

Editorial Understanding and coping with change

Among the many activities of the Directorate General for Social Cohesion (DG III) presented in this newsletter which show the progress made by Council of Europe programmes for the consolidation of social policies, I would to draw attention to two in particular. Both are activities pursued by the Social Cohesion Development Division which contribute to debate on the major challenges to social cohesion in today's Europe. Such debate will facilitate understanding of the changes taking place and point the way to appropriate responses.

The division wishes to provide more food for thought on the revision of the Strategy for Social Cohesion and to supplement the thinking and action of DG III as a whole and of other parts of the organisation. From these points of view, the two activities described below are consistent with the Secretary General's Integrated Projects and with the Parliamentary Assembly's concerns.

The first activity is the 2003 Forum "Social cohesion or public security: how should Europe respond to collective feelings of insecurity?", being held in Strasbourg on 23 and 24 October 2003. In Europe the question of security is raised almost exclusively in terms of crime. However, it is above all the structural changes taking place which generate feelings of insecurity.

Our societies are having increasingly to contend with depersonalisation in the workplace, a weakening of the welfare state and growing privatisation of public property and services, and are losing their time-honoured common points of reference. These feelings of insecurity often go unexpressed at a collective level and place individuals on the defensive, concerned above all for their personal security.

After the Second World War, security in both western and eastern Europe was built under the aegis of an omnipresent state and in the belief that full employment was possible. Nowadays, the reforms taking place in the west, above all in the welfare and services sector, and the weakening of state power in the transition countries are evidence, alongside growing job insecurity and income inequality, that European society is becoming a "risk society", as described by Ulrich Beck in his book "Risk society, towards a new modernity". Insecurity is accordingly a sign of our simultaneous uncertainty, need to find new common points of reference and lack of means for devising a new blueprint for society. The 2003 Forum must therefore foster debate on the policies to be pursued in Europe to guarantee everyone the right to live in security.

At the same time, the division has launched a search for possible answers, particularly with its project on citizens' commitment to the economy and social solidarity. This project, which has the backing of the Walloon Region and the Austrian government, aims to implement the

part of the Strategy for Social Cohesion concerned with citizens as ethical market players. The objective is to pool experience in the fields of ethical financing, fair trade and responsible consumption in order to develop new models of public ethics, which could be of use in regulating matters as complex as savings, distribution of commercial profits, balanced use of resources, etc. In other words, is there scope for a form of market ethics that could be taken into account in discussions on the future of social cohesion?

This project, the first stage of which will end in December with a seminar in the Walloon region, seeks to encourage dialogue between governments and citizens' organisations on this theme. In 2004 this dialogue will culminate in a new Forum on the many aspects of this issue and could be a key stage in the discussions taking place in DG III on the advisability of setting up a platform for operators in the ethical and caring economy to spotlight individual contributions and needs.

This work, which is publicised through the annual Forums, is part of DG III's effort to understand the changes taking place in our society and to offer responses, consonant with the concepts of social cohesion, human rights and defence of democracy, with a view to confronting these challenges from day to day.

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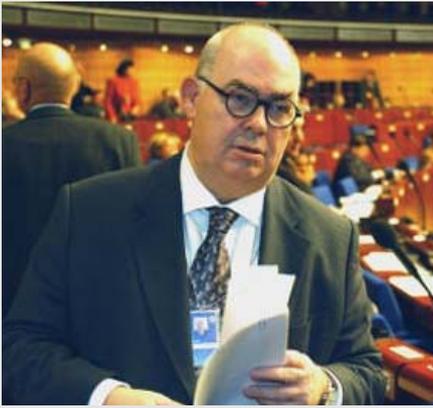
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Newsletter: Why have security issues gained so much importance in today's political life ?

In several of our member states crime figures are on the rise, in others they are stagnating, in some declining. Yet it must be said right at the beginning that it is not the statistics themselves – which are easily manipulated and can often give a distorted picture of reality – but people's perception of their own security – or rather insecurity - which is behind the growing importance of this question in the political debates in most of our countries.

