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# “Mind the Gap”

Building co-operation between  
the Public and Private Social Sectors  
at a European level



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"Mind the Gap"

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The European Social Network is the professional, independent forum of  
public sector directors of social services in Europe

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Edited by  
John Halloran, European Social Network

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# Preface

Over the last ten years the social dimension of the European Union has become increasingly recognised as having at least as much importance for citizens and their governments as the economic/market dimension. The Amsterdam Treaty introduced the new employment title and launched new initiatives notably on social exclusion and anti discrimination. The commitment of the European Union to combating poverty and promoting inclusion was further strengthened by the Member States at the Lisbon Summit with the agreement to targeting and social policy co-ordination.

The directors of social services who manage welfare, community health, housing and social assistance in thousands of local authorities across Europe support these initiatives and wish to contribute their experience and expertise to making social Europe a reality. To date, however, there has not been a framework for consultation such as that for the Social Partners and the Platform of NGOs.

The European Social Network (ESN) therefore proposed that the European Commission fund an initiative by directors to address this 'gap' between the mixed economy reality of social services in the member states with its pivotal role for the public sector and the current pattern of consultation at a European level in which it has no role.

This project was constructed in 3 parts; research, expert meeting and dissemination and further action.

The European Social Network (ESN) invited Dr Kai Leichsenring to undertake research into the changing nature of public-private relations in social services in Europe and to identify the issues that emerged with regard to future co-operation. This research involved designing a questionnaire for local authorities in Member States analysing social data and drawing certain conclusions.

The second part was the calling of an 'expert meeting' of public and private sectors, politicians and civil servants and representatives of the European Commission and European Parliament, to explore together the potential for future co-operation at a European level. Thirty five representatives of the public and private sector participated in a two day meeting which was held on the 8 and 9 November 2000 in Brussels and this report describes the presentations and discussions which took place during those days.

The third part is ongoing. It is about putting in place the building blocks of co-operation and consultation between the public and private sectors and the European Commission and European Parliament to ensure local public social services, together with all other stakeholders, contribute to a social Europe in the future. This report ends with a list of suggestions from the meeting, some of which by the time of publication are already being put into practice.

ESN would like to thank the European Commission Directorate for Employment and Social Affairs for supporting this project and all those who participated in this project, a list of whom can be found at the end of this report.

This report is available in English, French and German, both in print and on the website:  
**[www.socialeurope.com](http://www.socialeurope.com)**

# Welcome to the Expert Meeting

Lars-Göran Jansson – Chair ESN

*I should like to warmly invite you to read this report of research and discussions between representatives of public and private social services in Europe. The object of this project has been to explore how we might translate our local experiences of co-operation into better joint working at a European level.*

*We believe that combating social exclusion and building a social Europe in which all can fully participate, needs all of us to be engaged with each other in contributing to effective policy and practice.*

*As directors of social services across Europe, we wish to bring our experience and expertise into a partnership with the European Commission and Parliament, with other representatives of local authorities and the representatives of European non-government organisations in the social field.*

*We acknowledge the support of the Commission in making this project a reality and look forward to working together in the future to building a European public-private partnership for the benefit of all Europe's citizens.*

**Lars-Göran Jansson**

Chair

# European Social Network – Making a difference

John Halloran – Managing Director ESN

**T**he European Social Network is a newcomer on the European scene. Established in 1997, its aims are to work for a socially just and inclusive Europe by providing a forum for public sector social service directors from across Europe to meet together, to learn from each other and to work with the European Commission and Parliament and the private sector to improve the quality of social policy and practice across Europe.

ESN is currently organising its annual European Social Services Conference, which will be held in 2001 (its ninth year) in Göteborg in co-operation with the Swedish Presidency of the European Union. Previous events were held in Ashford (UK) 1993, Amsterdam in 1994, Copenhagen in 1995, London in 1996, Brussels in 1997, Frankfurt in 1998, Paris in 1999 and Madrid in 2000.

ESN has been pleased to undertake transnational projects funded by the EU Directorate for Employment and Social Affairs with an emphasis on empowering users of welfare to become full citizens (Towards a People's Europe pub.1998 ) and in better understanding and developing new forms of cross sector/professional co-operation (Building Partnerships for an Inclusive Europe pub.1999). ESN is publishing a report of this project shortly and also the results of a unique study of local government and civil society in the Nordic countries. 2001 will see research and publication of draft indicators 'Setting Standards for a Social Europe'.

The 16 national associations who are members of ESN represent social services in Belgium, France, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, United Kingdom. Their members hold the highest non-political responsibility for planning and operational management of, according to country, social welfare, housing, education and community health services.



Getting behind the statistics is nevertheless important in understanding who a director of social services might be. Here are four profiles, four individuals with different responsibilities in different parts of Europe.

1. **Ingo Staymann** has been the Director of Social Services for Frankfurt (population 650,000) for the last 11 years. With a staff of 1500 he manages a budget of DM1.5m. Ingo is particularly proud of the Youth and Social Services Office which encompasses child protection and support, fostering and guardianship and juvenile court proceedings. He is also responsible for providing assistance for those on low incomes, assistance for the homeless, addicts and asylum seekers, elderly persons and those seeking work.

