



EPSU General Circular N°5 (2013)

- To members of the of the Standing Committee Health and social Services **(HSS)**
- To members of the Standing Committee Local and Regional Government **(LRG)**
- For information to all trade unions organising in the Health and Social Services Sector **(UNIONS HSS + OTHER UNIONS HSS)** and in the Local and Regional Government Sector **(UNIONS LRG)**
- To the members of the Executive Committee **(EC)**
- For information to the members of the Executive Board of PSI

REF: CFP/MM/ec

Contact person: Carola Fischbach-Pyttel and Mathias Maucher  
Brussels, 6 February 2013

### **Main activities, outcomes and priority issues for EPSU in social services (2010-2012)**

Dear colleagues,

Please find attached an overview of our main activities, topics addressed and documents issued by EPSU between 2010 and 2012 in the area of social services and care services, put together January 2013.<sup>1</sup>

We are motivated to publish this report as amongst others Business Europe<sup>2</sup> has just taken an initiative on what they consider as a model for a “public-private-partnership in social policy in the common interest”. They want to push for “efficiency in the delivery of social services”, “cost effectiveness in public spending” and “access to quality and affordable social services for all”. A breakfast meeting was organised on 29 January 2013 to present first ideas and to reach out to other stakeholders (<http://www.epsu.org/a/9261>). EPSU feels the need to react to such or similar attempts to push marketisation of social service provision. We see strong moves towards “two-tiered systems” of social services delivery, with better service quality and quicker access available for those that (can and are willing to) pay more out of their pocket. We oppose these developments based on our experience with private service delivery. Commercial providers aim at creaming off the financially more attractive parts of the “social service market” to leave the rest to public authorities and organisations of the social economy. Their interest to “enter into social service markets” is facilitated by at least ambiguous policy frameworks supported by the European Commission. The latter supports, partially openly, partially indirectly the setting up and EU-level regulation of transnational markets in health and social care – with policy, EU legislation and financial assistance. A key role is foreseen for service delivery by organisations of the social economy and commercial providers, whereas the public sector is at least “forgotten”, if not totally sidelined.

At EU-level there is an ongoing debate on the legal, policy and quality framework for social services as part of “services of general (economic) interest”. In the last years the European Commission has got more profile with regard to the quality of social services by elaborating European Voluntary Quality Framework on SSGI, in cooperation with

<sup>1</sup>We will come back to this document in the meetings of the Standing Committees HSS and LRG in March 2013 and at our Executive Committee in April 2013.

<sup>2</sup> European Private Sector Employers’ Organisation

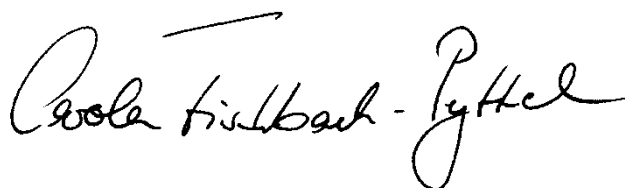
Member States and other stakeholders. It has also issued and recently updated guidance on the application of Community Law (state aid; public procurement; free movement of services) in the field of social services. Three fora on social services were organised between 2007 and 2010. 2011 saw the first initiatives to set up European standards/technical specifications (for sheltered/accompanied housing arrangements for elderly, to start with) in the field of social services. EPSU has accompanied and endeavoured to influence, in different ways, the content and shape of these initiatives.

Within Member States, there are trends towards marketisation / commercialisation and more private provision of social services. This development started long before the economic and social crisis set in. In several Member States we witness cutbacks on spending and a reduction of employment as a consequence of austerity policies. Legislation as well as local and regional authorities define public service obligations for provision of social services. Citizens are concerned with the affordability of the services, their availability across the territory, their quality, their delivery by sufficient and qualified personnel, their continuous provision, rights for users, etc. EPSU has strongly advocated for a guarantee of these objectives and defends mechanisms and systems of solidarity-based financing of social services. For EPSU it is also important to promote good working and employment conditions as well as equal pay for equal work in a sector with a very high share of female employment.

We re-iterated many of these concerns in our contribution to the consultation on personal and household services (of July 2012) and in our position on SSGI (of March 2011). With budget cuts and with private providers seeking to increase their share in social service provision, our colleagues are witnessing increased pressure on the principles of universality and needs-based access. They also report risks for the quality of the services and on the quality of work. EPSU's affiliates fight for "good jobs" and a coverage by collective agreements of those working in social services. We consider that social services must remain a collective task with solidarity-based funding and that this principle must apply to all providers, public and private. We therefore work to keep the sector together. With this rationale EPSU also is engaged in monitoring the eligibility for and in setting up European Work Councils to guarantee information and consultation rights of workers of multi-national enterprises in the field of social services.

We hope you will find this overview interesting and will share it with colleagues working on these issues in your organisation. It should help us to showcase, profile and promote our work done and to strengthen EPSU's role as the trade union federation responsible for social services and working on behalf of those employed in these services, underpinned by activities of our affiliates to increase their organisational basis and the coverage of the sector by social dialogue and collective arrangements. This letter and the overview are being translated into FR, DE, ES, RU and SV (accessible @ <http://www.epsu.org/a/9089>, together with a shorter version of the overview in EN only.

Kind regards,



Carola Fischbach-Pyttel  
General Secretary