It would be wrong to say that all talk of insecurity is exaggerated, the result of tabloid journalism or populist politics, but it would be equally wrong to uncritically swallow popular perceptions of the threat. In many cases, people's reactions first and foremost reflect their own feelings of insecurity about their social and economic future. I think that insecurity has its roots, certainly too much out of sight, in the social shortcomings of our own society.

Crime is a problem, terrorism, of course is also a significant threat, but so is the ever- diminishing solidarity which is tearing down the already frayed social fabric and nourishing the existential fear among the most vulnerable segments of the population.

The reason why security is gaining importance in political debate is the fact that politicians react to these fears. There is nothing wrong with that. On the contrary, as politicians we are obliged to respond to people's needs, and security is certainly one of the most pressing ones. But we must deal with

this problem in an honest, comprehensive, efficient and socially responsible manner and not by catering to people's fears with populist gimmicks and short-term publicity stunts.

Newsletter: What kind of security is compatible with democracy, citizenship and human rights ? How do you perceive the political responses to these issues?

Security is not only compatible with democracy, it is crucial for its normal functioning. This is nowhere more vividly evident at the moment than in Iraq and in the Middle East, but it applies everywhere. Threats, be they a result of terrorism, common crime, even natural disasters, must be dealt with, and dealt with efficiently. If insecurity is allowed to become too widespread, democratic institutions are put under too much pressure and may not function properly. Basic principles of democracy are ignored, fundamental rights are sacrificed, the ends are used to justify the means.

Economic and social policies which may contribute to security in the long term are set aside or forgotten, while some categories of the population – such as immigrants, ethnic minorities or the socially disadvantaged – are collectively blamed for every crime in the book. This creates a vicious circle in which injustice and insecurity begin to feed off each other and reproduce themselves. There is no development more dangerous than politicians in panic – except perhaps politicians creating, or contributing to, panic in order to extract political advantage from it.

Terrorists know this very well, because this is exactly the reaction they hope to provoke. The only way to deny them that victory is to respond with measures which are fully in line with our democratic standards and human rights principles. It is equally important to include social and economic measures which are necessary if we want to diminish the risk of future instability.

Even if common crime does not have the political dimension of terrorism, one arrives at the same conclusion – the

only truly efficient security policy in the long term is the one which succeeds in stopping more bad guys than it helps to create. I think we all need to think hard about our current policies and critically examine whether they correspond to this criterion.

Newsletter: Where are for you the roots of collective feelings of insecurity ? What kind of challenges have to be met to cut short these feelings?

I believe that I have responded to this question to some extent. But I should just like to stress the importance of social cohesion in this respect. The dramatic increase in the public perception of insecurity is in many cases linked to economic and social insecurity and injustice. I think that here lies the real problem. An important range of causes which today create abiding feelings of insecurity are purely domestic. They exist because of the notorious lack of social responsibility and long-term thinking. And they are present even without a specific, identifiable threat from outside.

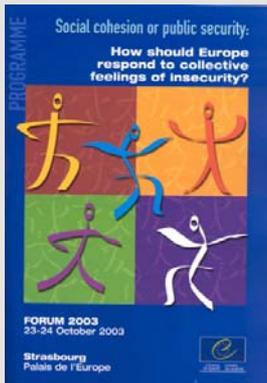
Those in socially precarious situations – the unemployed, the elderly, those continuously struggling to maintain themselves above the poverty line – can sometimes express their profound frustration by blaming those even more deprived than themselves for most, if not all, of their ills. Crime is a convenient label, and some media and politicians are more than willing to help make it stick. This is not very difficult, because the statistics show that crime rates are indeed higher among immigrant communities – the most “popular” target to blame – than in the general population. What people forget is that this higher prevalence of crime is also result of social and economic deprivation.

Where crime is on the rise, appropriate use of law and order must be a part of our response. However, for the reasons outlined above, I remain convinced that policies relying solely on more policemen and harsher punishment are unlikely to work in the long term.