2. **Patricia Sitruk** is the Director of Social Services for the 10th arrondissement in Paris which is home to 100,000 people from 65 countries of origin.

Patricia manages a complex organisation with 150 employees working with many agencies and volunteers. Patricia describes her job as a rough and passionate occupation! Her service includes homes for 250 elderly and handicapped persons and restaurants providing 40,000 meals a year. Home care is a major service together with managing 30 different forms of social benefit for families, elderly, handicapped persons and very poor and isolated persons.

3. **Anders Møller Jensen** is the director of Fünen, a county of 1 million persons and the second largest authority after Copenhagen. Anders manages three departments with 2,500 employees and 80 facilities to meet a wide range of needs.

Social services in a Danish county includes homes for children and adolescents, handicapped people, the elderly, the homeless, mentally ill, treatment centres for the abuse of alcohol and drugs, rehabilitation centres and advice centres and local administrators. Anders also chairs the group of 14 Danish county directors and the national centre for social psychiatry.

4. **Alex Jay** is director of social work and housing in West Dunbarton (population 96,000) in the West of Scotland. She manages a workforce of 1200 people, a social work budget of £32m and a housing budget of £45m. The director is responsible for financial management and operational delivery of both services including 15,000 houses.

Social work responsibilities include corporate responsibility for addiction, anti-poverty, domestic violence and equal opportunities.

As can be seen from these profiles (which can be seen on the ESN website), the role of a director of social services is an important one in the strategic and management of local community services for some of the most vulnerable in our society. These responsibilities will reflect both the local population profile such as in an inner city multicultural area of Paris to a large county in Denmark as well as the different systems and structures entrusted to a local public authority to plan, direct and also provide significant areas of service to people with social and sometimes community health needs.

What the above demonstrates is that at a local and national level there is considerable expertise and experience. The task in front of us is how to ensure this is used to the benefit of ensuring a better Europe for all.

This means building recognition of and participation by directors into the consultative framework of the European Commission and Parliament.

# Partners or competitors? – The changing world of public-private relations in social services

Kai Leichsenring – Researcher, European Centre for Social Welfare Policy  
and Research, Vienna

**T**he general assumption on which this paper is based derives from current trends in the European policy debate on social services that tends to favour a specific type of social welfare provision – one could call it the 'German model' – that involves NGOs in planning and providing social services. However, this 'German model' such as all other 'welfare mixes' within the Member States have a specific history and depend on various cultural and political variables that are not easy to replicate.

Co-operation and 'partnership' between the public and the NGO sector, in addition, are well established issues on the level of discussion but procedures, real dialogue and a clear definition of respective roles are often missing in practice. This is true for both national and community levels. Directors of public services, therefore, are keen to participate and to contribute to the further development of such a dialogue but see themselves excluded insofar as they are theoretically represented by politicians who, however, are not always familiar with daily practice of relationships between public 'purchasers' and 'private providers' of services.

Furthermore, in local 'welfare mixes', directors of public social services are often part and parcel of 'civil society' even in their professional 'public' function, let alone as local citizens. It is therefore necessary to develop more adequate concepts for public-private dialogue and partnership on local and community levels, starting from the elaboration on a common language and understanding of welfare regimes, their concepts and their results with respect to combating social exclusion.

Therefore, this paper seeks, first, to differentiate the various terms and concepts in the public-private debate in the area of social services, secondly, to look at the national realities behind general policy statements and ideological expectations, and thirdly, to provide some considerations concerning the development of appropriate partnership structures between private and public entities to combat social exclusion on the EU level.

## The Context

During the past twenty years, considerable shifts have taken place in policy and practice in the area of social services. One of the most remarkable changes concerned the public-private divide with respect to planning, financing, providing and controlling social services.

On the political level, there has been an apparent move towards neo-liberal market policies. At the same time, claims for reforming social policies – often understood as reducing social expenditures – put social services under pressure as well. In the institutional framework of the EU – and other international organisations – the cleavages between market and state orientation that have decisively influenced national policies, with increased emphasis on the 'mixed economy of social welfare' and 'social dialogue'. As even most explicit market theorists would not conceive all social services as 'marketable', the 'third sector', 'NGOs', volunteering, self-help and the family were 're-discovered' as most important sources for social welfare – and hence as institutions that were to be valued and supported in order to complement the role of public social services (Salamon, 1995; Evers/Olk, 1996).

The role of public administrations in the area of social services seems to have shifted in many countries towards one in which the state (the public administration) creates safeguards and conditions as a framework within which other social actors – individuals/families, the 'third sector' (now also called 'third system') and, partly, the market sector – fulfil various roles as providers of services, as activators of social solidarity, as advocates of citizens' interests, or also as advisors of local, regional or national governments.

## Relationships between EU institutions and NGOs

While, for many years, the contacts between NGOs and the European Institutions took place on a completely ad hoc basis, it was not until the Treaty of the European Union, in 1992, that the importance of links with this sector was first formally expressed in the creation of Declaration 23 which is annexed to the Treaty.<sup>1</sup>

In 1995, a Communication from the Commission, based on an extensive survey, developed some policy guidelines with respect to 'Promoting the role of voluntary organisations and foundations in Europe'.

