



News Letter

1/2002

Observatory for the Development of Social
Services in Europe

New EU processes: The "Open Method of Coordination"

Since the commitment of the Treaty of Amsterdam on 1 May 1999, EU Member States have been contractually called upon to pay increased attention to their social policy activities. Articles 136 and 137 of the Treaty require that EU Member States should cooperate in providing social protection and combating social exclusion so that these policy areas can, if this is desired at a later date, be integrated into actual EU legislation.

At the Lisbon European Council of June 2000, the 15 EU heads of state and government resolved to implement these contractual provisions by means of a concerted "strategy for combating social exclusion" based on the "open method of coordination".

Until then, this method had been used primarily in the employment policy area. It consists of defining shared objectives that each of the 15 Member States should implement within the scope of its own national policy. Each Member State is called upon to draw up a so-called "National Action Plan" and submit it to the European Commission for assessment. A deadline is then set for the implementation of the objectives, and afterwards each Member State must report to the European Commission once again.

In the view taken by the Member States, the advantage of applying this method in the field of social policy is that it allows joint policy measures on the EU-level – which are less binding than community laws – to be taken in an area which until now had been handled exclusively on a national level. The idea is that the Member States create reciprocal obligations concerning political decisions without being compelled to agree to uniform legislation.

The main impetus for implementing the process is in the hands of the Member States. Implementation begins with high-level government representatives meeting to prepare the adoption of joint objectives by the EU Council. At this stage, the European Commission plays the role of a "secretariat". However, it has the primary responsibility for assessing the implementation of the joint objectives.

The Member States and the Commission agree that the first phase of implementation of the open method of coordination within the scope of the European strategy for combating social exclusion was a success: schedules were respected, and the 15 Member States submitted their "National Action Plans" by the set deadline.

From the point of view of the non-government social welfare associations and municipal organisations working together in the German Asso-

ciation for Public and Private Welfare, the strategy for combating exclusion has indeed provided valuable political impulses – with regard to reconciling family and work and to combating poverty, for instance – but there are still problems to be overcome in terms of the procedure in general.

The objectives were adopted by the 15 heads of state and government at the Nice summit. Before this, extensive negotiations had taken place between high-level government representatives of the Member States in the EU Social Protection Committee. The welfare associations were not consulted until later, at the stage of drawing up the "National Action Plans" – and to actually implement the objectives in Germany.

From the point of view of the German welfare associations, not being involved until a relatively late stage was problematic, as they wanted to and would ultimately have to participate in the process actively, if the project was to be successful at all political levels and have concrete effects. An additional difficulty is that until now consultation with the welfare associations is not compulsory. The associations were eager to participate in the meetings that did take place, but it is also vital that this consultation mechanism be formalised.

It has also become obvious that the strategy for combating exclusion is not well coor-

Editorial

DEAR READER,

SINCE THE LISBON EUROPEAN COUNCIL (JUNE 2000), THE OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION HAS BECOME AN IMPORTANT INSTRUMENT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO COMBATING SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND DISCRIMINATION IN EUROPE. THE METHOD AIMS AT DRAWING ALL POLICY ACTORS AT NATIONAL LEVEL INTO NATIONAL ACTION PLANS; THE INSTRUMENTS TO MONITOR POLICIES AND EVALUATE MEASURES ARE PROVIDED AT UNION LEVEL. IN HER EDITORIAL ARTICLE, DR. KATHARINA ERDMENGER WILL PRESENT THE PROCESS OF COORDINATION IN GREATER DETAIL. SHE WILL DESCRIBE THE IMPORTANCE AND EFFECTS OF THIS METHOD AS WELL AS POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS WITH REGARD TO SOCIAL POLICIES IN INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES AND TO SOCIAL SERVICES. AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS METHOD IS THE DETERMINATION OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS, A TOPIC DEALT WITH BY DR. RUDOLF MARTENS IN THE GUEST COLUMN. FOR THE AREA OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION, SOME INDICATORS HAVE ALREADY BEEN DEVELOPED; OTHERS ARE CURRENTLY BEING DISCUSSED. HOWEVER, THERE ARE AS YET NO INDICATORS TO ADEQUATELY MEASURE THE EXTENT, STRUCTURE AND QUALITY OF SOCIAL SERVICES AT EU LEVEL. THIS PROBLEM WILL BE TACKLED DURING A CONFERENCE HOSTED BY THE OBSERVATORY IN COOPERATION WITH THE FEDERATIONS OF WELFARE ASSOCIATIONS IN OCTOBER 2002.