FORUM 2003

Social cohesion or public security: how should Europe respond to collective feelings of insecurity?

23-24 October 2003, Strasbourg



The annual forum of the Social Cohesion Development Division, which is now in its third year and looks at some of the most pressing

issues facing Europe, will this year focus on the current demand for security in Europe and the strategies adopted to meet this demand. In keeping with the Council of Europe's aims to uphold and promote human rights, the rule of law and participatory democracy, the Forum will discuss public security issues from the standpoint of "the right to live in security", to which everyone is entitled as a precondition for the full exercise of citizenship.

Since social cohesion, access to fundamental rights and citizen participation lead to security for all citizens, an approach that focuses too closely on public order soon shows its limits. Offered a choice of strategy – social cohesion or public security – and the confusion which this might lead to, the priority would appear to be to ensure citizen security without reducing the issue to a mere question of crime or the threat to public order allegedly posed by certain "problem groups" (for example immigrants and/or the inhabitants of underprivileged neighbourhoods or regions).

The Forum will begin by taking this preliminary consideration as a basis for discussing the various causes of insecurity in a society which is undergoing substantial changes as a result of globalisation. Researchers in economics and sociology and media professionals will address the participants. The following day the Forum will adopt a more political perspective. The results of previous studies will be used to consider the challenges which need to be tackled collectively to meet society's current demands. Several elected representatives and public officials involved in security policies, from both

a public security and a social angle, will make a major contribution to the debate.

More specifically, the opening session will distinguish between genuine causes and false perceptions of insecurity, while drawing attention to the effects of globalisation policies on the cohesion of European society, for example the loss of the personal identity gained through work, the reform of the welfare state and the privatisation of public services on the one hand, and concerns with regard to immigration and allegedly dangerous neighbourhoods on the other. New approaches, which consider these topics from a social standpoint, will be proposed. The arguments presented should also provide food for thought about the reasons which give rise to a security-based approach, which paradoxically sometimes merely increases feelings of insecurity.

The second session will elaborate on the first by seeking to shed more light on the feeling of insecurity, the influence of the media and the way in which the media handle these subjects. A further contribution to the debate will take the form of a comparative analysis of crime statistics and sources of information in this field, focusing on the way the media portray immigrants and problems relating to immigration. The potential, both positive and negative, of new technologies with regard to citizen security (data protection) and the consequences of the very structure of the global media (need for pluralism and transparency in view of media concentration, etc.) will also be discussed.

The third session, which will be opened by Peter Schieder, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, will take a look at a broad selection of legal instruments and policies introduced over the past few years to ensure that citizens can live in security, with due regard for the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Although the aims and the strategies adopted are heterogeneous, this comparison will provide the opportunity to consider the different ways in which insecurity is perceived locally and the conditions

under which local responses can be "successful" in terms of social cohesion.

The closing session will study the question of the social and economic governance required in Europe to tackle the roots of the problem and ensure confidence and future social cohesion. The debate will focus on the resources needed to fund such a policy and reaffirm the need to strengthen consultation of all the parties concerned before any reforms can be undertaken in this field. Considerable importance will be attached to the European Union's employment and welfare responsibilities with a view to ensuring that the forthcoming constitutional treaty incorporates the social agenda of an enlarged Europe in a coherent fashion.

Although the unfolding of the debates and the conclusions are as yet unknown, it is the concept of Europe as a cohesive, peaceful and tolerant society which is at stake. Throughout the Forum we will therefore be faced with a clear choice: either we take the view that the current globalised model of development and society is here to stay and that any extension of rights and democracy must be adapted to it, or we commit ourselves to an alternative form of social and economic governance which will ensure security mainly by means of social cohesion. This principle will of course then have to be applied to Europe's relations with the rest of the world.