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<sup>1</sup> Declaration 23 states: 'The Conference stresses the importance, in pursuing the objectives of Article 117 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, of cooperation between the latter and charitable associations and foundations as institutions responsible for welfare establishments and services.'

In this document, the perspective of the Commission towards NGOs reads as follows:

*'Voluntary organisations and foundations foster a sense of solidarity and of citizenship, and provide the essential underpinnings of our democracy'*

Although this 'does not mean that they could ever take on the role occupied by elected representatives', NGOs in their whole range are presented as important social and political institutions in democratic societies. As voluntary organisations are asked to take on an increasingly important role – by public authorities across the community and by the European Commission itself – the Commission proposes Member States offer them the opportunity to be involved in planning services and policy making with public authorities at all levels.

Another important step in the relationship between NGOs and the Commission was the first European Social Policy Forum in March 1996, which brought together over 1000 participants mainly from NGOs. The Forum saw the launch of a new policy objective: the building over time of a strong civil dialogue at European level to take its place alongside the policy dialogue with the national authorities and the social dialogue with the Social Partners.

The Commission published a further discussion paper (European Commission, 2000) where dialogue and consultation between NGOs and the Commission are seen in the framework of the democratic decision-making process of the European institutions.

## The debate on institutional reforms in EU institutions

An extremely useful starting-point to gain insight in ongoing debates on the institutional reform process within the EU is given by the results of a workshop in 1999 on 'Improving the Effectiveness and Legitimacy of European Governance'. The main impetus is related to civil society, public debate, decentralisation and de-sectoralisation of EU policies in which 'the public role of voluntary organisations and foundations needs to be acknowledged and the acceptance of the sector as a full partner in the debate on all policy and implementation matters which concern them, needs to be actively encouraged at all levels' (Lebessis/Paterson, 2000: 10).

The Commission is asked 'to move towards the systematic development of a policy process characterized by open communication at all stages where the views of affected actors are actively sought and valued. It should then prepare a Green Paper on new

forms of representation, participation and consultation with regard to European issues.' (Lebessis/Paterson, 2000: 17).

## **The debate on the European social model**

The notion of one European social model is an important and strongly acknowledged vision that is underlined by the common desire to combat social exclusion and to provide equal chances to all European citizens (Beck et al., 1997).

In reality, however, policy developments are seldom following one clear-cut and well-defined model. Both between and within countries one can find differences and adaptations that are due to regional specifics, political cleavages or traditions of the political culture. It is important, therefore, to consider different perspectives and traditions in constructing the European social model, hopefully, not based on the smallest common denominator but on 'best practice' in planning, financing and providing of social provision.

## **Shifting 'Welfare Mixes'**

Most social policy documents of single countries but also those on the level of the European Commission make use of the 'welfare mix' metaphor to depict the objective of a 'well-balanced' mix between public and private, civil society and household-based contributions.

Among the different functions which the state and the 'third sector' may take on in the realm of social welfare, financing and provision of social services are considered to be the most important ones in defining state-NGO relationships. Thus, at least three groups of countries can be distinguished (Gidron et al., 1992: 17-20). 'Government dominated' would be those countries, in which both financing and delivery of services is mainly provided by the state. In general, Scandinavian countries have been described under this heading. 'Dual' relationships are called those in which the governments and the 'third sector' are fulfilling both tasks at the same time, e.g. in that charities and other non-profit organisations are relying heavily on donations, user contributions or other own financing in order to be able to provide services such as, for instance, in the UK.

Finally, 'collaborative' relationships have been called those in which the governments are mainly responsible for financing services that are then delivered to a huge extent by NGOs. This has been the case, for instance, in Austria, Germany and the Netherlands.

However, state-NGO relationships are a matter of dynamic change, rather than a stable empirical fact. As policies are changing, so do relationships between the various actors, although some culturally stable features can always be retraced.

Figure 1

### Provision of elderly care services in selected European countries

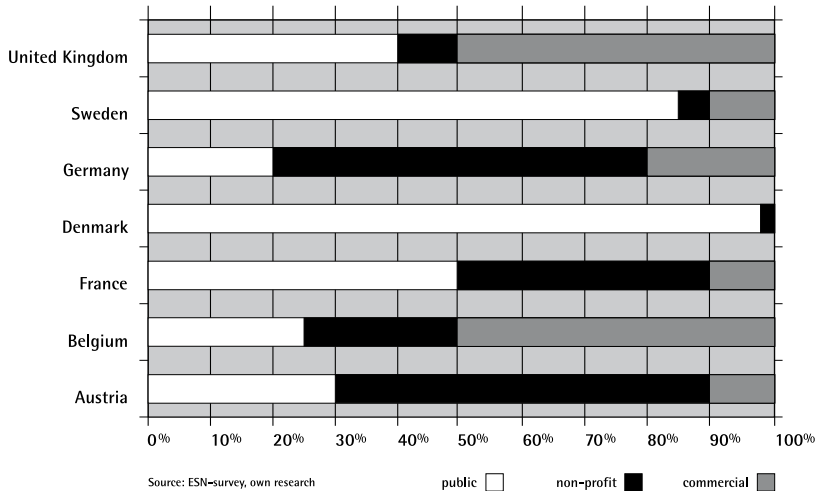
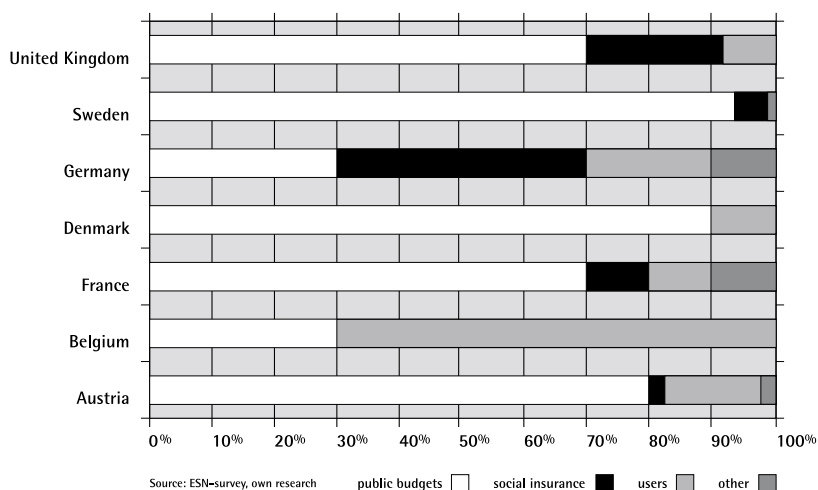


