?
- Do we need local strategies with all actors concerned for dealing with this mixed target group?
- Should we set up a partnership model with the health authorities?



Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 'Living independently and being included in the community' reaffirms the need for full inclusion and participation of all people in the community.

**Accessibility, choice and availability of services** are key words in the UNCRPD which call for action on the ground.

## **PARTNERSHIP**

The partnership of this two-year project, which started in August 2012, consists of 8 organisations in 7 countries. UNAPEI is the coordinating organisation and EASPD is one of the partners.

For more information, please have a look on EASPD's website under Projects-Running Projects or contact EASPD Project & Liaison Officer Katrijn Dekoninck: [Katrijn.Dekoninck@easpd.eu](mailto:Katrijn.Dekoninck@easpd.eu).



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## **INNOSERV – Innovative Social Services Platform**

EASPD is a partner in this exciting 7<sup>th</sup> Framework project which aims to create a social platform on innovative social services and to suggest input for future research activities in Europe. The Project surveys innovation in social services in the health, education and welfare sectors by relying on a combination of academic/policy input, civil society perspectives and empirical knowledge.

Moreover, the project implements a multi-level dialogue on trends of innovative social services to investigate, analyse and evaluate innovative practices in the provision of social services across Europe. To do this, 20 innovative practices in social services have been selected, visualised through short films and analysed through case studies. The films will be online on the [project website](#) in early April, and we'll be gathering feedback on them through a series of events. EASPD and Solidar will organise a workshop on 23<sup>rd</sup> April in Brussels.

Your opinion on innovation in social services is key for the further development of our work, so join us if you can or download and comment on the videos online!

For further information on the project or on the seminar, please contact Miriana Giraldi at [miriana.giraldi@easpd.eu](mailto:miriana.giraldi@easpd.eu).



## Pathways to Inclusion (P2i)

The P2i Network's final Conference in Budapest on 13-14th September 2012 reflected on the current situation of inclusive education wishing to be a catalyst for change.

Download the report on the Conference [here](#)

[Find out more on P2i project](#)

### Manifesto on Inclusive Learning

There is an increased awareness both of the educational potential and the citizen's rights dimension of inclusive education. There have been changes in educational, youth welfare and social laws to support learners with special educational needs to be educated in inclusive settings.

However, there are still fundamental barriers to inclusive education.

#### What should be done now?

EASPD and the P2i partners want to stress both the general importance of an inclusive lifelong learning approach and also to make specific recommendations to all key stakeholders.

Download the manifesto in English [here](#).

# ***EVENTS NOTIFICATION***

## **CHANGE OF DATE EASPD Conference**

**EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: RAISING AWARENESS & EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES 27-28 SEPTEMBER 2013, ISTANBUL**

Co-organized by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy of Turkey and EASPD; in close co-operation with the Turkish public employment agency ISKUR, the RACE consortium and the Dolunay Association. With the support of the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the International Labour Organization.

**The conference will take place on the 27 and the 28 of September 2013.**

The conference will tackle the main challenges preventing people with disabilities from enjoying fully their right to work: legislative frameworks, discriminative attitudes and lack of adequate support schemes.

We will look at the current situation and discuss future steps needed to facilitate access to the labour market for persons with disabilities. We will focus on the perspective of employees, looking at different approaches promoting employability, and on that of employers, by examining how they can be supported to successfully employ disabled people.

The topics will be discussed by multi-stakeholders panels composed of persons with disabilities, policy makers, representatives of employees and employers, authorities and support providers. During the conference the best employment agencies and employers will receive an official award.

### **Overall conference goals:**

By sharing challenges and best practices the conference aims to remove barriers and to boost the employment for persons with disabilities. We will:

- highlight the impact of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the right to Work and Employment (Art. 27)
- promote the exchange between employers and employees
- show models of good practice that have evidence based results
- identify the necessary steps to create a positive synergy between employers and employees
- launch the new EASPD's Declaration on Employment

**For further information please contact Ms Sabrina Ferraina:  
[sabrina.ferraina@easpd.eu](mailto:sabrina.ferraina@easpd.eu)**

## 2<sup>nd</sup> International SensAge Conference

AGEING PEOPLE WITH SENSORY DISABILITIES: QUALITY OF SERVICES AND THEIR IMPACT, ISTANBUL, TURKEY, JULY 2, 2013



On 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2013, the SensAge project will hold its second International event in Istanbul, Turkey. It will take place within the frame of the 8<sup>th</sup> international conference of ICEVI-Europe “Education and Rehabilitation of people with visual impairment”.

The Conference will focus on the sharing of knowledge, practice, and experiences and on the identification of issues, within the remit of the SensAge project and its [website](#) being the Reference Point in Europe for Ageing People with Sensory Disabilities.

### The main topics of discussion at this event will be:

- Ageing & Disability – What is Good Practice
- Impact of Existing Services
- Identification of Issues to be addressed
- Enabling Active Ageing

We are glad to invite you to take part in both the ICEVI-E and SensAge Conferences!