For more detailed information please consult our website at the following address: http://www.coe.int/T/E/social_cohesion/Analysis_and_Research/Activities/Forum_2003/default.asp

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7TH CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN HEALTH MINISTERS
Health, Dignity and Human Rights
12-13 June 2003, Oslo (Norway)



The 7th Conference of European Health Ministers was held on 12-13 June 2003 in Oslo at the invitation and under the Chairmanship of Dagfinn Høybråten, Minister of Health of Norway. The general theme of the Conference was *Health, Dignity and Human Rights – The role and responsibility of Health Ministers in meeting the challenges of the changes in society and new technology at the beginning of the third millennium*.

Sub-themes were:

- “Managing the impact of the changing societies on Health, Dignity and Human Rights”;
- “Managing the impact of new technologies on Health, Dignity and Human Rights”, and
- “The role and responsibility of Health Ministers in meeting the challenges in society and new technology at the beginning of the third millennium”.

At the opening session of the Conference Mrs Maud de Boer Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, highlighted the role of the Council of Europe, which gives primary importance to the ethical and human rights dimension in health care. She re-emphasised that the organisation considered health as the main source of human capital which promotes sustainable development and contributed to social cohesion.

One example she mentioned was the work carried out in the field of blood transfusion, where the standards as elaborated by the Council of Europe have been translated into more than 20 languages and became the basis for many national guidelines. Another example was the series of Recommendations adopted by the Council of Europe devoted to health care for vulnerable groups, for instance *the Recommendation on the organisational aspects of health care for the chronically-ill*.

Dagfinn Høybråten, Minister of Health of Norway, called on his colleagues to clarify how to deal with health needs of the vulnerable in a modern society, and how to ensure equal access to health services. In this context, key values such

as human dignity were to be discussed. He recalled that “to be weak does not apply only to certain groups. Anybody may at any time during his or her life become vulnerable. That was not a political, but an existential problem.”

Delegations from 35 of the Council of Europe’s member States attended the Conference. The Council of Europe bodies such as the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Development Bank were present and took part in the debates. International organisations attending the Conference included the European Commission, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank and the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, then Director General of the World Health Organisation, said that “the right to health is a goal for which all governments, rich and poor, should strive. Of course, this could not be achieved overnight. All nations face constraints, in many cases posed by limited resources. This is why the principle of progressive realisation is central to the achievement of all human rights”.

Mr Fernand Sauer, Director of Public Health at the European Commission, gave importance to the relations and work with other organisations and in this context paid tribute to the fruitful relations in particular with the Council of Europe. Examples of recent work include co-operation on blood safety and on tissues and cells. In a more broader sense, Mr Sauer stated that the Council of Europe and the European Commission share the same values and pursue common aims in relation to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The working sessions gave European Health Ministers the opportunity to discuss ethical and human rights aspects *inter alia* of the following topics: Globalisation; new responsibilities of principal health actors in pursuit of social cohesion across cultural barriers; new information technology and the health care system; technological

innovations; violation of human dignity by misuse of new technology and the consequences of predictive genetic screening.

In their final declaration, the European Health Ministers agreed that health care services should function within a human rights framework as promoted by the Council of Europe, keeping in mind that vulnerability was not necessarily the lot of certain social groups and restricted to certain age groups, but could hit anybody at any time. Ministers supported public funding of technological innovations of health care systems and patient information handling, in order to increase efficiency and safety; they were also fully aware that solidarity could no longer be limited to one’s own population, but that it had to be extended to other countries facing the same challenges.

Still in their final declaration, the European Health Ministers called on the Council of Europe and the European Health Committee (CDSP) in particular: to pursue and intensify, in a coordinated fashion, its work on the social, ethical and human rights dimension of health in the delivery and availability of evidence-based health care and related services, and make proposals on possible partnerships aimed at reducing inequalities within and between countries; draw up conceptual frameworks for various aspects of the health agenda, their organisation and functioning, including social, ethical and legal aspects.

The Conferences of European Health Ministers are being held on a regular basis since 1981. Upon the invitation of Dr Rudolf Zajac, Minister of Health of the Slovak Republic, the 8th Conference will be held in 2007 in Bratislava.

