

PESSIS Promoting employers'

social services in social dialogue

“Sectoral social dialogue – a key element of the European Social Model and a tool of modern industrial policy and good governance”

European Commission,
DG Employment, Social Affairs
and Equal Opportunities, 2010

The social services sector is a rapidly growing sector in both social and economic terms, due also to demographic changes. The employment growth of this sector, during a period of rising unemployment, has important implications for its place within the European Union (EU) economy. However, today the demand for social services exceeds supply of resources available in terms of workforce and financial support to the sector for many interconnected reasons linked to working conditions, the poor public image of the sector and the lack of public funding.

The social services sector faces a common set of problems, which are challenging traditional forms of delivery. The EU has a very

important role to play in terms of coordinating policy action, promoting cooperation among Member States and facilitating the exchange of good practices. Employers of the social service sector have a contribution to make, but they are not involved in the debate concerning their sector at EU level. Moreover, social services are not represented by a committee and thus not part of the European Social Dialogue.

The lack of social dialogue structures at European level in this sector is a missed opportunity, as the delivery of services will depend on the future of the social services workforce. Solutions to problems of recruitment and retention will have to involve improved pay and working conditions, more training and support for professionalisation, and focus on quality and better access to public funding. These issues could be addressed at European level.

A social dialogue in the social services sector is therefore a key element for the future of Europe and its citizens. ■

Recommendations for the European Union (EU) level

There is no structured input from social service employers on key European policies, such as the EU 2020 Strategy and the working time directive.

Recommendation: The European institutions should create dialogue structures with social service employers, to enable them to contribute to the policy making process.

The social services sector is not represented by a specific committee in the framework of the European Social Dialogue.

Recommendation: The European Commission should support the development of social dialogue instruments for the social services sector at EU level.

Due to a lack of sustainable funding schemes and a coherent policy framework, the social services sector is characterised by poor working conditions, shortage and retention of staff, lack of training opportunities and career perspectives and lack of gender balance in many European countries.

Recommendation: This wide range of common problems facing all national social services sectors should be addressed through the development of social dialogue at European level.

Further data is needed to better understand how social dialogue is organised in the social services sector in the eleven PESSIS study countries and other European countries, especially in Central and Eastern Europe.

Recommendation: The European Commission should invest in follow-up research to further understand how social dialogue is organised across Europe, to identify models of good practices and to understand the full economic and social contribution of the sector.

The not-for-profit sector is expanding fast and becoming a significant employer in all European countries.

Recommendation: New opportunities to promote reflection within the sector in order to identify employer responsibilities and ways of meeting them should be facilitated across Europe.

Recommendations for the European Union (EU) level

The European social services sector is diverse and often with a lack of representation.

Recommendation: Employers and employees must recognise the role of actors at EU level to support social dialogue in the social services sector. More work to support the development of representativity for employers, through workshops and seminars, is needed at EU level.

Existing social dialogue in the social services sector needs to be better understood and more widely recognised.

Recommendation: Use the Irish and Lithuanian EU Presidencies 2013 to promote the PESSIS project conclusions and recommendations. ■

Recommendations for the National level

Social partners in the social services sector need to develop a shared language for negotiations between employers and employees.

Recommendation: Support the creation of new social dialogue pilot projects to bring social partners together to create an effective social dialogue between employees and employers in the social services sector.

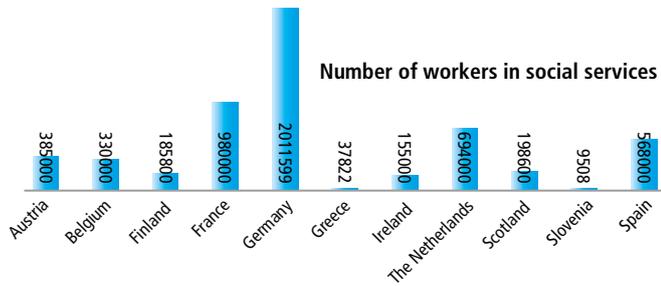
To reach innovation in social service delivery, additional research is required, drawing on new technologies as well as preserving sensitive and tailored local delivery.