THE EDITORIAL TEAM

minated between the federal and state governments. This is due primarily to the fact that the implementation of objectives – if it is to be effective – must also be linked to financial measures. However, it is precisely these financial consequences that state governments seem to fear.

Meanwhile, the European heads of state and government have decided to extend the open method of coordination to other policy areas. In particular, it is to be used in the area of modernisation of pension systems, health and elderly care, youth and migration – although with perhaps less rigour, for the moment, than in the fight against social exclusion. Here again, it is important for the Member States to tackle challenges such as ageing society, which affect all of them equally, with a concerted approach. But they must see to it that, particularly in the issues currently in discussion, coordination does not encourage a primarily competitive approach to the topics in question. In the field of migration policy there is also the additional risk that the currently envisaged legislative process to create a joint European asylum and immigration law could end up being replaced by a non-binding coordination process.

Overall, the municipal organisations and non-government social welfare associations want greater transparency and public exposure for coordination. They are willing and able to contribute to its success; indeed many of the objectives cannot really be effectively implemented without their cooperation.

Above all, the German welfare associations therefore want to be involved in intensive consultation at all stages of the process and its political implementation: in Germany, the relevant actors at all federal levels must be drawn into the process in an adequate manner. Funds for concrete implementation measures must also be guaranteed. As a process, “the open method of coordi-

nation” has the potential to provide impulses for the development of the social dimension of the EU, but it should not degenerate into a series of non-binding, non-transparent arrangements.

*Dr. Katharina Erdmenger
Diakonisches Werk [Welfare and Social Association] of the Protestant Church in Germany*

Guest column

Indicators – a key element of coordination policy in Europe

In March 2000, an extraordinary meeting of the European Council was held in Lisbon. The Member States of the European Union, in an effort to react vigorously to common problems such as long-term unemployment, social exclusion, low levels of labour force participation and weak economic growth, wanted to agree new strategic objectives in the areas of economic reform, employment and social cohesion. The focus of the resolutions taken is on exchange of information and best practices. This is to be achieved on the basis of jointly agreed indicators chosen to document the progress or to elucidate special problem situations. The Lisbon agreements have

made indicators a key element of European economic, employment and social policy.

Indicators and the “open method of coordination”

The objectives agreed in Lisbon are to be achieved primarily by way of a “more coherent and systematic approach” of policy instruments. The assessment of experience made in the area of economic and employment policies has led to the development of a new policy instrument: the “open method of coordination”. The method means process-controlled convergence by way of jointly agreed objectives and indicators. Indicators have a central role to play: on the one hand, they are meant to describe the current situation in the Union, and on the other to reflect changes over the time and differences in development from country to country.

In accordance with the mandate of the Lisbon Council of 2000, the Union has resolved to combat poverty and social exclusion. A Social Protection Committee created at Council level (June 2000) formed a sub-committee to develop indicators suitable for the entire European Union. In the

course of 2001, a total of 18 indicators were developed and coordinated to describe the scope and dynamic of the development of poverty in the EU and to show the effects of anti-poverty policies in the various Member States. The idea was to enable the Commission to draw up a substantial report on social integration in the EU (Social Protection Committee, report on indicators in the field of poverty and social exclusion, October 2001 – “Stanton Report”).

Structural indicators and synthesis reports outside the open method of coordination

The Lisbon European Council decided that in addition to the new policy instrument of open coordination, EU policies should be regularly discussed and assessed on the basis of jointly agreed “structural indicators”. With this in mind, the Council invited the Commission “to draw up an annual synthesis report on progress on the basis of structural indicators to be agreed relating to employment, innovation, economic reform and social cohesion” (Presidency Conclusions, no. 36, Lisbon, March 2000).

The Council had asked the Commission to make the indicator lists as concise and to the point as possible; results were expected to give a clear and comprehensible political signal. The Commission drew up a list of 36 structural indicators which it coordinated with the Council and used to prepare the first synthesis report in 2001 (Communication from the Commission COM (2000) 594, 27 September 2000, COM (2001) 619, 30 October 2001).

