



DialogueS Final Conference  
*“Social Dialogue in Social Services for a strong social Europe”*

## Meeting Report

**Date:** 19/10/2020 > **Start Time – End Time:** 10:30 – 14:45  
> **Where:** Online > **Version:** Final

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## 1. Introduction and welcome

### Moderated by Jiří Horecký, Vice-President, Social Employers

- Presentation of the agenda and speakers.
- Introductory remarks.

### Introduction

#### Opening remarks from Gregor Tomschizek, President, Social Employers

- Welcoming participants and speakers, and acknowledgement for their participation.
- Presentation of DialogueS Project and its objective: to build capacity for social dialogue in the social services sector.
- Overview of the main outcomes of the project and collaboration with EPSU.

#### Opening remarks from Maryvonne Nicolle, President of EPSU's HSS (Health and Social Services) committee

- Welcoming participants and speakers.
- Presentation of EPSU's main elements to build social dialogue:
  - o Meet the need of social services sector
  - o Strong Employer's and employee's representativeness at national and European level
  - o Capacity for negotiation and influence policies
- Social dialogue plays a key role in providing support to the actors in the social services sector, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2. The European Commission's intentions regarding social dialogue and the role of social partners

### Video message from

- Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights
  - o The Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights started by thanking the social services *"for their remarkable work and for being in the front line in these exceptional times we are living in"*.
  - o Importance of providing accessible, affordable and quality services for all.
  - o Relevance of the social services sector in the implementation of the Commission's initiatives and in the recovery process from the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - o Key role of constructive partnerships between employers and workers, especially in critical situations such as the one we are facing. He also highlighted the *"importance of social dialogue to achieve resilient and inclusive societies"*.

### Reactions and exchanges among panellists

- Good reception of the video message, which recognises the importance of social dialogue, but hoping that in a future contribution, the EU Commission will go more in details regarding social dialogue in the social services sector.

## 3. Presentation of the report on Benefits of Social Dialogue in Social Services

### Introduction by



- Sylvain Renouvel, Chair of the Social Employers Observatory
  - o Introduction of the observatory and objectives: to provide information on social services, especially on workforce and human resources.
  - o Overview of the first work under the Observatory framework: “[report on the Social Services Workforce in Europe: Current State of Play and Challenges](#)”. The report shows:
    - Social services sector employed more than 11 million people (2019)
    - Difference on social services workforce between countries
    - Main challenges: Gender gap and aging of population

#### The session began with a presentation by

- Alina Pavicevac, Project & Policy Officer, Social Employers
  - o Presentation of the report and aims:
    - Support capacity building for effective national and EU-level social dialogue in social services
    - Gather examples and good practices from countries with well-established social dialogue structures
    - Discussion & lobbying tool
  - o Main factors hindering effective social dialogue at national level.
  - o Benefits of social dialogue from employers’ perspectives at national level:
    - Negotiate and find common solutions
    - Influence policy making
    - Training funds for education and skills development
    - Knowledge management
  - o Benefits of social dialogue from employers’ perspectives: EU-level
    - Have a say in EU policies concerning social services
    - Raise awareness, share experience, good and innovative practices and solutions
    - discuss with European trade unions, bring common topics and demands to the European Institutions
  - o Recommendations:
    - Get recognition from respective governments or affiliate with established structures, both sectoral and cross-sectoral
    - Dedicated & skilled staff and experts to defend interests
    - Join the respective European employers’ organisations and trade unions

## 4. Current state of play of social dialogue and workforce related issues in Southern, Central and Eastern Europe

#### Introduction by

- Jiří Horecký, Vice-President, Social Employers
  - o Presentation of the national events done in the framework of the DialogueS Project.
  - o In total eight events were held in five countries: Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Portugal and Hungary.

#### The session began with a presentation by

- Razvan Gae, Sanitas Federation, Romania
  - o Overview of social services sector in Romania.



- 30% of social services providers in Romania are public and 70% are private.
- 15% of the employees are employed by private providers and 85% are employed by public providers.
- State of play of social dialog in social services in 2020 and impact of COVID-19:
  - A meeting between the representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the representative federations at social assistance sector level, took place in March
  - The most important problem during the COVID-19 outbreak is the total lack of protective equipment and the lack of political will
  - The new rules under the State of Emergency had serious effect on the right of social dialogue
  - The social dialogue was and remains a formal one

#### Q&A

- **Q:** Which is the relation between EU policies and the social dialogue situation in Romania?
  - **A:** The EU Commission is making pressure to the Romanian government to take in consideration the recommendations presented in the European Semester to start negotiations in social dialogue.
- Giannis Bistas, EEA Margarita
  - Introduction of Social Services situation in Greece
  - State of play of Social Services in Greece:
    - Lack of a unifying system
    - Important role of private initiatives
    - Difficulties to have accurate statistics
    - Heavy reliance on EU Funding
    - Social and solidarity economy: New Law at 2016
  - Difficulties of Social Dialogue in Social Services in Greece:
    - Social partners lack of influence in the consultation process
    - lack of Employers' representative body in several sectors and lack of unifying system
    - Lack of Union of Social Service workers
    - Restrictive aspect on who represent a sector or confusion because of the multi-division of the workers
  - Presentation of the new network called "the Network", representing service providers for people with disabilities.
    - The network has 13 initial members
    - Represents the non-profit Service Providers for people with various disabilities
  - The network serves to promote dialogue between the organizations of the sector.

