

**PESSIS2 Action 3**  
**Outcome of Discussions of 4 Options at National Level**  
**AUSTRIA**

**March, 3 2014 and April, 28 2014**

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Action 2 of the PESSIS2 project focused on better understanding the interest of employers in the social services sector in 5 countries to participate in European Social Dialogue. One of the outcomes of this action was for each country to agree on a national Roadmap towards European Social Dialogue.

Action 2 was divided into 2 separate meetings. A first focus group was organised in each country to discuss the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the Social Dialogue structures for their social services sector, as well as their interest in participating in European Social Dialogue. The focus group was followed by a second meeting, called Roundtable towards European Social Dialogue, which offered the opportunity to those present to discuss how their sector might be involved in European Social Dialogue, based on the following options:

- Joining the Sectoral Committee for Local and Regional Governments;
- Joining the Sectoral Committee for the Hospital and Healthcare sector;
- Creating an inter-sectoral Committee for the non-for-profit sector, including the social, health, cultural and education sectors;
- Creating a Sectoral Committee for the Social Services Sector.

**The Focus Group was attended by**

Wolfgang Gruber: Chairman Sozialwirtschaft Österreich

Walter Marschitz: Chairman Sector Health and Social Services, Director Hilfswerk Österreich

Walerich Berger: Chairman Sector Labour Market Services, Director Jugend am Werk Steiermark

Erich Fenninger: Deputy Chairman Sozialwirtschaft Österreich, Director Volkshilfe Österreich

Marion Ondricek: Chairwoman Sector Disability Work, Director Balance

Klaus Harter: Director AVS Sozial

Luk Zelderloo: General Secretary EASPD

Marina Einböck: Policy Officer Labour Market Services, Volkshilfe Österreich

Christan Perl: Moderation, Consulting, development and Co-ordination of EU Projects in the social sector, author of the Austrian Report in PESSIS 1

Presentation Luk Zelderloo: Secretary General of EASPD.

## **The Roundtable was attended by**

Representatives of Sozialwirtschaft Österreich:

Wolfgang Gruber: Chairman Sozialwirtschaft Österreich

Walerich Berger: Chairman Sector Labour Market Services, Director Jugend am Werk Steiermark

Klaus Harter: Director AVS Sozial

Representatives of the trade union vida:

Willibald Steinkellner: Chairman of vida section health and social affairs, deputy chairman vida;

Ms. Valerie Kihl: vida Department International Affairs, EFFAT, IUL, EPSU

Representatives of the trade union GPA - djp:

Reinhard Bödenauer: Deputy Division manager GPA - djp

Luk Zelderloo: General Secretary EASPD

Marina Einböck: Policy Officer Labour Market Services, Volkshilfe Österreich, Moderation

Christian Perl: national expert, author of the Austrian Report in PESSIS 1

The national project partner Volkshilfe Austria invited persons to the focus group that are involved as employers in the collective bargaining negotiations in the social service sector in Austria. Therefore the focus group was composed of the heads of the occupational groups of Sozialwirtschaft Österreich, the largest employer organisation in Austria

<http://www.bagskv.at/1001,,,2.html> . The persons invited are in their capacity as heads of different occupational groups responsible to prepare the collective bargaining negotiations together with the members of their section. **Sozialwirtschaft Österreich** is the largest employers' organization in the social service sector. It was founded in February 1997 as a professional association of employers for health and social care professionals with voluntary membership. Being declared statute, the collective agreement BAGS in Austria is the only collective agreement providing regulations for the entire health sector, social services sector, disability sector, child and youth welfare services and labor market services. Currently, the collective agreement BAGS is valid for more than 260 member organizations nationwide and nearly 100,000 people are employed in these areas.

## **What was the Outcome of these discussions? Which option would you prefer to take?**

Sozialwirtschaft Österreich sees social dialogue as an essential pillar of a democratic society. This dialogue is important at all levels. Above all Sozialwirtschaft Österreich is committed to strengthening employers' representation at national level. Realizing importance of social dialogue at European level Sozialwirtschaft Österreich is interested to seize initiative in Austria. The representatives of Sozialwirtschaft Österreich attending the Round table argue

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in support of a participation of Sozialwirtschaft in a possible testing phase of European social dialogue (Pessis 3).

In addition to that the representatives argue in support of an own Sectoral Committee for Social Services in the European Social Dialogue.

Sozialwirtschaft Österreich will have a board meeting in July 2014 where the board will vote on these topics.

### **Why this approach?**

The structure of the Austrian social service sector makes it difficult to join other Sectoral Committees. It is seen as an opportunity to develop the sector in various areas: as an important economic sector, impact, staff recruiting, qualification, workers mobility.

It is important to note that this positioning remains a theoretical and preferred option, rather than a conclusive decision.

### **What are the main issues with regard to participation in European Social Dialogue? What still needs to be tackled?**

- Structure (what needs to be done to set up a ESD Committee on the national level?)
- Representativity (who is involved?)
- Scope
- Making national experts “EU Fit”
- Lack of resources
- Change of important framework conditions: demand, staff, public procurement

Below you may find a summary of the discussions we had in Austria, including the pros and cons of each option.

#### **- Joining the Sectoral Committee for Local and Regional Governments**

- Created in 2004
- CEMR and EPSU are the two partners
- Tackles topics such as public procurement, restructuring, recruitment and retention

#### **Pros**

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#### **Cons**

- Different way of collective bargaining
- Different self-concept

- **Joining the Sectoral Committee for the Hospital and Healthcare sector**

- Created in 2006 after 6 years of negotiations
- HOSPEEM and EPSU are the two partners
- Tackles topics such as Occupational Health and Safety, and Recruitment and Retention
- 15 Full members in HOSPEEM, 14 active + 1 Observer (CEEP)

**Pros**

- Existing committee
- Established working field
- Strong focus on care sector which covers a lot of social services provided by the Sozialwirtschaft Österreich members.

**Cons**

- Leaves out various social services not covered by health issues
- Hospital sector is covered by different players

- **Creating an inter-sectoral Committee for the non-for-profit sector, including the social, health, cultural and education sectors.**

**Pros**

- Non-for-profit providers have a strong commitment to the common interest and therefore a different approach than private, commercial providers.

**Cons**

- Doesn't cover all the relevant players in the field

- **Creating a Sectoral Committee for the Social Services Sector;**

**Pros**

- Good overview of sector
- Possibility to speak as a branch/sector
- Would develop sector as a strong player

**Cons**

- Approaches/interests can vary depending on organizational structure of service providers (public, non-profit, commercial)