Figure 2

### Financing of elderly care services in selected European countries



## The need for quality assurance

These latter trends have triggered an intensive debate on quality assurance as non-statutory provision of services means to adequately define and control the quality of those services that are now purchased by public authorities on behalf of the clients and/or by the clients themselves (Evers et al., 1997).

Up till now, the different actors within the 'mixed economies of welfare have faced the above developments with specific active or reactive measures. The introduction of long-term care allowances or similar payments (e.g. Austria, Germany, The Netherlands), for instance, has increased the independence and purchasing-power of persons in need of care. In many cases, such schemes were introduced as the clients became more demanding in claiming social rights, rather than being service recipients.

During the implementation of such measures and 'new public management' in particular, it became clear, however, that also the services themselves have to be further developed (quality guidelines, planning processes, contracting). In some cases, it could be observed that it was the providers themselves (non-profit organisations but also commercial firms) that became active in the development of instruments to assure service quality, for instance by adapting those that derived from the business sector (ISO 9000, TQM) to the area of personal social services (Leichsenring/Stadler, 1998).

## The changing role of Directors of Social Services

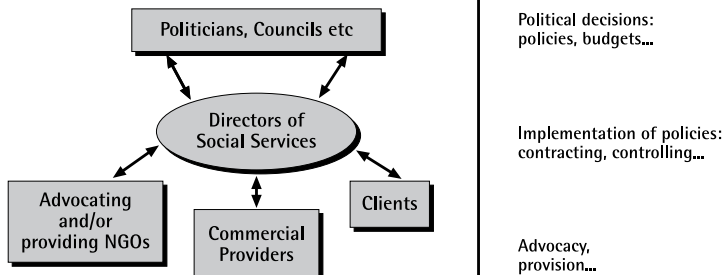
For a long time, implementing political decisions that were taken by elected politicians, remained the principal rationale for the activities of Directors of Social Services who were more or less considered as 'secretaries'<sup>2</sup>. With the changing context described above, it seems high time to re-consider the role and function of Directors of Social Services. They are no longer just secretaries of politicians but also purchasers of services, managers of considerable budgets, social planners with strategic responsibilities, and quality managers. In addition, nowadays many Directors of Social Services are far from being characterized as inflexible bureaucrats as they become initiators of new services and projects.

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<sup>2</sup> In Belgium, for instance, the official title of Directors of Social Services is 'Secrétaire du C.P.A.S.'



Figure 3

**The role of Directors of Social Services**

## The role of Directors of Social Services

An example of the greater involvement of Directors of Social Services and their associations can be found in Sweden (but can equally be found in many other countries) where the association of Directors of Social Services is officially invited to respond to government policy proposals, participate in parliamentary committees discuss legislative drafts and generally be regarded as independent experts concerned with improving social policy and practice.

With the changing role of Directors of Social Services described above and the increasing insight it is high time to start a discussion on their future role and functions. Directors of Social Services are, of course, in close contact with local or regional politicians. They might also meet occasionally with NGOs that are advocating clients' rights, with non-profit organisations or with commercial firms providing services. In general, these relationships are, however, lacking a structural framework, co-ordination with other policy fields, and a clear mandate.

## Towards a new job profile for Directors of Social Services as mediators in social dialogues?

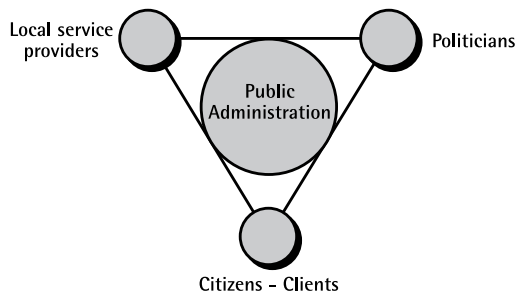
Placed at the interface between politicians, providers of social services (non-profit and commercial), own staff and clients, Directors of Social Services could play an important role in initiating and steering communication mechanisms that, in current European

parlance is called 'social dialogue' Starting from the 'grass-root' level, i.e. the local context of social problems and the respective search for adequate solutions, Directors of Social Services would be in a position that is:

- not too powerful but close to political decision-making
- with important links to local networks and organisations
- relatively stable and continuous, and
- based on knowledge and experience with regard to opportunities for finding solutions.