The structural indicators cover six areas: general economic background, employment, innovation and research, economic reform, social cohesion, environment. Further indicators are being discussed; the Commission wants the development of a complete list of indicators to be largely completed by 2003 and agreed with the Council.





On the basis of the indicators and of the Commission's synthesis reports, the European Council can then discuss and decide "how to modernise the European model and attain the Union's strategic goal for the next decade decided at Lisbon" (Presidency Conclusions, Stockholm, March 2001).

Indicators for sustainable development in the Union

The Brundtland Commission defined sustainable development as "meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Commission, 1987, "Our common future").

The European Council summit in Göteborg (June 2001) agreed a strategy for sustainable development to complement its political commitment to an economic and social union. The Council conclusions singled out four priority areas: climate change, ensuring sustainable transport, addressing threats to public health and managing natural resources more responsibly. The Council also agreed that the Commission, in its annual synthesis report, would assess the implementation of the strategy for sustainable development on the basis of a number of indicators, and that these indicators would be

developed and agreed at Council level by 2002.

Indicators of a German sustainability strategy

With regard to sustainability, Germany's own objectives are even more ambitious than those of the Union: here, sustainability is to be understood as an across-the-boards task and as the underlying principle of German policy. Current policies should be oriented to the model developed at the Rio de Janeiro UN conference in 1992. Under the keyword "Agenda 21", the signatory states had pledged to adopt a strategy aiming at economically efficient, socially just and ecologically acceptable development.

The German sustainability strategy needs indicators that can describe a great range of areas accurately. The current German government has chosen 21 key indicators to show where Germany is on the way to sustainable development and what progress has been achieved. Four areas have been chosen: intergenerational justice, quality of life, social cohesion and international responsibility. The number of key indicators has been kept intentionally small: the idea is to get a comprehensive rather than a detailed picture of sustainability. The German government expects clear and

effective political signals (German government: Perspektiven für Deutschland. Unsere Strategie für eine nachhaltige Entwicklung. Entwurf der Nationalen Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie [2002]).

Consequences for welfare associations

By now, indicators have become more than merely an instrument for statisticians. As a great number of indicators now have binding force across the EU, they have achieved immense political significance. Nowadays, it has become fully natural in the media and among the politically interested general public to place economic topics in a EU context. The German welfare associations recognise the importance of this development, and they intend to get involved in the debate on a European social policy.

What is still missing from the point of view of the welfare associations are indicators to describe the organisation and importance of social services at EU level (e.g. provider structure, financing, taxation, etc.). Hardly any research has been done on this topic. What indicators are necessary to provide an accurate picture of social services in Europe? What sources of data are there? In addition to these questions, there is still a lot of basic work to be done. Therefore the Observatory in close co-operation with Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband will organise a conference on 16 and 17 October 2002. In a workshop the participants will assess the situation and look at the prospects for future research.

Dr. Rudolf Martens
social science analysis; Paritätischer
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Main report

European forum on the role of social services within the scope of services of general interest and on current and future challenges for social services

On 5 October 2001, a seminar on "The Future of Social Services in Europe", organised jointly by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and the Observatory for the Development of Social Services in Europe, took place in Brussels. It provided an opportunity for representatives of providers and users of social services and representatives of the relevant ministries in several EU Member States to meet with the EU Commission for an intensive discussion on the future of high-quality, universally accessible and affordable social services in Europe. The one-day event also focused on the challenges involved in the provision, organisation, funding and further development of social services within the scope of services of general interest.

The day began with a presentation and analysis of the demographic, economic and social challenges involved in the provision of social services. This was followed by presentations and discussions on type, scope and form of social services. The seminar took into account both the academic point of view and the positions of providers and users; it was also an occasion for taking stock and looking ahead to possible future needs and innovations. Moreover, the role of Europe was in the centre of discussions. The issues covered dealt primarily with how, in the further development of social services, the EU Commission should shape competences agreed upon in treaties or determined by politics.

