



NEWLY COMPOSED EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND EUROPEAN COMMISSION: THE IMPACT ON SOCIAL SERVICES

Analysis paper

Key Findings

- The European Commission and the European Parliament have a **direct impact on Social Service Providers**
- The European Commission and the European Parliament **have been renewed**
- **Social services achieved a high profile** within the Commission and the Parliament
- **Important role to play for EPR** and other sectoral organisations
- The **Directorates General** play a critical role in the drafting of the decisions of the Commission
- The European Parliament is especially driven by the work achieved by the **Standing Committees** and more precisely, the different **rapporteurs**
- **Intergroups** can through their action put new topics in the Parliament's Agenda and raise awareness on various areas

1. Introduction

As the European Commission and the European Parliament have been renewed, it is of great importance to understand how these changes have affected the functioning of these institutions and the sector of social services. The main purpose of this paper is therefore to provide the reader with an insight on the internal functioning of the European Commission and the European Parliament following their renewal and to highlight the importance of the social services sector within the Parliament and the Commission through specific institutional structures.

2. The European Commission

2.1. General Functioning of the Commission

As the executive body of the European Union, the European Commission is the main driving force of the daily business of the EU. From an internal perspective, the institution is led by the College of Commissioners which represents the political level. Each Commissioner is assisted by a cabinet directed by a “chef de Cabinet”. The latter plays an important role as he/she prepares the commissioner’s response to all proposals. The Commissioners have under their authority a specific Directorate General (DG) related to their Portfolio. Each DG functions according to a hierarchical structure. At the base, there is the Unit commanded by a Head of Unit. Each Unit is the subdivision of a Directorate managed by a Director and several Directorates form together a DG headed up by a Director-General. The coordination between DGs is facilitated by the Secretariat-General. A Strategic Planning and Programming Unit assists the Commission in determining its priorities and assigning its resources. It notably lays the foundation of the Commission’s general policy debate that forms the basis of the “Commission Legislative and Work Program” (CLWP) which sets out the main political priorities and legislative initiatives of the Commission for the year to come.

In order to take decisions, the College of Commissioners bases its opinion on the information gathered by DGs. More specifically, the DG responsible (the lead DG) for the policy area in question coordinates the preparation of legislative proposals. It prepares the documents, consults with other DGs and services through an “interservice consultation”, and puts forward the draft for adoption. It is also its role to ensure that the contribution from outside parties is taken into consideration by the Commission. All consultations are usually realised by means of Green and White Papers, departmental working documents, and notices of consultation¹. Aside from the consultation process, all major legislative and policy initiatives mentioned in CLWP must complete an Impact Assessment² to evaluate the potential effects of new legislation in social, economic and environmental areas.

¹Most consultations are displayed on the following website „Your voice in europe“:
http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/consultations/index_en.htm

² The IAB opinions are published on the following website: http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/index_en.htm

2.2. The new Commissioners

After having won backing from EU heads of state and government and the European Parliament for a second five-year mandate to steer the European Commission, President Barroso designated a new team of Commissioners and created 3 new portfolios.

Among the various portfolios displayed in the team, four are of direct interest to the social services sector:

- The newly created Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship portfolio is related to the DG Justice and its action primarily focuses on:
 - Promoting and enforcing the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
 - Enhancing citizenship by promoting and protecting citizens' rights
 - Supporting non-discrimination by notably enhancing the integration of disabled people
 - Developing the European area of justice through common rules and by building on the legal traditions of the EU Member States
 - Ensuring legal certainty and a level-playing field for citizens, consumers and businesses in enforcing their rights within, and across, national borders
 - Strengthening the single market for cross-border transactions through a better harmonisation of consumer, contract and marketing laws

Concrete actions relevant to SSGI:

- The new European Disability Strategy 2010-2020
 - The new strategy to ensure that the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is effectively implemented.
- The Internal Market and Services portfolio is connected to the DG Internal Market and Services and notably aims at:
 - Bringing forward proposals for legislation aiming to remove barriers within the Internal Market
 - Ensuring that the opportunities offered by the Single Market are fully exploited.