Figure 4

Can Public Administration mediate the social dialogue?



## Can Public Administration mediate the social dialogue?

Whilst there may be barriers and counter-arguments to such consideration there is no doubt that Public Administration should play a more active part in social dialogues, rather than merely executing managerial and/or politically induced decisions. Although the proposal to put Directors of Social Services at the centre of social dialogue might run counter to classical theories of democracy and its basic principles concerning the division of powers, new public management and privatisation strategies have much more undermined these principles as allegedly 'objective' managerial decisions have gained on grounds over political debate and priority-setting. Furthermore, one might argue that Directors of Social Services are not 'objective' enough to act as arbiters in social

dialogues as their career might depend too much on politicians and/or respective political parties. The same is true, however, for most other participants in social dialogues whose civil and professional status might often be much more charged with external dependencies.

A final, but resolvable, question mark regards the education and training of Directors of Social Services as the given career patterns and professional backgrounds of persons who have arrived in this function might not always suffice to initiate and steer forward new social dialogues.

## **Conclusions and future perspectives**

The European Social Network (ESN) has started to organize Directors of Social Services on a transnational level, gathering both national organisations and individual members (in particular from countries where no national organisation exists). The ESN thus groups planners of social services with respective experiences in policy consulting on the national level – a resource that should be used and be given a voice also on the European level. Furthermore, members of the ESN are also 'producers' of public social services that are often confronted with the same problems or challenges, yet policies or directives issued by EU institutions (e.g. competition policies, tendering regulations etc.), as NGOs providing social services in the different countries. Social dialogues between EU institutions and NGOs could therefore increase their effectiveness and adequacy if Directors of Social Services participated in such interactions also on the EU level. Finally, ESN is most interested in developing quality assurance in the Member countries but also with respect to an emerging policy towards social quality on the European level. Respective solutions should be based on dialogue and partnership between institutions and persons involved.

The ESN could be a partner in this process by providing services such as consultancy to national and international organisations, training and exchange of experiences on issues of trans-European relevance.

# The New Social Policy Agenda for the European Union

Joan Cornet-Prat – Directorate for Employment and Social Affairs  
European Commission

Social objectives are at the heart of Europe's ambitions and concerns.

Over the past three decades, the Commission has pursued these objectives through a series of social policy programmes and actions. Each reflecting the needs of their times. In the 1970s, the aim was to bring a more human face to the newly enlarged Union, in the 1980s, it was to strengthen the social dimension as we worked to complete the Single market and in the 1990s, it was to build bridges between the social and economic debates.

The Commission's Social Policy Agenda which launches the new millennium is even more ambitious. Our aim is to build within Europe a new, modern, active, social model. That will increase efficiency, raise the quality of life, and provide the foundations for a successful enlargement.

In the words of the European Council we aim to build a Europe that is both competitive and cohesive.

There are three policy dimensions, namely, social with the emphasis on quality and cohesion, economic with the emphasis on competitiveness and dynamism and employment with the emphasis on better, as well as full. This represents our social policy contribution to the success of the new European economy, and the Euro.

## The new social agenda

The new social agenda is not an abstract vision. It is based on the reality of successful experiences across the countries and regions of Europe.

It will draw on the full range of means and instruments available, in the most appropriate ways to achieve open co-ordination that is dialogue; programmes; mainstreaming; structural fund support and legislation where, and when, it is the right way forward.

Its over-riding emphasis is to invest in a skilled, healthy and dynamic population and to

support and encourage co-operation between all parties concerned in the pursuit of common goals.

Our proposals are based on three principles: that increasing living standards widely shared is the fundamental objective of the Union; that social policy is a productive investment; and that quality of employment, social spending, and industrial relations matter.

The economic arithmetic of all this is not complicated. Increased living standards depend on the productivity of those in work, the proportion of those of working age who are in work and the size of the non-working age group compared with the size of the working age group.

In respect of productivity and employment, our performance is unbalanced hourly productivity is as high in Germany, France and Italy as in the US but our employment rate especially of women is low.

We need a positive policy response to this imbalance. Not a US-style 'jobs at any price' solution.

We need to develop a pattern of working life which meets the aspirations of women to participate as fully as men in economic life while reconciling the family needs of all concerned including children and older people.

In respect of demography, we acknowledge the trends but we must prepare our responses carefully.

In particular, we need to beware of desperate or draconian measures to cut-back on hard-won gains on pensions. We will need comprehensive, long-term, policies to meet the challenge of a slowing ageing population over the next two decades and beyond.

We will need to assess the contribution that different elements can bring to closing the pensions funding gap. The contribution from higher levels of employment, extended working lives, increased savings and changes in social benefit structures.

## **Social policy as a productive investment**

We can all be happy that the positive benefits of social policies are starting to be recognised, even by sceptics. Caricatures of social policy as a wasteful use of hard-earned financial resources carry little credibility any more.