#### Q&A

- **Q:** What are the effects of the different UN conventions on the social services workforce? Do you think that these conventions and the new way of delivering services will change the way how social workers will work in a few years?
  - **A:** To meet the UN conventions, you have to change the way to build the services. You have to answer to the needs of people with disabilities and their families in a new model which is more social. This social model answers to the need of the users, not to the need of workers or government. It presents a positive challenge, the development of new services according to the UN conventions and to the new needs of the beneficiaries.



- Júlia Cardoso, Portuguese Social Workers Organisation
  - o State of play of social services in Portugal:
    - Diversity of non-for-profit Organisations, which had 17.000 employees and had generated an economic impact of over 1.000 euros per year.
    - In 2018, 6.500 organizations providing social services: 71,3 % non-for-profit organisations, and 28,7 % for profit organisations.
  - o State of play of social dialogue in Portugal:
    - Economic and Social Council is the constitutional body for consultation and concertation in the economic and social field.
    - It includes the Permanent Commission for Social Dialogue, where Employers' Confederations and Union Confederations discuss public policies on employment, vocational training, social security, etc.
    - Topics as better conditions for professional practice and better organisation of social services, have not had the necessary attention in the consultation process.
    - Main challenge: strong pressure from the Order of Nurses to become the leaders of residential structures for the elderly
  - o APPS concrete actions/steps to build capacity for social dialogue in social services:
    - Since the adoption of the law creating the Order of Social Workers in 2019, APPS will participate in the discussions and negotiations on social services.
    - Positions are essentially presented to the government, specifically to social security and health ministries, in meetings or by mail.
  - o Next steps:
    - Systematically collect information on job satisfaction and promotion of transparency for the design of internal and external policies
    - Analyse what the needs are, opportunities, and strategies
    - Organisation of a small forum
    - Deepening the analysis of our reality

#### Q&A

- o **Q: How is the representation of the trade unions in Portugal?**
  - **A:** In Portugal there are workers unions, but they are not representatives. Social workers are divided in many different unions.

## 5. COVID-19 challenges in social services

### Moderated by Mads Samsing, hkkommunal Denmark, President LRG Committee EPSU

- Presentation of the agenda and speakers.

#### The session began with a presentation by

- Bettina Kromen, Deputy Head of Unit, Modernisation of Social Protection Systems, DG EMPL, European Commission
  - o Presentation of the EU Commission [Report on the impact of demographic change](#) from June 2020. Main demographic outcomes:
    - Shrinking working age population
    - Increasing share of older people: 65+: from 20.3% in 2019 to 30.3% in 2070 and 80+: from 5.8% in 2019 to 13.2% 2070
    - Significant differences between demographic profiles at regional level



- Shrinking EU shares in global population (and GDP)
  - Presentation of the main policy challenges, as sustaining economic growth, by bringing more people into jobs and fostering productivity growth.
  - COVID-19 impacts: long-term care workforce, overview of the issues and recommendations.
  - Common challenges in long-term care across the EU:
    - Access and affordability
    - Quality
    - Workforce & supporting informal carers
    - Sustainability
  - The access to LTC is an issue in most of the countries, as well as informal care which increases gender inequalities in the labour market.
  - More than 50 % of the EU population aged +65 years old with severe activity limitation can't benefit of LTC.
  - Overview of work done at EU level.
- Eileen Rocard, Junior Economist, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- Impact on LTC mortality of COVID-19: over 90% of COVID-19 deaths were among those aged 60/65+.
  - Presentation of the LTC workforce challenges collected in the [OECD report](#):
    - Poor working conditions
    - Physical and mental risk factors
  - Increase recruitment and improve retention are the highlighted ways to develop the LTC workforce. Ways for it:
    - There are four ways to recruit: get back to work initiatives, image campaigns, financial supports and initiatives to try to recruit men.
    - To retain workers in the sector, the improvement of working conditions is needed.
  - Policy responses since COVID-19 outbreak:
    - Recruiting additional staff
    - Loosening regulation
    - Awarding bonus to LTC workers
    - Supporting LTC workers' families
    - Providing psychological support
    - Developing telehealth
  - Most LTC workers are in low-skilled jobs with low entry requirements. To provide training is needed to increase care quality.

## Q&A

- **Question:** what does it mean to adapt social services to the EU Commission recommendations?
  - **Answered by Bettina Kromen:** The main way that the EU Commission has to provide recommendations and support Member States is by the country recommendations report collected in the European Semester. The approach taken is to provide guidelines on how to face the current situation of aging with two key objectives: maintaining the adequacy of the systems with sustainability.
- **Question:** How can EU Institutions impose mandatory trainings to EU member states?