- Controlling the full and timely respect of Community law
- Informing citizens and businesses about the rights they have within the Single Market and about the benefits available to them

Concrete actions relevant to SSGI:

- Will present in 2011 proposals for the modernization of public procurement rules
 - Review of Professional Qualifications legislation programmed for 2012
- The Portfolio of employment, social affairs and inclusion is linked to the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. It supports:
 - Creation of jobs at the EU level through the European Employment Strategy and the European Social Fund
 - Free movement of workers and coordination of social security schemes
 - Better working conditions through common minimum standards in the workplace
 - Social inclusion

Concrete actions relevant to SSGI:

- Europe 2020 flagships on "New Skills and Jobs" and "a Platform against Poverty"
 - Communication on "Developing labour market intelligence and skills governance: towards an EU skills audit" to be published in 2012
- The portfolio on Health and Consumer Policy is connected to DG SANCO. Its main goals are to:
 - Empower consumers
 - Protect and improve human health
 - Ensure that food is safe and wholesome

Concrete actions relevant to SSGI:

- Communication on Consumer empowerment to be published in 2012

Key Contacts

- Commissioner for justice, fundamental rights and citizenship: Viviane Reding
 - Head of Cabinet: Martin Selmayr
 - Spoke person : Matthew Newman - Matthew.Newman@ec.europa.eu
 - Director General for Justice : Françoise Le Bail
 - Useful link: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/index_en.htm
- Commissioner in charge of Internal Market and Services: Michel Barnier - Michel.Barnier@ec.europa.eu
 - Head of Cabinet: Mr. Guersent
 - Director General Internal Market and Services: Jonathan Faull
 - Useful link: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/internal_market/index_en.htm
- Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion : László Andor - CAB-ANDOR-CONTACT@ec.europa.eu
 - Head of Cabinet: Anabela Gago
 - Director General Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities: Robert Verrue
 - Useful link: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/home.jsp>
- Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy: John Dalli - cab-dalli-webpage@ec.europa.eu
 - Head of Cabinet: Frank ZAMMIT
 - Director General Health and Consumers: Paola Testori Coggi
 - Useful link: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/index_en.htm

2.3. The Unit for the Integration of People with Disabilities

The Unit for the Integration of People with Disabilities is part of the Directorate for “Equality between Men and Women, Action against Discrimination and Civil Society”. It is important to note that **as of 1st of January 2011, the Directorate in question and the corresponding units and staff will be transferred from DG Employment to DG Justice.**

Among its objectives, the Disability Unit aims at ensuring that the disability perspective is taken into consideration in the internal affairs of the European Commission, and the formulation of relevant Community’s legislation, programmes and legislation. In that respect, the unit is particularly involved in:

- The new European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 which aims to empower people with disabilities so that they can enjoy their rights and participate fully in society
- The implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

2.4. The High Level Group on Disability

The Unit for the Integration of People with Disabilities works closely with the High Level Group on Disability. The latter is a body composed of representatives from all EU Member States with competence on disability issues (mostly from social affairs or employment ministries). The European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) is also titular of one seat as an observer member on behalf of civil society. The group is chaired by the European Commission and meets two to three times a year. Its main goal is to guide the Commission on methods for reporting on the EU-wide situation in connection to disability and to screen the latest policies and priorities of EU governments regarding persons with disabilities. In that context, the group notably works on:

- Monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Providing a forum for the exchange of data and policy coordination between Member States in the framework of the new European Disability Strategy 2010-2020

Key Contacts

- Unit for the Integration of People with Disabilities :
 - Head of Unit: Johan Ten Geuzendam
 - Deputy Head of Unit: Inmaculada Placencia Porrero - Inmaculada.Placencia-Porrero@cec.eu.int
 - Useful link: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=429>
- High level Group on Disability:
 - Useful link: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/soc-prot/disable/hlg_en.htm

3. The European Parliament

3.1. General functioning of the European Parliament

Following the entrance into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Parliament (EP) has considerably extended its legislative remit and has therefore increased its hold on the decision making process of the EU. The EP is the directly-elected parliamentary institution of the EU. Together with the Council of the European Union, it forms the bicameral legislative branch of the EU.