For more information and registration please visit the [SensAge page](#) or the EASPD website [here](#). Alternatively, you can contact Ms Lilia Plastunova: [plastunova@yandex.ru](mailto:plastunova@yandex.ru) or Stefana Cankova: [stefana.cankova@easpd.eu](mailto:stefana.cankova@easpd.eu).

## Courses for professionals and educators working with people with Special Educational Needs

The former partners in the W2ID project Atempo, FAIDD and the Rix Centre, organise two educational courses for professionals working with people with special educational needs (SEN):

- **Course A: “Inclusive Learning - New Opportunities through New Media”**
- **Course B: “Inclusive Learning using iPads and Tablets”**

The participants will learn how to use New Media, Klikin and iPads to support the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.

The courses will be delivered by an international team of professionals from Atempo (Graz, Austria), the RIX Centre (London, UK) and FAIDD (Helsinki, Finland).

They will take place on the following dates:

- Course A: 21<sup>st</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> October 2013 or 2<sup>nd</sup> - 06<sup>th</sup> December 2013
- Course B: 11<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2013

The course fee, travel and accommodation expenses can be covered by the EU Comenius and Grundtvig grants.

Interested?

Find out everything about the courses content, dates and registration procedure [here](#) or on [atempo website](#).

# ***NEWS IN BRIEF***

## **EASPD Summer school on quality of services June 2013**

REGISTRATION FOR THE SUMMER SCHOOL ON QUALITY OF SERVICES 24 -28 JUNE 2013. *QUALITY IS NOT A PLACE, BUT A JOURNEY*

Registrations for the EASPD Summer School on quality of services are still open: as a reminder the workshop is addressed to service providers, quality managers, trainers, quality assurance professionals, quality inspectors and R&D professionals and it will be structured around 4 main topics:

- System Perspective: local, regional, national and international (Local Participation Planning, Supported decision making, Peer counseling; Case management; person centred services; personalised budget; quality frameworks, standards)
- Individual Perspective: planning and leading independent lives, maximising Quality of Life (QoL) (Person centred planning/services/activities and support)
- Outcomes and continuous quality improvement (Quality management, subjective and objective QoL measures, peer interviewers, use of evaluation feedback, examples of good practice)
- Methodology and tools to assess "Quality of Social Services" (toolbox for Quality of Services and QoL, Peer interviewers, examples of good practice)

### PRACTICAL INFORMATION:

Find here the [registration form](#)

Find here the draft [programme](#)

The deadline for applications is 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013. The completed registration form has to be sent in attachment to Mrs. Helga Pintar: [helga.pintar@chanceb.at](mailto:helga.pintar@chanceb.at).

You will receive a confirmation within two weeks from sending the duly completed registration form.

## **Final symposium: VIPI and ATLEC projects**

VIPI (BASIC ICT SKILLS TRAINING FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES) AND ATLEC (ICT-BASED ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY LEARNING THROUGH A UNIFIED CURRICULUM) PROJECTS.

Two European lifelong learning projects (ViPi and ATLEC project) will come to an end and the final Symposium will present their outcomes within a wider framework of learning, employment and independent living for people with disabilities.

The two projects are complementary as VIPI focuses on the development of skills in ICT for (young) adults with disabilities and ATLEC on skills and competences in ICT based Assistive Technologies.

The Symposium has a twofold aim: raising awareness among gatekeepers and policy makers on the need for ICT and ICT\_AT training and on providing concrete curricula, methods and tools produced in the project. Highlighting needs and showing material to tackle those needs, is considered a valuable contribution to further equal opportunities and the participation of people with disabilities in learning and employment.

The participation of people with disabilities is incentivised by an accessible venue and by accessible presentations

Please consult [vipi-project website](#) & [atlec-project website](#) for more information on the projects and for programme updates.

Registration is now available [here](#).

## **Implementing the UN Convention**

### **THE ROLE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY CENTRES**

The role of Assistive Technology Centres in identifying appropriate solutions to enhance the independence as well as the rights of persons with disabilities is a reality. As it is known, the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** contains many references to accessibility, assistive technologies and universal design so that the complementarity of the operational field is considered a crucial factor to realise its aims and goals. It is now 2 years that **an international group of leading AT Centres**, facilitated by the G3ICT initiative and endorsed in Europe by AAATE, have been meeting to discuss on how to implement the Convention. The next session is scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2013, in Portugal, during the AAATE 2013 Conference.

The purpose of the session is to come to an exchange regarding issues of specific interest for AT Centres, such as:

- **Models and methodologies of service delivery;**
- **Measurement of impact;**
- **Governance;**
- **Training of staff members;**
- **Collaboration and networking with end user organisations and other stakeholders.**

The session will be chaired by Evert-Jan Hoogerwerf, *Head of the Projects Office of AIAS Bologna onlus and staff member of Emilia Romagna's Regional Centre for Assistive Technology. He is an active AAATE member (President elect) and part of the group of founding members of the G3ICT Global AT Centres Leadership Network.*

Contact: [hoogerwerf@ausilioteca.org](mailto:hoogerwerf@ausilioteca.org))

**We wish happy birthday to our President Franz Wolfmayr who turned 60 on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013!**