- **Answered by Bettina Kromen:** The EU can provide funding to promote trainings at national level. Public procurement can also have an important role in supporting trainings.
  - **Question:** What is the number of workers in the social services sector need to meet the current demand? Moreover, social workers would like to receive training and continuing their learning process but due to COVID-19 they cannot stop working to receive trainings, what is your vision on this? And finally, is there a report made by the OECD on the number of people receiving home care?
    - **Answered by Eileen Rocard:** A report on the number people receiving home care will be published next year. Regarding the number of people needed in the sector, send an email to [Eileen Rocard](#) for further information.
    - **Answered by Bettina Kromen:** we ask Eurofound to collect the information on staff shortages to make an assessment on how many workers will be needed in the sector. A way to deal with the increasing demand is to reduce the need for care, by helping people remaining active, independent and participating in society.

### Joint Position Paper on Recruitment & Retention presented by

- [Jakob Embacher, Policy Assistant EPSU, and Sylvain Renouvel, Director Social Employers](#)
  - Presentation of the Joint Position Paper on Recruitment and Retention in European Social Services state of play, challenges and recommendations.
  - Role of the EU Institutions:
    - EU level employment policies aiming to create more and better jobs
    - European Pillar of Social Rights
    - European Semester
    - New Skills Agenda for Europe
    - European Social Fund +
  - Role of social dialogue:
    - Develop a joint framework on how to support the social services sector in responding to the challenges & opportunities in the field of recruitment and retention
    - Develop guidelines for the sector on how to best respond to challenges & opportunities
    - Launch a joint campaign on recruitment and retention

## 6. Presentation of social partner initiatives on Covid-19: joint responses and follow-up

### Jointly presented by

- [Jakob Embacher, Policy Assistant EPSU, and Sylvain Renouvel, Director Social Employers](#)
  - Presentation of the joint initiatives on COVID-19.
  - Presentation of the Joint Position Paper on “Preparing the social services sector for the COVID-19 resurgence and increasing its resilience”
  - Overview of COVID-19 challenges and recommendation in the social services sector.
  - Role of the EU Institutions:
    - Coordination of common safety protocols and health guidelines at European level



- Develop guidelines on enhanced cooperation between health and social care and on cross-border movements for care workers
- Creation of social funds for emergency response
- Urgently facilitate social services' access to EU and national funds
- Ensuring enough and well-trained social care staff
- Recognition for the social services sector
- Role of social dialogue:
  - Jointly agreeing possible solutions, measures and initiatives to protect workers and users, and to promote the recognition of the sector.
  - EU social dialogue can be fundamental to promote cooperation among social partners in ensuring preparedness of social services by the exchange of good practices and the formulation of principles and guidelines.

## 7. Conclusion

### Concluding remarks by

#### - Penny Clarke, Deputy General Secretary, EPSU

- Key message from this webinar:
  - We need to fight on the different social areas simultaneously.
  - COVID-19 has presented several challenges but also the opportunity to structure the sector, to have more care workers, better conditions and more funding.
  - *"The advantage of building the social dialogue in social services sector will enable us to influence all this different social area at once. To structure social areas at European level will help to have a coordinated program and a coordinate support."*
  - Social dialogue is a key area to develop at EU level.
  - Looking forward to the next steps.

### Concluding remarks by Gregor Tomschizek, President, Social Employers

- Overview of the achievements of the European Social Employers through the different projects:
  - Better knowledge of social dialogue at national level, exactly in 25 EU member states.
  - Better knowledge of the state of play of the workforce in Europe.
  - Development of recommendations with EPSU to face challenges in the sector.
  - Reinforce social dialogue at EU and national level.
  - Better visibility of the Social Employers at EU level, with 28 members representing 17 EU countries.
- Next steps:
  - Social Employers together with EPSU applied to develop a project on the impact of COVID-19 in social services and on the attractiveness of the sector. This project could help to develop social dialogue culture at national level.
  - Eurofound will publish the representativeness study in November, which could help the Social Employers to build social dialogue for social services at EU level.

The Final Conference was closed at 14:45.





## Supporting Documents

- [Agenda](#)
- Joint Position Paper on “[Recruitment and Retention in European Social Services](#)”.
- Joint Position Paper on “[Preparing the social services sector for the COVID-19 resurgence and increasing its resilience](#)”.

## Presentations

- [Alina Pavicevac, Project & Policy Officer, Social Employers](#)
- [Razvan Gae, Sanitas Federation](#)
- [Giannis Bistas, EEA Margarita](#)
- [Júlia Cardoso, Portuguese Social Workers Organisation](#)
- [Bettina Kromen, Deputy Head of Unit, Modernisation of Social Protection Systems, DG EMPL, European Commission](#)
- [Eileen Rocard, Junior Economist, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#)
- [Jointly presentation by Jakob Embacher, Policy Assistant EPSU, and Sylvain Renouvel, Director Social Employers](#)

