



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

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*Committee on Employment and Social Affairs*

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**2009/2222(INI)**

2.3.2010

# **DRAFT REPORT**

on the future of social services of general interest  
(2009/2222(INI))

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

Rapporteur: Proinsias De Rossa

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on the future of social services of general interest (2009/2222(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Treaty on European Union, in particular Articles 2 and 3(2) thereof, and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular Articles 9, 14, 106, 151, 153(1)(j) and (k), 159, 160 and 161 thereof, and Protocol 26 thereto,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular Article 36 thereof,<sup>1</sup>
- having regard to Regulation No 1370/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on public passenger transport services by rail and road,<sup>2</sup>
- having regard to Directive 2006/123/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on services in the internal market, in particular Article 1(3) thereof,<sup>3</sup>
- having regard to Decision No 1098/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2008 on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010),<sup>4</sup>
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Implementing the Community Lisbon programme: Social services of general interest in the European Union’ (COM (2006) 177 final) and the accompanying Commission staff working document on social services of general interest in the European Union (SEC(2006)0516),
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Services of general interest, including social services of general interest: a new European commitment’ (COM(2007)0725),
- having regard to the Commission staff working documents entitled ‘Frequently asked questions in relation with Commission Decision of 28 November 2005 on the application of Article 86(2) of the EC Treaty to State aid in the form of public service compensation granted to undertakings entrusted with the operation of services of general economic interest, and of the Community Framework for State aid in the form of public service compensation’ (SEC(2007)1516) and ‘Frequently asked questions concerning the application of public procurement rules to social services of general interest’ (SEC(2007)1514),
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (COM(2010)2020) and to its resolution of

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 303, 14.12.2007, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 315, 3.12.2007.

<sup>3</sup> OJ L 376, 27.12.2006, pp.36 to 68.

<sup>4</sup> OJ L 298, 07.11.2008, pp.20 to 29.

16 June 2010 on that communication<sup>1</sup>,

- having regard to the Commission’s first ‘Biennial Report on social services of general interest’ (SEC(2008)2179) and its second ‘Biennial Report on social services of general interest’ (SEC(2010)1284)<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Towards a Single Market Act for a highly competitive social market economy’ (COM(2010)0608),
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Towards a better functioning Single Market for services – building on the results of the mutual evaluation process of the Services Directive’ (COM(2011)0020) and to the accompanying Commission staff working paper (SEC(2011)0102) on the process of mutual evaluation of the Services Directive,
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Annual Growth Survey: advancing the EU’s comprehensive response to the crisis’ (COM(2011)0011 final),
- having regard to Commissioner Andor’s statement on the social provisions of the Lisbon Treaty<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the Monti report of 9 May 2010 on ‘A new strategy for the single market at the service of Europe’s economy and society’<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to the ‘Report on the application of Community rules to SSGI’ prepared by the Social Protection Committee in 2008<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to the report entitled ‘A voluntary European quality framework for social services’ prepared by the Social Protection Committee in 2010<sup>6</sup>,
- having regard to the ‘Joint report on social protection and social inclusion 2010’ prepared by the Social Protection Committee in 2010<sup>7</sup>,
- having regard to the conclusions and recommendations of the Forums on Social Services of General Interest held in Lisbon in September 2007, Paris in October 2008 and Brussels in October 2010<sup>8</sup>,
- having regard to the conclusions of the EPSCO Council meetings of 16 and 17 December

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA-PROV(2010)0223.

<sup>2</sup> Commission staff working document accompanying COM(2008)0418 - Biennial Report on social services of general interest.

<sup>3</sup> Plenary debates, Wednesday, 6 October 2010 - Brussels, item 13, Social provisions of the Lisbon Treaty (debate), statement by László Andor, Member of the Commission.

<sup>4</sup> Report to the President of the European Commission by Mario Monti, 9 May 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Council of the EU, 16062/08, ADD1, 20 November 2008.

<sup>6</sup> SPC/2010/10/8 final.

<sup>7</sup> Council of the EU, 6500/10, 15 February 2010.

<sup>8</sup> 1st Forum on Social Services of General Interest, 17 September 2007, Lisbon, Portuguese Presidency;  
2nd Forum on Social Services of General Interest (SSGI), 28 and 29 October 2008, French Presidency;  
3rd Forum on Social Services of General Interest (SSGI), 26 and 27 October, Brussels, Belgian Presidency.

