



ACTIVITY REPORT FOR 2015

Red Cross Presidency

In the first weeks of 2015, Social Services Europe launched work in four newly established task forces, concerned with issues that were identified as high priority for not-for profit health and social services providers:

- **Job Creation Potential:** this task force joined forces with representatives of the European Public Service Union (EPSU) for drafting a paper on job creation and improving working conditions in the social sector incl. attracting young people, addressing the gender-balance, universality, financing the sector, skill development & lifelong learning the sector, public funding and responsibility, pre-conditions for quality services.
- **Financing of services:** this task force examined alternatives to traditional financing of services such as vouchers, personalized budgets, calls for projects, partnership approaches, triangular model or free choice model. Different models would be examined regarding application, effectiveness, usefulness and accessibility for service providers. The product would be a compilation of qualitative examples of different financing models, both for the purpose of giving practical orientation as well as to inform advocacy
- **Structural Funds:** this task force worked towards an overview on use of EU structural funds by social service providers, focusing in particular on ESF. The paper would include information on new funding opportunities introduced for the 2014-2020 programming period, and present a range of case studies to illustrate best practice across the sector.
- **European Semester:** this task force would follow the European Semester cycle with a focus on the social service perspective only. This includes the AGS – Annual Growth Survey, the CSRs – Country Specific Recommendations, and the NRPs - National Reform Programmes. Own work by several network members i.e. analysis of national reform programmes was fed into the work of the task force.

On 26th March, Social Services Europe invited stakeholders to a [breakfast session](#) to discuss “Job Creation and Economic Growth in the Health and Social Sector - The Contribution of Non-profit Service Providers”. Representatives of governments, civil society, Member of the European Parliament, Members of the European Economic and Social Committee, and the European Commission exchanged views on the role of social service providers as important factor for social policy and social investment.

During spring, Social Services Europe also began work as partner in the [4Quality! project](#), a transnational cooperation project concerned with “Improving jobs and services’ quality in personal care and household services across Europe”. The project consortium gathers 9 EU-level networks including Social Services Europe, and receives co-funding from the PROGRESS Programme of the European Union. Particular attention was paid to organising three regional seminars in Rome, Brighton and Vienna, giving the opportunity to engage national member organisations directly into the project.

Other activities during the first semester included meetings with the cabinet of Commissioner Thyssen, DG Employment Director Fransen, with Social Economy Europe, the European Federation of Foodbanks, and active contribution by Social Services Europe to external events such as the EESC NGO Forum on Participation and civil dialogue, held in March.

EPR Presidency

During the second half of 2015, the European Platform for Rehabilitation took over the presidency of Social Services Europe. EPR prepared and chaired the monthly board meetings and general working group meetings focusing on reinitializing and boosting further the work started earlier in the year. EPR led the working of the task force on structural funds and started the drafting of the paper on effective use of ESF, ERDF and FEAD for social service providers and public authorities. An extraordinary general assembly was convened on 19th October to approve the amendments related to changes in the board members which was subsequently published in the “Moniteur Belge”.

Letters were written to representatives of the European Commission to advocate the importance of reconnecting the 2016 European Semester with the Europe 2020 Strategy and ensuring that the vision of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth guides policies at European and Member State level. On 11th September, SSE [wrote](#) to the College of Commissioners and Heads of Cabinet to call for a renewed attempt to reinforce the Europe 2020 Strategy and acknowledge that the emphasis on social inclusion, and the subsequent need to reduce poverty, as well as increase employment, is essential for the well-being of people in Europe, as well as for the credibility of the European Commission towards delivering a Social Triple A.

On the 21st October, SSE [wrote](#) to the Vice President of the European Commission, Mr. Valdis Dombrovskis, to call on the European Commission to ensure investment in social policies, including social services, and make sure that the Annual Growth Survey 2016 reflects the importance of the social sector in achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. On 9th December, SSE received an answer from the Mr. Dombrovskis’ cabinet reassuring that the European Commission recognizes that a renewed process of upward economic and social convergence is needed in order to tackle the economic and social disparities between Member States and within societies.

On 23rd September, Laura Jones was invited with other Social Services Europe members’ representatives to a small meeting with the head of Commissioner Thyssen’s cabinet (Commissioner responsible for policy leadership on Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility).

Laura Jones and Conny Reuter also met with MEPs and staff that lead the cross-party group promoting the social economy to present SSE priorities and develop engagement.

On 1st December, Laura Jones [spoke](#) at the public hearing hosted at the European Parliament by the Working Group on Public Services of the European Parliament Common Goods and Public Services Intergroup, on behalf of SSE. The event co-organized by SSE with the European Public Services Union (EPSU) focused on the need of unlocking job creation potential of the social sector and on the challenges faced across the sector. Key messages agreed between SSE and EPSU were validated during the event.

Under its presidency, EPR together with SSE member organizations led the drafting of the [recommendations](#) for the 4Quality project to improve quality of jobs and services in personal and household services.

EPR also led the development of the work programme for 2016, which streamlines SSE’s main working areas: recognition of the specificities of the sector, European Semester, quality employment in social sector, job creation and decent working conditions, structural funds, alternatives to public procurement in the financing of services; The decision of focusing SSE attention on the migration phenomenon and the role of social service providers in ensuring integration was also made.