So it should be. A major part of social expenditure on health and education, for example is a direct investment in human resources and just as important as any investments in machinery or infra-structure.

And other social expenditures like social security and pensions provide benefits that go much wider than the immediate recipients. Social transfers provide equilibrium for the economy as a whole balancing economic purchasing power throughout booms and slumps providing what the experts call 'automatic stabilisers'.

There is growing recognition, too, that all developed societies have a range of social needs which need to be met, however they are funded. Hence we see that spending differences between so-called Continental and Anglo-Saxon social models largely disappear, once private as well as public social spending is taken into account.

For example, the UK spends 27 per cent of its GDP on public and private social investment and transfers. That is only one percentage point below Sweden. And only three percentage points above the US.

## **Social agenda and quality**

As our societies and economies evolve, other factors less easily measurable, but equally important becomes apparent, too. These quality factors hold an important place in the new Social Policy Agenda, and form the substance of this Conference.

Quality matters. In all aspects of our lives.

There is an inter-dependence at work. Better jobs mean better workers. Better workers mean better products and services. You cannot expect quality in one without quality in the other.

This has profoundly influenced both the content of the new Social Policy Agenda, and the way we have set about putting it to work.

In terms of content, we have ranged wide. With over 70 specific actions in some 11 policy areas:

- Full employment and the quality of work, building on the encouragement coming from the Lisbon and Feira European Councils
- The new work environment, with increasingly close co-operation with, and between, the social partners

- The knowledge-based economy, with the emphasis on skills and education in the growing sectors
- Mobility within the new European economy, with renewed efforts to remove remaining obstacles
- Social protection, with the accent of modernisation and sustainability
- Social inclusion, with new targets and indicators, and closer monitoring
- equality, with a continuing strengthening and deepening of the long-term strategy
- Fundamental rights and anti-discrimination, including a new directive and programme
- Dialogue and industrial relations, with a renewed commitment to co-operation and strategic development
- Enlargement preparation, with the accent on mutual support and benefit
- And, last but not least, international co-operation in pursuit of fundamental goals on labour and social standards.

In all of this, we intend to work with all our partners even more closely than we have in the past.

## Conclusion

Change is the 'leit motif' of contemporary life. The management of change demands partnership, networking and collaboration about the direction of policy about priorities and about methods.

The coming years will be different from the past mainly in terms of the quickening pace, and deepening impact, of change. This demands better policies built on analysis and consultation and better execution based on engagement at all levels.

# The Role of the European Parliament Committee for Employment and Social Affairs

Proinsias de Rossa, MEP – Vice President of the Parliament's Socialist Group and Member of the Committee for Employment and Social Affairs

**M**r de Rossa began by reminding the meeting of the large number of people in poverty in Europe today. 'In the Netherlands for example, twenty percent suffer periodic episodes of poverty and having a member of the household in work doesn't necessarily mean that people therefore escape poverty. Fifteen percent of those in work in Ireland are on low wages of whom three quarters are women.'

One of the ways forward for Mr de Rossa was greater co-operation by those with an interest in the poor and excluded.

'What is clear is that in order to develop a strong social dimension to the European Union, there needs to be an engagement by the people of Europe: we can't do anything without their support. The key has therefore to be in terms of social services, an emphasis on more co-ordination involving those who are closer to people with special educational, health, social needs etc.'

The development of civil dialogue which should have a legal statute was important in supporting democratic participation of all given the poor levels of voting in local and European elections in recent years.

We should encourage new forms of social participation and traditional government structures should find ways of co-operating with such initiatives.

Mr de Rossa described a pilot programme involving the third sector in 100 economic and social development projects which could be a model for future co-operation. 'Conventional welfare organisations,' he said, 'needed to work differently with new forms of organisation.'

Those interested in influencing the Parliament should regularly consult it's website and contact the secretariat. They should also be aware of the existence of 'inter-groups' (cross party common interest groups) which may be more open to working with experts on a particular issue.



For those unaware of the powers and responsibilities of the European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, these relate to:

- i) employment policy (Title VIII of the EC Treaty), including measures to combat unemployment, job creation and the Employment Committee;
- ii) social policy (Articles 136 to 145 of the EC Treaty, with the exception of Article 141), in particular:
  - a) protection of living and working conditions, including the working environment, in order to protect the health and safety of workers;
  - b) information and consultation of workers;
  - c) collective protection of workers' and employers' interests;
  - d) wages and pensions policy;
  - e) social security and welfare protection;
  - f) social exclusion and social cohesion;
  - g) employment conditions for legal residents from third countries;
  - h) housing policy and promotion of low-cost housing schemes;
- iii) the social dimension and the labour market in the information society
- iv) the European Social Fund (Articles 146 to 148 of the EC Treaty);
- v) vocational training (Article 150 of the EC Treaty), and in particular:
  - a) implementation of a Community vocational training policy;
  - b) harmonisation of professional qualifications;
- vi) the free movement of workers (Articles 39 to 42 of the EC Treaty);
- vii) social dialogue;
- viii) the following bodies:
  - the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop)
  - the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
  - the European Training Foundation
  - the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work
- ix) all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (Article 13 of the EC Treaty), related to fundamental social rights and to the labour market;

- x) the monitoring accompanying the implementation of current expenditure for which it has responsibility, on the basis of periodic reports provided by the Commission.