2008, 8 and 9 June 2009 and 6 and 7 December 2010<sup>1</sup>,

- having regard to the following judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU):
  - of 19 April 2007 in Case C-295/05 *Tragsa*,
  - of 18 December 2007 in Case C-532/03 *Commission v Ireland* (Irish rescue services),
  - of 13 November 2008 in Case C-324/07 *Coditel Brabant*,
  - of 9 June 2009 in Case C-480/06 *Commission v Germany* (Stadtwerke Hamburg),
  - of 10 September 2009 in Case C-206/08 *Eurawasser*,
  - of 9 October 2009 in Case C-573/07 *Sea s.r.l.*,
  - of 15 October 2009 in Case C-196/08 *Acoset*,
  - of 15 October 2009 in Case C-275/08 *Commission v Germany* (Datenzentrale Baden-Württemberg),
  - of 25 March 2010 in Case C-451/08 *Helmut Müller*,
- having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 6 December 2006 on the Commission communication entitled ‘Implementing the Community Lisbon programme: Social services of general interest in the European Union’<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 6 September 2006 on a European Social Model for the future<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 27 September 2006 on the Commission white paper on services of general interest<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2007 on social services of general interest in the European Union<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 October 2008 on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the EU<sup>6</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 February 2009 on Social Economy<sup>7</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 6 May 2009 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market<sup>8</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> Council of the EU, press release (Press 358), 2916th Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 16 and 17 December 2008.

Council of the EU, press release, 9721/2/09 REV 2 (Press 124), 2947th Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting Luxembourg, 8-9 June 2009.

Council of the EU, press release, 17323/1/10 REV (Press 331PR CO 43), 3053rd Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 6 and 7 December 2010, Social services of General interest, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Opinion CdR 181/2006 fin on COM(2006)0177.

<sup>3</sup> Texts adopted, P6\_TA(2006)0340.

<sup>4</sup> Texts adopted, T6 -0380/2006.

<sup>5</sup> Texts adopted, P6\_TA(2007)0070.

<sup>6</sup> Texts adopted, P6\_TA(2008)0467.

<sup>7</sup> Texts adopted, P6\_TA(2009)0062.

<sup>8</sup> Texts adopted, P6\_TA(2009)0371.

- having regard to its resolution of 18 May 2010 on new developments in public procurement<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to the results of the Eurofound Quality of Life Surveys of 2003 and 2007<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, the Committee on Regional Development and the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (A7-0000/2011),
- A. whereas the Treaties affirm the Member States’ objective as the constant improvement of living and working conditions, and the Union’s aim as the well-being of its peoples, to be achieved through sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth, a highly competitive social market economy aiming at full employment and social progress, protection and improvement of the environment, combating social exclusion and discrimination, promoting social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child,
- B. whereas Article 14 of the TFEU and Protocol 26 thereto explicitly address services of general interest (SGI) which include social services of general interest (SSGI), both economic and non-economic; and whereas it is confirmed that national, regional and local authorities have the essential role and wide discretion in providing, commissioning and organising services of general economic interest (SGEI), and that the Treaties do not affect the competence of Member States to provide, commission and organise non-economic services of general interest (SGNEI),
- C. whereas the provision of universally available, high quality, accessible and affordable SSGI can therefore be regarded as an essential pillar of the European social model and as the basis for a good quality of life and for achievement of EU economic objectives,
- D. whereas Articles 4(2) and 5(3) TEU encompass subsidiarity at local level, give formal recognition to regional and local self-government and accord them a stronger role,
1. Considers that SSGI and their users have a number of special characteristics in addition to the common characteristics of SGI. SSGI encompass, in addition to health services, both statutory and complementary universally available services, provided directly to the person, that play a preventative and social cohesion and inclusion role and make tangible fundamental social rights;
  2. Stresses that access to SSGI must be universal and independent of wealth or income, and are not only for vulnerable users;
  3. Endorses the recommendation in the Monti report that broadband internet and banking

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA-PROV(2010)0173.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/eqls/2007/index.htm>.

services be new universal services, which should be acknowledged in European legislation;