Prof. Gøsta Esping-Andersen
(Universitat Pompeu Fabra,

Barcelona) started his presentation by raising the question of which social services would be needed in future as a result of changing demographic, social, economic and political conditions. More particularly, he explored the potential for the creation of new jobs which might develop as a consequence of increased demand for the type of care services that had until now, across Europe, been provided mainly within the family context. He also outlined the elements of a strategy that could create a sustainable financial basis for funding these services and various concepts to distribute the resulting economic burdens. Prof. Martin Knapp (London School of Economics and Political Sciences) spoke of a general tendency in all countries to give more attention to the needs and interests of the users of social services. He explained why such a reorientation towards user perspective and quality assessment could lead to better results and raised the issue of what consequences greater user participation and a growing number of options offered to users would have, particularly with regard to the overall provider landscape and to the quality of the services offered. Prof. Edith Archambault (Université de Paris) focused on the advantages of a pluralistic provision of social services. This, she explained, would make it possible to satisfy a heterogeneous demand as to preferences and values and to encourage innovative concepts of social work within a competition for suitable solutions. Users of social services could profit greatly from the creation of local information centres and systems.

Pastor Jürgen Gohde (President of the Diakonisches Werk of the Protestant Church in Germany) expressed his wish to see the declaration of cooperation between EU bodies and NGOs infused with more life. He named five central values or guidelines for the orientation of social services so as to best promote public interest.

Within the scope of the discussion on services of general interest, and in particular with regard to the application of EU competition law to institutions organised along the lines of the solidarity principle and to not-for-profit services, he found it justified that these services should merit special treatment. The secretary of the European Disability Forum, Frank Mulcahy, explained the importance of the principles of greater independence and guarantee of freedom of choice for users of social services from the point of view of people with physical or mental disabilities.

Kirtikumar Mehta and Gabrielle Clotuche examined the applicability of EU competition law and the options and competences of the EU in areas relevant to social services. Mr. Mehta, representative of the EU Directorate-General for competition, explained the criteria leading to a non-application of competition law to services of general interest. Overall, he expressed his belief that national actors continue to have a large leeway for defining access rights and conditions of social service provision. Ms. Clotuche, representative of the EU Directorate-General for employment and social affairs, stressed the EU strategy for combating social discrimination, exclusion and poverty as re-stated at the Lisbon summit. She explained that social services were a key element of this strategy – and thus in the development of a European social model. In this context, she also pointed out the expanded responsibilities of the Commission to promote exchanges and improve the coordination of policies between the individual EU Member States.

In his closing words, State Secretary Peter Haupt (German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth) referred to the central role of social services in implementing social rights; in this context, he mentioned the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the EU social agenda and the stra-

tegic aims of the European Union as defined in Lisbon. He suggested that debate on the further development of social services should consider their effect on employment, concentrate on the potential advantages of quality orientation and abandon an excessively rigid focus on prices and costs.

A seminar report is published under the title “The Future of Social Services in Europe”. It includes a summary of the lectures and plenary discussions – focusing on the German participants – as well as an overview of the developments and opinions on the topic of services of general interest and an outlook on the activities planned by the EU Commission in the coming months. This publication can be ordered from the Observatory or downloaded in pdf format from the project website.

Mathias Maucher

Social services: a vital element of social cohesion in Europe

Representatives of more than 30 European countries took part in a conference on “The Role of Social Services for Sustainable Social Development” held at the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin on 25-26 October 2001. The conference was organised by the Observatory in close cooperation with the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and with the Council of Europe.

The primary objective of the conference was to promote an exchange of ideas and experiences among participants from the individual countries of the Council of Europe and among representatives of governments, municipalities and NGOs. The main focus of the conference lied on three working groups; this report presents the most important results of their deliberations.

In her welcome address to the first plenary session, Dr. Christine Bergmann, Germany’s Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, stressed that Europe had to be given a social character, i.e. it should be made for the people and with the people. Social services have a central role to play in a social Europe. They are an indispensable element of social protection and social security in Europe. Social services as part of services of general interest thus belong to the established structures and institutions within the member countries of the Council of Europe, entrusted with tasks related to public welfare. The welcome address given by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Dr. Walter Schwimmer, also referred to the important role of social services in achieving one of the main objectives of social development: the eradication of poverty and social exclusion. This becomes particularly clear in situations where social services are about “helping people to escape from the trap of social marginalisation and exclusion”. Dr. Walter Schwimmer referred to Article 14 of the European Social Charter, which guarantees the right to benefit from social welfare services, and established a direct link to the universal importance of social services.