The new Employment and Social Affairs Committee has 109 members of whom half are full members with an equal number of substitutes. The President is Michel Rocard and the vice presidents are Marie Thérèse Hermange (EPP), Winfried Menrad (EPP) and Paulo Postas (UEN).

Mr de Rossa said he was delighted that the directors of local public social services had organised this meeting and looked forward to their greater involvement in the future.

# Building partnerships at a local, national and European level – workshop debates

Virginia Gomes, Anders Møller Jensen and Patricia Sitruk

**D**iscussions were held involving all participants who were invited to join one of three workshop groups. The chairs, who also acted as rapporteurs, were Virginia Gomes a member of the APSS, Portugal, Anders-Møller Jensen a member of FSD, Denmark and Patricia Sitruk a member of ANCCAS, France.

These workshops were lively and participative and whilst tackling the question in different ways, they produced remarkably similar conclusions for later presentation. The question they posed is deceptively simple and suggests that public-private partnerships are an obviously good thing that just require a level of goodwill to succeed.

The discussions however opened up the complexity of issues which needed addressing to support an effective partnership outcome and whose absence may explain the failure of such partnerships to be developed and be sustained. These issues were:

## The importance of understanding terms

There was a need for common understanding across sectors as to what was meant by the 'public' and 'private' sector, as traditional roles had sometimes changed and it may become more difficult to be clear as to who was responsible for a particular element of the welfare process, whether in policy, practice, quality control and service user need assessment and advocacy.

Independent organisations may be provide 'public' services under contract with public money. What is referred to as the 'private' sector could be a commercial company, a not-for-profit service provider, a service user collective or a special interest group etc. Misunderstandings often arose because different sectors did not take the time to listen to each other and take time to clarify terms. This is increasingly a major issue at a European level where the same term can mean quite different things in different member states and even within the same country.

## Competition or complement?

The experience of some delegates was, that far from being in partnership, the public sector could in fact be in competition with the private sector. This might be because of a confusion about roles and responsibilities, such as where associations/NGOs contested the right of local authorities to hold them to account for contract compliance or it could be an inevitable consequence of market orientated approach to welfare services in some countries where for example local authorities were both service providers and contractors for the same kind of services.

## The importance of agreed planning to meet local needs

Here delegates felt that partnership was essential to ensure that both the strategic and individual needs of citizens were met and that they had access to a comprehensive social welfare response which was coherent and quality led. It was important that the public sector took responsibility for planning, research, budget control, review and quality in co-operation with the private sector. Partnership should, it was agreed, operate from first contact with someone in need. Pursuing a particular model however was not regarded as of prime importance rather that it should be done together and be systematic.

## Is there a focus on quality?

The shared view across the three groups was that in the context of modernising social protection, that partnerships should focus on building quality into the future of welfare. It was only in developing contractual relationships between the local public and private organisations of whatever type, based on quality, that all could ensure that the outcome was a better deal for the service user. This above all would mark out successful partnerships in the future.

The sustainable development of local, national and European partnerships it was agreed, hinged on having a clear vision and purpose for developing a particular relationship, a programme for ensuring it was delivered and a framework of transparency to support a positive, inclusive culture of co-operation in the future.

Many had experienced successful local partnerships, but found that they were difficult to transfer onto a national stage where more complex political and inter-organisational factors were at play. Indeed although our research found generally positive relationships

between national associations of private voluntary organisations there were few examples of sustainable strategic partnerships between the public and private sectors at a national level.

There was broad agreement that European public-private partnerships were important and that the European institutions, notably the Commission and Parliament should invest in building effective joint working with the public sector as it does with NGOs and the Social Partners.

# Round Table – Bridging the Gap

## Conclusions and future action

Chair: Dr Helmut Hartmann

**F**ollowing on from the discussions in workshops the principal question for the meeting was how should ESN, following in from this meeting, together with others in the public and private sector, better work in partnership with European Institutions to bridge the 'gap'?

The response from the Commission's representative was that the New Social Policy Agenda and the White Paper on Governance provided an opportunity to make a contribution to the Commission and that ESN represented a unique source of experience and expertise.

"You are part of civil society and we need your experience and ideas", stated Joan Cornet-Prat.

He also felt that the lessons of the European social services Conference in Madrid (2000) should be taken forward and that the development of social indicators was a key task.

Kai Leichsenring asked ESN to be more courageous in promoting itself to a wider audience. He believed that the network was now a significant institution for Europe.

Proinsias de Rossa said he was delighted that the directors were wishing to contribute to the civil dialogue and he encouraged ESN to take the initiative with the Parliament, informing it of its developments, getting to know the MEPs on various committees who specialise in certain issues.

In conclusion we recall that the origins of this project were partly drawn from frustration that the worth and contribution of local public social services was not recognised at a European level. The experience of the project, culminating in the cross sector Expert Meeting in Brussels with its very positive co-operative atmosphere, has been a first step to building a new partnerships at a European level to ensure a more inclusive consultative process involving local government social services.