A total number of 736 MEPs were elected in June 2009 for a five-year term. The assembly is mainly dominated by the right with the centre-right European People's Party (EPP) that strengthened its position as first political group of the Assembly with 264 seats.

The Presidency of the EU Parliament is held by Mr. Jerzy Buzek, MEP of the EPP, and former Prime Minister of Poland. He was elected for a two-and-a-half year term. His main goal is to represent the EP in its relation with other EU institutions and vis-à-vis the outside world. He also ensures that the Rules of Procedure are respected and that all the activities of the institution and its constituent bodies are properly executed.

In order to take decisions, the Parliament works through a system of specialised committees. There are currently 20 standing committees specialised in particular fields. Each committee is composed of a various number of MEPs mirroring the political trends in the Assembly as a whole. The role played by the committees is of tremendous importance in the decision making process of the institution as it will guide the work for plenary sessions. In that respect, the rapporteur is the key person. The rapporteur is elected by fellow MEPs in the event that one of Parliament's committees is called to draft a report on a legislative proposal, another text from the European Commission, or a specific topic. In that regard, he/she will analyse the project, consult with specialists in the particular sector and with those who could be affected, discuss with other members within the committee and recommend the political "line" to be followed. The Committees can also draw up own-initiative reports in which they make suggestions on actions to be taken in a specific field by EU Member States or the Commission. Aside from the

Standing Committees, the EP can also set up special committees and committees of inquiry to deal with specific topic.

The Members of the Parliament sit in political groups in accordance with their political affiliation. MEPs that do not belong to one group are known as non-attached Members. The European Parliament encompasses seven political groups. Each report issued by the Committees is examined by these groups prior to every vote in plenary session so that they can coordinate and formulate their positions.

It is also possible for MEPs to unite on single issue across party lines by means of "intergroups". Hence, they can work on subjects and debate without considerations of political parties or committee competence. They usually invite high level speakers, produce policy documents, prepare Parliamentary reports and resolutions and organise events. There are currently 20 registered cross party intergroups but that number can jump to 40 if we also consider those that are not registered.

3.2. The Standing Committee on employment and Social Affairs

Among the numerous Committees existing in the EP, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) is of direct relevance to the social services sector. It is indeed specifically responsible for:

- Employment policy and all aspects of social policy such as working conditions, social security and social protection
- The European Social Fund
- Vocational training policy, including professional qualifications;
- The free movement of workers and pensioners
- All forms of discrimination at the workplace and in the labour market except those based on gender
- Social dialogue

Key Contacts

- The Standing Committee on employment and Social Affairs:
 - Chair: Pervenche Berès (Fr, S&D).
 - Contact: IP-EMPL@europarl.europa.eu
 - Useful link: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/home.do?language=EN>

3.3. Intergroups

EPR managed to secure one seat in three intergroups active in our field:

- **The Public Services Intergroup** was recently set up in January 2010. Composed of 50 MEPs from six political groups, it aims at working on the main issues affecting public services, which notably includes:
 - Public procurement
 - The Monti-Kroes package on State aid
 - Concessions and public-private partnerships (PPPs)
 - The implementation of the Services directive. In that respect the group mainly deals with Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)
- **The Disability Intergroup** was established in 1980. Its main aim is to promote the rights of disabled people in the framework of the action of the EP as well as in the national context. It includes MEPs from all EU Member States.
- **The Intergroup on Social Economy** focuses on social economy and third sector issues. In that context the theme of SGIs and SSGIs has been (and still is) core to the group's activities. 43 MEPs are currently members.

Key Contacts

- The Public Services Intergroup:
 - President: Françoise Castex (Fr, S&D)
 - Vice-President: Elisabeth Morin-Chartier (Fr, EPP).
- The Disability Intergroup
 - President: Adam Kosa (Hu. EPP).
- The Intergroup on Social Economy
 - President: Mario Mauro (It, EPP) and Marc Tarabella (Bel, S&D)