In the keynote speeches that followed, the two speakers, Professor Igor Tomes (Czech Republic) and Brian Munday (Great Britain) presented the challenges facing Europe in the context of political and social changes. Prof. Tomes explained that there are still clear differences between the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the members of the European Union – not only with regard to funding for social services and the range of services available. In his opinion, social services in Western Europe can focus mostly on social cohesion and include a number of prophylactic elements, while the main problem in post-communist countries is still a struggle to reduce social exclusion.

The historical differences between European countries and regions were also evident in the deliberations of the three working groups, which followed the first plenary session. In the first group, which dealt with “Structures, actors and responsibilities in the provision of social services” participants confirmed the variety of situations and systems present in Europe. However, they also reported that a certain amount of convergence was taking place, a tendency reflected in the fact that individual countries see the necessity of central position for the framework for the provision of social services – legal certainty, funding, standards, etc. They agreed that it was preferable to decentralise the provision of social services in order to bring these services as close to the user as possible. Participants also stressed the necessity of direct user involvement. Independently from existing systems and their varying degree of development, the countries of Europe are currently facing similar challenges: above all budget restrictions with regard to public services, tendencies of decentralisation, increases in cross-border social services and a greater range of services offered by private for-profit providers. The main task of

the second working group about “Concepts and forms of the provision of social services – practical experience” was to find examples of “good practice” in participating countries, and, on this basis, to develop criteria for Europe-wide comparability and mutual learning. However, Europe has not yet managed to develop clear criteria and standards to define good and best practice in the area of social work. The group called for the European Commission to establish a European database where providers of social services could find information about good practice in particular areas. Working group C discussed “The role of users in social services – possibilities for participation”. The reasons why users should participate in the provision of social services are complex. On the one hand, they have to do with important values: in this case, democracy, equal opportunities and transparency. There are also instrumental arguments in favour of user participation. The members of the working group agreed that user participation could improve the quality of social services, make it easier to target client needs and promote innovation. There are already a number of user participation models in Europe; differences between them were dis-



During the opening address of Minister Dr. Christine Bergmann. Seated (from left to right): Prof. Igor Tomes, Hans-Georg Weigel, Dr. Walter Schwimmer, Prof. Helmut K. Anheier, Prof. Brian Munday

cussed. In the course of the two-day conference, the members of this working group drew up a list of recommendations with a total of 15 demands that are presented in detail in the conference documentation.

In his address to the concluding plenary session on “The Future of Social Services in Europe”, Pastor Jürgen Gohde, President of the Diakonisches Werk of the Protestant Church in Germany once again referred to the principle of sustainability. In his opinion, sustainable development in the field of social services means greater user involvement, a steady improvement of voluntary commitment, greater transparency and increased equity in the provision of funds. Another important element of sustainable social development is adequate qualification of personnel to ensure the high quality of the social services offered in Europe. It would be necessary to establish a “European Social Academy” that would develop joint qualification models.

In his closing words, John Murray, head of the Council of Europe’s social policy department, gave the following summary of the two days of intensive work in the individual groups: “I think this conference has indicated very clearly that there is a lot of

scope for work on social services at the European level. We are convinced that this should not just be a one-off event, but, on the contrary, the starting-point for future work.”

NB: THE INDIVIDUAL PAPERS ARE PART OF A CONFERENCE DOCUMENTATION WHICH WILL BE PUBLISHED IN GERMAN, ENGLISH AND FRENCH. THIS PUBLICATION WILL SOON BE AVAILABLE FROM THE OBSERVATORY. IT CAN ALSO BE DOWNLOADED IN PDF FORMAT FROM THE OBSERVATORY’S HOMEPAGE.

Beatrix Holzer



Vived interest in the information stands of the Observatory, the Council of Europe and the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

Social services in Europe

Social Services in The Netherlands

The provision of care and welfare (social services) and its constituent system are directed at the encouragement, care, support and counselling of people. They are meant to help people to feel well and to function adequately in their families, at work, at school and in their neighbourhoods. The responsibility for social services in the Netherlands has been almost completely decentralised. The provinces and the 496 municipalities receive money from the central government to 'buy' services from private organisations.

The 12 provinces are responsible for the professional support of social workers. They also have some co-ordinating tasks in the fields of child and youth care and care for the elderly.

In addition, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) is responsible for the overall care and welfare policies, for innovation, research and international relations. However, the larger part of these responsibilities is transferred to (semi)private national bodies such as the NIZW (Editors: Netherlands Institute for Care and Welfare).

