



**Datar**



## COESIONET

EUROPEAN COHESION AND TERRITORIES RESEARCH NETWORK

### Minutes of the workshop « Services of general interest and cohesion » 27 June 2011

**10h00 – 12h30 Services of general interest and economic, social and territorial cohesion: civil society actors – trade unions, user representatives**

#### **Opening and introduction by Pierre Bauby**

After discussing during the previous workshops with a range of institutional actors and researchers the relationship between services of general interest (SGI) and EU cohesion policy, this session is devoted to actors that one listens less often but which are essentials: on the one hand, representatives of the workers directly involved in the provision of public services and, on the other hand, user representatives, those for which public services are designed, defined and organised.

#### **I. Anne-Marie Perret, President, European Federation of Public Services Unions (EPSU)**

##### **1. EPSU: sectoral competences, SGI, cohesion**

EPSU is the largest of the 12 federations of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). It is recognised as social partner at European level and gathers about 250 trade unions and 8 millions members coming from 47 countries (the geographical area of the Council of Europe). More than 68% of EPSU members are women.

Due to the large number of represented countries, EPSU works on the subjects concerning public services and cohesion and the articulation with European integration issues are more complex and difficult.

The organisation has several sectoral and horizontal competences but it is mainly within the sectoral committees (health and social services, regional and local public administration, national and European public administrations – since 2010, public enterprises – gas and electricity, waste) that the questions of economic, social and territorial cohesion are treated.

EPSU is involved in the European decision making process with all EU institutions through, dialogue and concertation, positions and proposals on European Commissions initiatives (green papers, white papers, communications, etc.), often in common with European employers representatives (e.g. health agreements).



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We are particularly concerned with the impact of European decisions on the national, regional and local context (e.g. Directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare), the subsidiarity principle and the respect of the national diversities (e.g. Directive concerning certain aspects of the organisation of the working time), the evaluation of the European policies and initiatives (e.g. public-private partnership).

One of our major actual demands concerns the crisis, fiscal and budgetary problems and measures (e.g. EPSU proposal of 2010 for a Tax Justice Charter), public employment cuts and the reduction of wages within the public sector, "the weak, the minimum State", the flexicurity (rather flexibility than security).

## **2. EPSU: horizontal competences, SGI, cohesion**

EPSU works on three fields of horizontal competence that are: equality between men and women (e.g. representativeness, wages), collective bargaining and global problems. Different action tools are used: training (gender equality), studies (e.g. country reports on collective bargaining), surveys (e.g. impact of the crisis on woman workers), annual conference, data bank, etc.

EPSU is also actively involved in the European debates with critical positions and/or proposals concerning the externalisation-privatisation of public services, the liberalisation of network industries, state aid regime, public services concessions and public procurement, the regime in house, the social clause (including in the international agreements), universal access to public services, a European horizontal framework on services of general interest and the creation of a European observatory on public services.

## **3. General discussions**

- The question of time devoted to the coordination of different national members in the detriment of the works on substantive issues.
- The role of the committee of European enterprises in the field of public services.
- Difficulties in concluding agreements on the ground of national and European disparities.

## **II. Michel Mercadié, General Secretary EAPN France (European anti-poverty network), Member of the Management Committee of the European Social Platform**

European Social Platform is a representative association of European civil society gathering 45 European networks in all social fields. Each network is present in at least 25 Member States of the EU.

### **1. A semantic question**

The common European vocabulary may have different representations in national circumstance and in the different European languages. Also, it may cover the worst and the best - Aesop language: for example the concepts of "mainstreaming" or "modernisation", or the principle of "free and undistorted competition" while, in fact, the competition is free but distorted; the concept of "competitiveness" but hiding "competition" between EU Member States, between public services, between workers, etc.; "fight against exclusion", "cohesion", "harmonious society" while there are 116 millions excluded persons in the EU and the development disparities are important, etc.

To success the inclusion of the poorest proclamations are not enough. The EU 2020 Strategy is ambitious but it also needs appropriate budgetary resources in order to attain the objective of 20% poverty reduction.



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As for the European concept policy and legal framework on economic, social and territorial cohesion, our view is rather critical. Within the primary law (articles 158-159 TFEU) it is the economic cohesion that has the main role; it is claimed that social cohesion would be the consequence of economic development based on the market and competition while the reality is different. As for the territorial cohesion there are mainly the weak territories that are taken into account in the primary law because they are fragile in relation to the internal market. Or the general objective of strengthening cohesion is still far and European institution seems rather considering what is happening out of the Europe than within the EU.

The distinction between non economic services of general interest (NESGI) and services of general economic interest (SGEI) is also very important as the legal regime is different. However, there is a continuous insecurity for NESGI and we are now concentrating our efforts on this issue.

## **2. *Proposals for economic, social and territorial cohesion***

We are claiming the application of the social horizontal clause (article 9 TFEU), *a posteriori* evaluations concerning its respect and the creation of national registers of services of general interest that EU Member States consider as being within or out of the market and more generally of the Lisbon Treaty norms (articles 5, 11 and 14 TFEU, Protocol 26 on services of general interest).

For us, SSGI are at the heart of social cohesion and our proposals are actually concerning the revision of the public procurement directive and the budgetary framework for the period 2014-2020 in order to secure social strategies, programmes and actions, and particularly the European Social Fund. Our studies show that social expenditures are not a cost but an investment. Also, the development of the social economy and of public-public partnership would carry jobs that cannot be relocated and responds to citizens essential needs.

## **3. *General discussions***

- The impact of the actions of European social and civil society partners, what critical review?
- The territorial dimension: the economic and social link a way to prevent social decline?
- The integration of the European case law concerning the border between SGEI and NESGI in the strategies of social and civil society actors.
- What role of the European Parliament in advancing cohesion, what tools of social and civil society actors to build European dialogue and consensus, conceptual cohesion, initiate evaluations.
- What place for SGI in the European social dialogue in the perspective of the development of the externalisation of public services?
- What tools and places in a post-welfare state to question the work and modes of production changes?
- The role and tools of lobbying of the social and civil society actors.



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