4. Highlights the fact that SSGI make a major economic contribution in terms of jobs, economic activity and purchasing power – the Commission’s second Biennial Report indicating that the health and social services sector accounts for 5% of economic output and employs 21.4 million people – and that SMEs in particular are reliant on high quality SSGI;
5. Stresses that local authorities play a fundamental role in defining, financing, providing and attributing SSGI: it is estimated that the local and regional government sector is worth 15.9% of EU-27 GDP, with local government alone accounting for 12.9%, and its social protection expenditure for 3% (EUR 378.1 billion);
6. Stresses that the primary purpose of SSGI is to achieve social policy objectives and make tangible the social rights of individuals and groups and that SSGI are often an integral part of social security systems; points out that Eurofound Quality of Life Surveys<sup>1</sup> have verified that one of the most important ways of enhancing citizens’ quality of life, ensuring full inclusion in society and providing for social and territorial cohesion is through the provision and development of SGI including SSGI;
7. Considers that experience demonstrates that the profit maximisation objective of commercial providers of SSGI conflicts with the principles and objectives of SSGI;
8. Stresses that national and local authorities engaged in providing or mandating SSGI need a clear legal basis for their services and expenditures, and that while the information and clarification service developed by the Commission is essential, it is insufficient and does not protect SSGI providers from legal challenge;
9. Considers that it is neither efficient nor democratically acceptable that the ECJ is expected to continue to adjudicate on matters which should be clarified in legislation;
10. Emphasises that SSGI are an indispensable investment for Europe’s future, and are under severe pressure due to the economic and banking crises and government austerity programmes, which are resulting in even greater demand for them;
11. Considers that the principle of solidarity and the strengthening of the European Union require that the crisis, with its growth in unemployment and poverty, must be addressed by a greatly enhanced EU budget, by strengthened structural funds, in particular the European Social Fund, and by a new European debt agency;
12. Believes that the delivery of quality SSGI requires Member State governments to ensure a financial framework for SSGI which guarantees continuity of services and stable financing, as well as decent incomes and working conditions and training for those delivering the services;

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<sup>1</sup> Eurofound - Quality of Life Surveys <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef09108.htm>.

13. Considers that, in order to maintain the delivery of quality SSGI, the Member States need new income streams, such as a financial transaction tax;
14. Believes there is a broad European consensus that SSGI are essential to the well-being of our peoples and an efficient economy but that there is no agreement within or between the Commission and the Council on the implementation of practical measures to overcome identified obstacles to the delivery and development of SSGI;
15. Underlines the fact that Member States and local authorities must be free to decide how SSGI are funded and delivered, whether directly or otherwise, using all available instruments so as to ensure that the Union's social objectives are not weakened by single market rules, while at the same time supporting an environment that promotes quality, accessibility and efficiency in the delivery of the services;
16. Calls for EU legislation to enable mutual societies, associations and foundations to operate on a transnational basis;
17. Calls for clarification of basic principles on the control of state aid, and for a review of the criteria for calculating compensation of public service obligations;
18. Calls for the 2005 Monti-Kroes response to the Altmark case to be broadened so as to simplify the rules, improve flexibility in their application, and expand the derogations. The *de minimis* threshold should be raised to at least EUR 500 000 over a three-year cycle;
19. Calls for reform of the criteria for classifying economic and non-economic SSGI in the framework of current EU legislation;
20. Emphasises that public procurement rules need to be simplified and made more flexible so that public service obligations can be fulfilled;
21. Calls on the Commission formally to recognise other modalities for the selection of providers, such as 'in-house' and 'service concession' methods, and explicitly to accord equal value to all options for the contracting and financing of SSGI; calls for the expansion of the 'in-house' method to include service providers who meet specific general interest criteria;
22. Supports the normative anchoring of a practical 'in-house' tendering option for SSGI, based on the model of the revised Regulation 1370/2007 on public passenger transport services by rail and road, which would provide that any competent local authority may decide to provide services itself or to award public service contracts to a legally distinct entity over which the competent local authority exercises control similar to that exercised over its own department;
23. Believes that local authorities must be involved in an ongoing bottom-up process of overhauling procurement rules to avoid discrepancies between the rules and modes of organisation on the ground;
24. Calls for redefinition of the concept of 'most economically advantageous offer' so as to



make national and local social and quality criteria for the delivery of SSGI an obligatory requirement in procurement contracts, including subcontracts;