This organisation of the care and welfare sector is laid down in the Welfare Act, which was implemented in 1994. Institutions for the disabled, home care, nursing homes and residential homes for the elderly are covered by the Exceptional Medical Expenses Act (AWBZ). The Facilities for the Disabled Act (WVG) encompasses the provision of (medical) aids, adjustments in houses and compensation for transport. The WVG is also implemented by the local authorities.

Main Sectors

Here we will briefly discuss five main types or sectors of social services.

Care for the disabled

Policies for the physically disabled and mentally disabled focus on the principle of equal opportunity. Physical and social integration are the main issues. Services are needed to realise these aims.

Many services for the disabled are directed at the non-care and welfare sectors, for instance education, employment, social security, transport and housing. These services focus on adjustments in homes and offices, accessibility of public areas and buildings, the creation of sheltered employment and extra support for special education.

For physically disabled people living at home but unable to work independently, there are activity centres. Similar provisions exist for people with a mental disability. For the more severely mentally handicapped there is a range of residential and semi-residential services, such as 'sheltered workshops', where people can work under adapted working conditions. Residential services are provided for those who cannot manage on their own.

The overall policy is to reduce the number of disabled in residential care and to have small-scale services in all cases. The personal budget has been introduced in an effort to better match needs and benefits.

Care for the elderly

Older people should be able to participate in public life and live on their own as much and for as long as possible, with additional assistance when necessary. In this respect home care is an important factor. Providers of home care services offer all care, nursing, and monitoring services for people who require assistance at home. They also lend and sell all sorts of (medical) aids. Home care usually consists of relatively 'light' domestic help for a couple of hours per week. More frequent and/or intensive help is provided when needed for a limited period of time. There are also residential homes for people who are unable to live alone even with



the help of home care and informal care. And finally, nursing homes focus on those who need the most intensive type of care and nursing.

At the local level there are various welfare organisations for the elderly. They offer services like 'meals on wheels', organise social events, excursions, et cetera. Educational activities 'for the third age' are becoming increasingly popular. In many places elderly people participate in local 'guilds' for guiding services and other voluntary jobs.

Ethnic Minorities

Resident members of an ethnic minority should have access to and make use of existing general services as much as possible. At the same time it should be possible for them to retain and develop their native culture. For these reasons the authorities often offer financial support to minority organisations. Special services and policies for (immigrant) minorities exist only in urgent cases, for instance for refugees and asylum seekers. These groups are given (compulsory) courses in Dutch language and culture. In addition there are many informal (non-certificate) and formal courses aimed at immigrants and disadvantaged groups of immigrants: how to overcome health problems, how to find a job, etc. Over the past few years many efforts have been made to improve the home and family situation of immigrants with parenting support, pre-school

education and extra attention for immigrant pupils. A special law has been adopted to promote equal opportunities for immigrants on the labour market.

Youth policy

Child and youth care consists of youth protection and voluntary youth care. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for youth protection. Young people who come into 'contact with the law' can be placed in a residential institution or in guardianship. Voluntary care consists of ambulatory youth care, foster care and residential care, or a combination of these three. For complex problems and/or intensive treatment there are special provincial or regional child-care service bureaus one can turn to for an independent need assessment.

Preventive youth policy is the responsibility of the local authorities. Almost all municipalities finance services specifically meant for young people, such as youth centres, youth information and counselling centres and community centres. In addition there are many voluntary organisations working in leisure and sports. People other than the parents define day care for children as the organised care and upbringing of children between the ages of 0 and 12, for a fee. Child day care is financed from a mix of contributions from the government, from companies who pay for their employees and by parental contributions.

Local Social Policy

Authorities use the term 'social policy' to define a common, comprehensive approach to social problems for individuals and neighbourhoods. A great many institutions and services deal with local social policy. Community work encompasses services such as community centres, youth centres, day nurseries, street-corner work, play facilities, non-formal education. Most of the work is done by volunteers and in many cases activities are restricted to a certain area or neighbourhood. Social services provide professional assistance of both material and non-material nature. Types of services rendered are: general social services (directed at how people function personally and socially), information and consultancy (for instance on work and pay, consumer affairs, debt restructuring), telephone help lines. Crisis care services offer accommodation, guidance and counselling. Most shelters and care facilities provide care for a particular group of people, method or problem. For example shelter for women or for the homeless.