Recommendation: National governments and other stakeholders should commission research to explore how social services delivery could be restructured, using new technologies and new forms of organisation at local, regional and national levels. ■

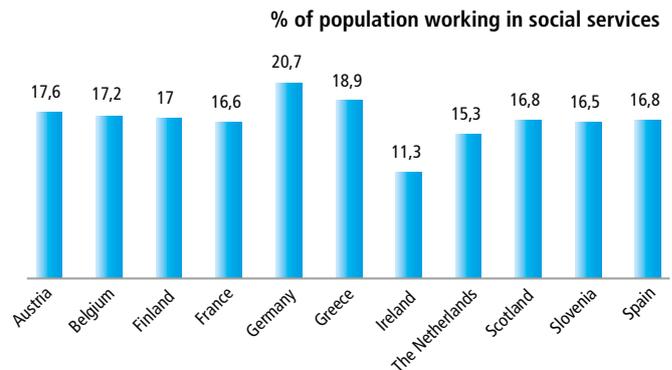
Key Findings

Nature and Structure of Social Services

- The social services sector is a rapidly growing sector contributing to social and economic value;
- Social services are labour intensive activities and there is a growing demand for workers, with problems of recruitment and retention;
- The majority of workers are women and low paid, often working part-time



- Much of the labour force is aged 40+;
- The social services sector is fragmented with a majority of small sized enterprises in for-profit and not-for-profit sectors;
- There is an expansion of competition and entry of the for-profit sector;
- There is a decline in public provision in many countries.



Key Findings

Social Dialogue in the Social Services Sector

- The social services sector is often covered by a range of employers' organisations and more than one trade union;
- Some form of dialogue between employers and employees exist in all countries;
- Five countries have well-developed social dialogue systems, but there are differences in the role played by the state;
- Six countries have some form of dialogue ranging from well developed collective bargaining based on legislation, to less well defined agreements covering fewer issues;
- There is evidence that some existing arrangements are threatened by a lack of recognition of social services partners;
- Budgets cuts are leading to new alliances.

Collective Bargaining in the Social Services Sector

- Basic collective agreements just cover wages, and more comprehensive agreements cover a wider range of issues such as pay, working hours/conditions, contracts, consultations, absences and trade union rights;

- Coverage by collective bargaining agreements is highest with public social services workers and lowest for private sector workers;
- Recent changes in the social services sector have led to changes and mergers between collective agreements;
- There is an important role of the state with some tri-partite arrangements; others are influenced by the state as funder of social services;
- In some countries with strong social dialogue arrangements, the collective bargaining agreements are built on these relationships.

The Case for EU Social Dialogue in the Social Services Sector

- There is a legal basis for social dialogue at EU level;
- Social dialogue at EU level will address problems of a rapidly expanding sector threatened by the lack of a sustainable workforce;
- Social dialogue at EU level will
 - strengthen social dialogue at national level;
 - help sharing models of good practice and solutions to problems facing social services;
 - facilitate the share of information about how to safeguard the social value of social services. ■

The PESSIS Project

PESSIS is "Promoting employers' social services organisations in social dialogue". The aim of the research project PESSIS was to provide a detailed understanding of how social dialogue is organised and structured (or not) in the social services sector in Europe. It focussed on identifying barriers to increased cooperation among employers in the sector as well as highlighting examples of good practice.

The aim of PESSIS was to redress the lack of qualitative and quantitative data on labour and social dialogue issues in the sector of social services from the perspective of employers. Eleven national studies of social dialogue in the social services sector in Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland,

The Netherlands, Scotland, Slovenia and Spain contributed to an overall European perspective of social dialogue in the social services sector.

The project, running from December 2011 to September 2012, was led by EASPD and supported by a broad partnership of European and national organisations representing social and health services providers, in close cooperation with the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU).

It is a European project funded by the European Commission's Programme on Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue.



The PESSIS Final Conference

The partners involved in the project PESSIS, together with stakeholders and representatives of EU institutions, gathered in Brussels on the 22 June 2012 to discuss the results of the project and to assess recommendations on social dialogue in the social services sector. Representatives from five European countries presented the results of the analysis of social dialogue systems and models of good practices during the PESSIS Final Conference at the European Economic and Social Committee.

The PESSIS research project is the first step in a process aiming to set up a sectoral committee in European Social Dialogue representing employers and workers in the social services sector. PESSIS' goal was to better understand how social dialogue is organised and structured; and to thus contribute to the development and promotion of social dialogue.

At the PESSIS Final Conference, various stakeholders discussed how to enhance social dialogue in Europe, amongst them representatives of social service providers; Jean-Paul Tricart, Head of the Social Dialogue, Industrial Relations Unit of the Directorate General for Employment and Social Inclusion; and Mathias Maucher of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU). Jean-Paul Tricart emphasised the interest of the European Commission in developing social dialogue in the social services sector. He also highlighted that the first step in order to reach the European level is to establish networks of employers at a national level, in a bottom-up process.

In the presentations of the country reports from Belgium, Spain, Ireland, France and Austria as well as in the surrounding discussions and debates, the need for social dialogue in the sector was imminent. The specificities of the social services sector, however, and the challenges it is facing, need to be considered. Next steps could be to research what makes existing social dialogue in the social services sector successful and to build up networks and capacity of employers. ■



Partners in PESSIS

For more information, please visit: www.socialserviceseurope.eu/peisis



Supported by: DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.
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European Partners



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National Organisations