During the meeting and following it, several broad themes which may provide direction for this initiative:

That those organisations, like ESN whose members work in the public local government sector and who have no framework of consultation with European institutions, should consider working together in a public social services forum. This would complement the NGO Platform and the Social Partners.

That the experience of public-private debate should not be lost and that a future meeting be called, perhaps at the next European Social Services Conference, in Göteborg in June 2001.

That ESN and other networks should better communicate with the Parliament their interest and contribution to the employment and social affairs agenda.

That the learning from trans national single and cross sector working should be made more widely available through access to good practice. Could this be developed as a 'virtual partnership' was suggested, on the website?

That outside of EU funded projects, that networking between countries and sectors be facilitated to engage more stakeholders in learning from Europe at a local level.

That discussions take place about meeting the needs of the next generation of welfare managers whether public or private sector who will need new skills to lead and manage in a pluralist and fast changing environment. Is there a need for a European management Initiative to develop tomorrow's managers?

December 2000

## List of "Mind the Gap" participants

- |     |                            |  |
|-----|----------------------------|--|
| 1.  | <b>Ambrosini</b> Catherine | Direction Interdépartementale de l'Intégration Sociale,<br>Namur, Belgium                              |
| 2.  | <b>Besozzi</b> Carlotta    | European Disability Forum  |
| 3.  | <b>Carlin</b> Ben          | European Federation of National Organisations Working<br>with the Homeless - FEANTSA                   |
| 4.  | <b>Cornet-Prat</b> Joan    | European Commission  |
| 5.  | <b>Davey</b> Ian           | Association of Directors of Social Services for England,<br>Wales and Northern Ireland – ADSS          |
| 6.  | <b>de Rossa</b> Proinsias  | European Parliament  |
| 7.  | <b>Dupuis</b> Yves-Jean    | Association Nationale des Directeurs d'Action Sociale et<br>de Santé des Départements – ANDASS, France |
| 8.  | <b>Dussutour</b> Isabelle  | Council of European Municipalities & Regions – CEMR  |
| 9.  | <b>Elsier</b> Alex         | CPAS de Bruxelles Capitale, Belgium  |
| 10. | <b>Genot</b> Jean-Pierre   | Association Régionale Wallonne des Secrétaires de<br>CPAS, Belgium                                     |
| 11. | <b>Geoghegan</b> Pauline   | Quartiers en Crise   |
| 12. | <b>Gomes</b> Virginia      | Ministry for Employment & Solidarity and<br>Associação Portuguesa de Segurança Social, Portugal        |
| 13. | <b>Gruselle</b> Sheila     | Assembly of European Regions – AER   |
| 14. | <b>Halloran</b> John       | Director ESN, European Social Network  |
| 15. | <b>Hartmann</b> Helmut     | Treffen der Sozialamtsleiter der Gross-Städte in<br>Deutschland, Germany                               |
| 16. | <b>Jansson</b> Lars-Göran  | Chair ESN and Föreningen Sveriges Socialchefer –<br>FSS, Sweden  |
| 17. | <b>Jiwa</b> Hoslo          | European Network Against Racism – ENAR   |



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|-----|-----------------------------|---|
| 18. | <b>Kourten</b> Ralf         | Netzwerk der Sozialamtleiter der mittleren Gross-Städte, Germany                                    |
| 19. | <b>Laour</b> Jean           | Association Nationale des Cadres Communaux d'Action Sociale – ANCCAS, France                        |
| 20. | <b>Leichsenring</b> Kai     | European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, Vienna, Austria                             |
| 21. | <b>Lellouche</b> Rachel     | Coordinator ESN, European Social Network  |
| 22. | <b>Melchior</b> Dorothea    | Netzwerk der Sozialamtleiter der mittleren Gross-Städte, Germany                                    |
| 23. | <b>Møller Jensen</b> Anders | Foreningen af Socialchefer I Danmark– FSD, Denmark  |
| 24. | <b>Nunes</b> Maria          | Associação Portuguesa de Segurança Social – APAS, Portugal  |
| 25. | <b>Palola</b> Elina         | Council of European Municipalities & Regions – CEMR   |
| 26. | <b>Picquet</b> Valérie      | Eurocities  |
| 27. | <b>Rucquoi</b> Jacques      | CPAS de Bruxelles Capitale, Belgium   |
| 28. | <b>Sântos</b> Luís Antonio  | Associação Portuguesa de Segurança Social – APSS, Portugal  |
| 29. | <b>Sitruk</b> Patricia      | Association Nationale des Cadres Communaux d'Action Sociale – ANCCAS, France                        |
| 30. | <b>Thoren</b> Eri           | Föreningen Sveriges Socialchefer – FSS, Sweden  |
| 31. | <b>Van Wassenhove</b> Dirk  | Assembly of European Regions – AER  |
| 32. | <b>Villani</b> Giuseppe     | Regione Autonoma Valle d'Aosta, Italy   |
| 33. | <b>Vink</b> Geneviève       | Association Régionale Wallonne des Secrétaires de CPAS, Belgium                                     |
| 34. | <b>Wiseman</b> David        | Association of Directors of Social Work – ADSW, Scotland  |
| 35. | <b>Yzebe</b> François-Guy   | Association Nationale des Directeurs d'Action Sociale et de Santé des Départements – ANDASS, France |





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