Trends

Competition between providers, benchmarking of results and an increasing influence of clients are the main trends in care and welfare work today. As a result, social services should become more effective and consumer-friendly.

Henri Braakenburg, 
Netherlands Institute for Care and Welfare (NIZW)

For further reading: Who cares? An overview of the Dutch systems of health care and welfare, by Hans van Ewijk and Tessa Kelder; NIZW, Utrecht 1999 and various Fact Sheets, also available from NIZW, E-mail: intcentre@nizw.nl

News from the Observatory

Cross-border social services and social work

On 23-24 April 2002, the Observatory hosted a meeting of experts to bring representatives of providers of social services with experience in cross-border social work together with representatives of municipal social departments, federal and state ministries, the academic world, European border regions and EU institutions. The meeting was a practice-oriented exchange of information focusing on the central challenges and opportunities of cross-border social work. Topics such as the creation of structures between institutions, providers and associations or changes in qualification requirements for employees and volunteers played a central role. Issues were discussed from the perspective of social law and welfare state conditions from a German as well as from a comparative European angle.

The main results of the event will soon be available on the Observatory website. Please contact Mathias Maucher at the Observatory for further information.

Conference on "Indicators and quality of social services in a European context" – preview of the conference on 16-17 October 2002

In cooperation with Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband Gesamtverband and with the national Arbeiterwohlfahrt Federation, the Observatory will be hosting a conference on "Indicators and quality of social services in a European context" in Berlin on 16-17 October 2002. The two topics – indicators and quality – will be dealt with separately for the most part, but the conference also has the objective to create cross-references between the two areas; such links will be taken into account in the joint introduction and conclusion sessions of the conference. Three parallel workshops are planned for the topic of "quality".

D a t e s t o r e m e m b e r

April

18-19/Linz, Austria:

5th international colloquium of NPO researchers on "Non-profit organisations and social development: between mission and economy"
Information: (in German) at www.ibgu.uni-linz.ac.at

23-24/Aachen:

Meeting of experts on "Cross-border social services"
Information:
Matthias Maucher
Institute for Social Work and Social Education
phone + 49-69-9 57 89-175
E-mail:
mathias.maucher@iss-ffm.de

May

27-29/Frankfurt:

Preparatory meeting for the involvement of NGOs in the consulting process of the International Plan of Action on Ageing and in the ECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Berlin
Information:
German Association for Public and Private Welfare
Ms Barbara Kahler
phone + 49-69-958 07-401
E-mail: kahler@deutscher-verein.de
further information at the ECE website www.unece.org/ead/pau/age/conf2002frame.htm

30-1 June/Turin, Italy:

XVIIth International Congress on "Active Older People - Role models for Europe in the XXIst century", organised by EURAG
Information:
www.eurag-europe.org or from the organisation committee,
Via Marochetti
11 - 10126 Turin (Italy)
phone +39-011-686 67 44
E-mail: eurag.congresso@sepin

June

5-7/Barcelona, Spain:

European Social Services Conference on the topic "Shaping the future of social services in Europe", organised by the European Social Network
Information:
www.socialeurope.com
phone +44-12-73 54 98 17

24-28/Rotterdam, Netherlands:

International Conference on Social Welfare (ICSW) - "Social Development in the Third Millennium"
Information:
www.nizw.nl/icsw2002 or e-mail icsw2002@nizw.nl

July

4-6/Tampere, Finland:

International Conference on Evaluation for Practice

Information:

www.uta.fi/laitokset/sospol/eval2002/ or
E-mail: rostila@dodo.jyu.fi

7-10/Cape Town, South Africa:

Conference on "Transforming Civil Society, Citizenship and Governance: The Third Sector in an Era of Global (Dis)order", organised by the International Society of Third Sector Research
Information: www.jhu.edu/~istr

September

9-10/Stuttgart:

2nd international congress of Wohlfahrtswerk für Baden-Württemberg on "From basics to luxuries - Services for senior citizens in Europe: old structures offering something new?"
Information: (in German) at www.wohlfahrtswerk.de

11-13/Berlin:

ECE (Economic Commission for Europe) Ministerial Conference following the World Assembly on Ageing, to implement the International Plan of Action on Ageing in the countries of the UN-ECE region
Information:
<http://www.mica2002.de/background.htm>
or from Barbara Kahler
German Association for Public and Private Welfare
phone + 49-69-958 07-401
E-mail: kahler@deutscher-verein.de

21-25/Seefeld, Austria:

"The loss of the social bond?" European Science Foundation conference on the future of community in advanced western societies
Information: www.esf.org/euresco or e-mail euresco@esf.org

October

7-11/Leipzig:

31st congress of the German Sociological Association on "Entstaatlichung und soziale Sicherheit"
Information:
www.dgs2002.uni-leipzig.de

16-17/Berlin:

Conference on "Indicators and quality of social services in a European context" in cooperation with Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband and Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bundesverband
Information:
Observatory for the Development of Social Services in Europe, Institute for Social Work and Social Education,
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They will cover the following aspects:

- quality from the perspective of the providers of social services
- how the direct participants – users and employees – understand quality
- the quality of social services from the perspective of social benefit systems

The topic of indicators for social services in Europe will deal primarily with the following issues:

- What suitable indicators are necessary in order to adequately describe, at a national and European level, social services and possibilities of access to them?
- Which existing data and what results of past or current research projects can be used to work out an indicator and reporting system?
- What new qualitative and quantitative indicators should be created in order to establish a satisfactory reporting system on social services and their contribution to social integration?

On this basis, the working group will then have the task of drawing up a concrete list of already available and new indicators at both national and European level.

The overall objective of the conference is to make recommendations based on a review of the current situation in the field and on the current debate in Germany and Europe, and to look into ways of approaching future challenges facing social services in the next few years, as Europe grows together.

Further information on this 1 1/2-day event can be requested from the Observatory for the Development of Social Services in Europe.

Beatrix Holzer

Current events

Publications:

New publications of the Observatory:

Working papers:

- No. 1: Gegenstandsdefinition [Definition of the subject 'social services'] (Author: Prof. Dr. R. Bauer)
- No. 2: Qualitätsdiskussion [Quality discussion] (Author: Prof. Dr. R. Bauer)
- No. 3: Soziale Dienste und spezifische Zielgruppen, insbesondere Migrant/inn/en [Social services and specific target groups, particularly migrants] (Author: Prof. Dr. R. Bauer)
- No. 4: Klientenrechte und Nutzerstrukturen sozialer Dienste [Rights of users and the structure of the users of social services] (Author: Prof. Dr. R. Bauer)
- No. 5: Organisationsformen sozialer Dienste in Europa [Organisational forms of social services in Europe] (Authors: Prof. Dr. P. Flora, Dr. T. Bahle, A. Pfenning)
- No. 6: Europarechtliche Rahmenbedingungen für die Tätigkeit sozialer Dienste und Einrichtungen in kommunaler und freige-meinnütziger Trägerschaft [European law with regard to the activities of social services and municipal and non-profit institutions] (Author: Dr. B. Schulte)
- No. 7: Soziale Ausgrenzung und neue soziale Risiken in einer sich wandelnden



Gesellschaft – Die Zukunft der sozialen Dienste in Europa [Social exclusion and new social risks in a changing society – the future of social services in Europe] (Author: Dr. C. Lange)

Conference papers:

- Conference on “European Integration as a challenge: role and reform of social services in Germany”, December 2000
- Meeting of experts on “Social services in transition – towards a European Social Services Information System”, December 2000
- Conference on “Social exclusion and new social risks in a changing society – the future of social services in Europe”, May 2001
- Seminar on “The Future of Social Services in Europe” (with contributions in English, French and German), October 2001
- Conference on “The Role of Social Services for Sustainable Social Development” October 2001 (available from May 2002)

These publications are available for download as pdf files from the Observatory’s website at www.soziale-dienste-in-europa.de or www.social-services-in-europe.de. Hard copies may be ordered (address information in imprint section).

News update

The Observatory has had a new administrative assistant since 1 March 2002:

Ms Christine Rotzinger, standing in for Johanna Segebrecht during her parental leave. Ms Rotzinger (MA) studied sociology, economics and American linguistics in Tübingen and Frankfurt am Main. She was also a guest student of the International Communication Studies programme at the University of Uppsala (Sweden).



Observatory for the Development of Social Services in Europe

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