25. Stresses that the problems which SSGI providers have identified need prompt solutions;
26. Calls for a programme of reform, to include legislative adaptation and clarification at European level, to support the specific characteristics of SSGI;
27. Considers that the Social Protection Committee has made an important contribution to the understanding and role of SSGI, but that it is not sufficiently representative or transparent to be the driver of a reform programme;
28. Proposes the establishment of a high-level multi-stakeholder taskforce – initially with a two-year mandate – that is open, flexible and transparent, to pursue implementation of the policy initiatives identified in this report and in the 3rd Forum recommendations, the Commission's second Biennial Report and the SPC reports, as well as any other relevant proposals; to initiate a full review of all rules, particularly state-aid and procurement rules, which impact on SSGI and to evaluate how they need to be redesigned so as to respect and support Member States' responsibilities in the definition and delivery of SSGI, taking account of the current Commission review of rules;
29. Considers that, as part of its mandate, the proposed taskforce would also consider innovations such as a European resource centre for SSGI, a Member State register of SSGI, a pilot scheme on elder care, and action programmes based on the European Voluntary Quality Framework (VQF);
30. Calls for a 4th European Forum on SSGI, organised by Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs Committee, to continue the initiative of the 2007 Ferreira report, and to review progress on reform; and for the taskforce to submit a progress report to the 4th Forum, providing the Forum with continuity, direction and substance;
31. Urges that the taskforce be chaired by the Commission's DG Social Affairs; that its membership include DG Competition, DG Single Market, DG Environment and DG Sanco, the European Social Affairs Council (EPSCO), the social partners and civil society organisations active in SSGI; that, in view of their democratic mandate, both Parliament and the Committee of the Regions must be centrally involved; and that social economy enterprises and stakeholders including voluntary associations, as well as local authorities, must be represented;
32. Welcomes the VQF but insists that application of the principles must be monitored using the proposed quality criteria and that stakeholders must be included in the process;
33. Urges that Member States use the VQF to draw up quality accreditation and monitoring systems, and that implementation of the VQF be evaluated with reference to the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Protocol 26 TFEU;
34. Emphasises that decent, stable working conditions and quality training are essential for the delivery of quality social services;

35. Considers that the VQF principles should be used to help define obligatory quality criteria for application to revised public procurement rules;
36. Proposes that the absence of reference in the VQF to funding and service provider status be remedied;
37. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States and of the candidate countries and to the Committee of the Regions.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The world has changed since the Hasse Ferreira Report addressed Social Services of General Interest (SSGI) in 2007. Firstly, the light-regulation economic model diligently promoted by the Commission and the Council over many years spectacularly collapsed at the end of that year. Secondly, and more positively, there is the Lisbon Treaty's new regulatory and policy environment for the support and development of SSGI. SSGI are essential social and economic pillars of our societies. Means must be found to fund them adequately. This report identifies possibilities to address the concerns of providers and users of SSGI in a progressive and decisive manner. In particular, it is crucial to establish a dedicated and bottom-up official body involving all stakeholders to identify and implement the necessary reforms.

### **The Economic Crisis**

There have been enormous economic and social costs of collapse including economic stagnation, large increases in unemployment and poverty. In some cases Member State debt and budget deficits have reached crisis levels through the socialisation of private bank debt. The budgetary pressures generated by this situation are putting enormous strain on funding of SSGI and are additional to the pressures on these services arising from the neo-liberal economic model, which regards such services as optional extras. This has heightened the longstanding concerns of SSGI providers and of citizens, regarding restrictions imposed by Commission interpretations of the Treaties, on how SSGI are funded and delivered.

Current Council and Commission policy is to emphasise fiscal consolidation - the restoration of the debt and budget deficit criteria of the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) even though the crisis has revealed the totally inadequate nature of the SGP as a measure of economic health. The debate about how to address these problems is also about how we save the European Social Model from fatal damage. Finding the right combination for each member state of expenditure on SGI, taxation, and stimulus to help our economies to grow in a sustainable way, thereby making it possible to reduce debt and deficits to manageable proportions in a reasonable timeframe, have been abandoned in favour of a blindly ideological agenda. The critical role that SSGI can play at this time as both safety net and growth boosters is so far largely ignored.

### **The Lisbon Treaty**

However, the Lisbon Treaty's new regulatory and policy potential, if used intelligently, could help renew this essential ingredient of our European Social Model. The response to the crisis could be an opportunity for a renewed political commitment to the social and economic role of universal SSGI.

The new Treaty provisions (Article 3.3 and 9 of the TFEU) empower us to develop a modern Social Market Economy. Article 14 TFEU acknowledges that Services of General Economic Interest (SGEI) are an intrinsic part of Europe's social model. Protocol 26 states clearly the responsibilities of Member States in the delivery of such services, while the European Charter of Fundamental Rights recognises the right of citizens to access SGEI.

This report identifies possibilities to address the concerns of providers and users of SSGI in a progressive and decisive manner. It identifies the legislation and policy that could be developed to ensure that Social Services of General Interest (SSGI), both economic and non-

economic, can be enabled to play their normal role, while helping us to exit the crisis, and contributing to the achievement of the 2020 social and economic strategy, as recognised by the European Council for Social Affairs in December 2010,

### **SSGI Social Role**

Social Services of General Interest (SSGI) are subdivisions of Services of General Interest (SGI) and under prevailing interpretations are sometimes, wrongly categorised as 'economic' services. SSGI and their users have a number of special characteristics in addition to the common characteristics of SGI. SSGI encompass, in addition to health services, both statutory and complementary universally available services, provided directly to the person, that play a preventative and social cohesion and inclusion role and make tangible fundamental social rights.

High quality universal services such as health, education and childcare, and essential network services such as transport, energy and telecommunications, ensure a healthy, active, cohesive and inclusive society, and are also essential for higher levels of labour market participation and for the development of a competitive, social market economy.

### **SSGI Economic role**

SSGI as a whole make a very significant contribution in terms of jobs, economic activity and purchasing power in the economy. The Commission's Second Biennial Report on SSGI indicates that Health & Social Services account for 5% of economic output and employ some 21.4 million.

The CEEP<sup>1</sup> estimates that providers of Services of General Interest (SGI) in the EU contribute directly 26% (EUR 2412 Billion) of EU GDP and employ 64 million people, one third of which are employed in the health and social services.

*Eurofound* Research has established in their Quality of Life Surveys<sup>2</sup>, that one of the most important ways of enhancing the citizens' quality of life, ensuring full inclusion in society, and providing for social and territorial cohesion is the provision and development of SGI/SSGI, whether delivered by State Departments and Agencies, Local authorities, or by social economy enterprises and actors such as Mutual Associations, cooperatives, and voluntary organisations.

### **Funding**

A *Communaautaire* approach of solidarity, a greatly enhanced EU budget to assist the weaker economies, a greater role for the European Investment Bank, and a European debt agency to stabilise the cost of debt, would ensure a quicker recovery and strengthen the European Union at a time when there are growing centrifugal forces weakening the Union. A Europe-wide tax of no more than 0.5% on financial transactions, as agreed in the Berès Report, would raise EUR 200Bn per year.

## **INITIATIVE TO ADVANCE REFORM**

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<sup>1</sup> CEEP: Mapping of the Public services:

[http://www.ceep.eu/images/stories/pdf/Mapping/CEEP\\_mapping%20experts%20report.pdf](http://www.ceep.eu/images/stories/pdf/Mapping/CEEP_mapping%20experts%20report.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Eurofound - Quality of Life Surveys <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef09108.htm>.

Public Authorities engaged in the provision or mandating of SSGI need a clear legal foundation on which to base their services and expenditures. The information and clarification service developed by the Commission is essential for providers and the upgrading of those services is to be welcomed. But Commission clarifications have not removed legal uncertainty. The ECJ is faced with the task of adjudicating on these matters which should be clarified in legislation. This is not satisfactory from a democratic or efficient decision-making point of view.

Volunteer and social economy enterprises, with few resources or management structures, which are delivering SSGI, can be rendered insolvent due to the weight of the bureaucratic requirements of procurement and state-aid rules. This has the effect of limiting their capacity and the willingness of local authorities to use such organisations for service delivery and piloting innovative services.

The challenge is to delineate and provide a secure and flexible framework for SSGI, using all the instruments available to us, to ensure that the social objectives of the Union are supported rather than impeded by rules intended to regulate commercial enterprises.

In the Rapporteur's view a reform package should include a Framework Regulation for SGEI<sup>1</sup> using Article 14 TFEU to define services of general interest and delimit the impact of single market rules. The Regulation could distinguish between economic and non-economic SGI, and consolidate and clarify the general principles and common conditions for the successful operation of these services. However the political configuration of the Council and the Commission makes it unlikely that such legislative can be adopted in the near future, and solutions are required now.

This report outlines a Reform Programme which addresses the difficulties created by Procurement and State-Aid rules for delivery of SSGI, and other issues and makes proposals to achieve a flexible approach for national and local authorities in the funding and attributing of SSGI, either as 'in-house' services. Reforms should also address *inter alia*: The role of social economy enterprises and actors and volunteer organisations in the delivery of SSGI; Define as obligatory, compliance with national and local social and quality criteria in Procurement contracts, including where subcontractors are used; Address the issue of false self-employment in SSGI provision; An EU statute to enable Mutual Societies to operate on a transnational basis.

### **Multi-Stakeholder Taskforce**

Most importantly an ambitious Reform Programme for SSGI needs an official framework dedicated to implementing the necessary reforms. This Report proposes the establishment of a 'High Level Multi-Stakeholder Taskforce', which is supported in the Recommendations of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Forum on SSGI. The Taskforce mandate would be to seek a broad consensus on the various proposals including those of the European Parliament, the Commission, the SPC, the Social Partners, and representative bodies of providers and users; identifying the policy and legal adaptations necessary to establish high quality standards and the legal certainty

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<sup>1</sup> Socialist & Democrats Group Draft SGEI Regulation: [proinsias.derossa@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:proinsias.derossa@europarl.europa.eu).

necessary to ensure full realisation of the social and economic role which SSGI can play in European society. Its membership would consist of the aforementioned organisations and should be chaired by DG Social Affairs and membership should also include DG Competition, DG Single market, DG Environment, and DG Sanco. It would have an initial two year mandate, with the objective of making a progress report to a Fourth Biennial Forum on SSGI, which is also proposed by this report.

An additional idea, which deserves consideration by the proposed Task Force, comes from UNIOPSS<sup>1</sup> which proposes a 'European Resource Centre for SSGI'. This could be a technical reference point between Member States, the Commission and Civil Society at EU level. It could promote an effective European legal framework, facilitate investment, exchange best practice, gather statistics and organise comparative studies. It could be consulted on any legislative initiative with an impact on SSGI. The Monti Report on 'Completing the Single Market (2010)' argues that SGI have an important role economically and socially and concludes there is a need for new universal right to broadband access and to banking services. These, along with existing concerns about the impact of single market legislation on SSGI, need to be legislated for.

### **European Voluntary Quality Standards**

Access to high quality SSGI is a citizen's right. Considerable work has already been done on this issue including by civil society and we are quite close to adopting a Voluntary European Voluntary Quality Framework (VQF). But there are gaps in the VQF which this report seeks to have addressed. Fundamental to quality is: respect for human dignity and fundamental rights; services must be participative; must empower users to take decisions on their own; be holistic and continuous; be provided in partnership with communities and other actors; be provided by skilled professionals working in decent employment and working conditions; be managed in a transparent way and be accountable.

### **Conclusion**

There are many other proposals from EPSU and the ETUC, and service providers such as CEEP, many local authority representative organisations and representative organisations from civil society such as Solidar, European Social Network, Social Platform, REVES, BAGFW, AIM, MEPLF, Eurodiaconia, CEDAG, REIF, and Eurocities. I have carefully considered all these views. All are drawn from their experience and deserve active and serious consideration in a structured and integrated manner, such as by the proposed Task Force.

The problems that providers and users have identified need urgent solutions, and in light of the economic and unemployment crisis our citizens have a greater need than ever for access to high quality Social Services of General Interest, while our economies and our society also needs the benefits which such services can deliver.

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<sup>1</sup> UNIOPSS: [http://www.uriopss-picardie.asso.fr/resources/trco/pdfs/2010/J\\_octobre\\_2010//57908EuropeaManifesto\\_SSGIoct2010.pdf](http://www.uriopss-picardie.asso.fr/resources/trco/pdfs/2010/J_octobre_2010//57908EuropeaManifesto_SSGIoct2010.pdf).