Further information can be found by visiting the following Websites: http://www.coe.int/T/E/Social_Cohesion/Health/ and <http://www.coe.int/health-Oslo/>

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Activities in the health field: recent decisions and current developments

As part of its overall mission to achieve greater unity between member States and contribute to social progress, the involvement of the Council of Europe in the health field is aimed both at raising medical care standards and at promoting living conditions conducive to health.

In this context, the European Health Committee (CDSP) plays a key role elaborating practical guidelines on policy issues improving the daily life of citizens in the member States. Its strategy is based on an integrated approach of medical developments on the one hand and values of the individual – legal, ethical, social – on the other hand. Its activities are invariably aimed at the democratisation and humanisation of health services.

On 19 June 2003, three Recommendations emanating from the European Health Committee (CDSP) were adopted by the Committee of Ministers:

- *Recommendation (2003) 11 on the introduction of pathogen inactivation procedures for blood components.*

“Pathogen inactivation procedures” are new security measures relating to blood components. Among the issues raised by the Recommendation are: the cost of these procedures in relation to the extra level of security that they provide; the fact that their health benefits to individuals remain unproven; and their potentially negative impact on the effectiveness of blood components.

Making highly-secure blood products available is one of the main objectives of the Council of Europe. On that occasion, the Committee of Ministers recalled that the *Guide to the preparation, use and quality assurance of blood components*, currently available in its 9th edition, offers an international golden standard in the field and is used by member States and beyond to establish national guidelines on the subject.

- *Recommendation (2003) 12 on organ donor registers.*

Organ donor registers consign precise details of the consent given or refused by donors, and allow individuals to express their wishes in a simple and reliable

manner. Donors can, if they so wish, stipulate exactly which organs or tissues they would or would not like to donate. Donors can also cancel their registration at any time.

This Recommendation is an important contribution to the Council of Europe’s policy to promote organ donation as it improves transparency and traceability in the process.

- *Recommendation (2003) 10 on xenotransplantation.*

Xenotransplantation – the transplantation of animal organs and tissues – is still largely experimental, but it represents one possible response to the shortage of human organs and tissues. However, there are unknown and potentially considerable public health risks involved. To minimise these possible public health risks, the Recommendation sets out guidelines for member States to follow. It also specifies the conditions which should be met before xenotransplantation is allowed to take place.

Equity in access to safe and good quality care in health services

At its June 2003 meeting, the European Health Committee (CDSP) adopted a *draft Recommendation on the organisation of palliative care* for submission to the Committee of Ministers with a view to its adoption.

Palliative care is currently defined as “an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problems associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual.” This draft Recommendation includes proposals to member States on the legislative framework needed for the development of palliative care as well as on the development of structures for the practice of palliative care in the widest sense for the individual and the enlarged family circle. It is supported by an explanatory memorandum containing, *inter alia*, information on the existence, extent and nature of palliative care available in member States and on the environment in which palliative care is practised.

At its November 2003 meeting, the European Health Committee (CDSP) will

The Parliamentary Assembly’s Committee on Economic Affairs and Development

The Parliamentary Assembly’s Committee on Economic Affairs and Development may not have the word ‘social’ in its name but nonetheless the social dimension underlies virtually all of its activities. The Committee’s conviction – as illustrated in its reports, recommendations, conferences and extensive links it maintains with European and worldwide international organisations – can perhaps best be summed up as being that it is only when member states’ economies grow that social needs can be met and lastingly improved.

The interested reader is referred, for instance, to the annual debates on “The OECD and the world economy” which take place within the context of the Enlarged Assembly, where all parliamentary delegations from the OECD’s non-European member countries (Australia, Canada, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand and the United States) participate on an equal footing with their peers from the Council of Europe area. Social issues figure prominently here as part of the more general stock-taking of the worldwide economic situation and outlook. (see <http://assembly.coe.int/> and <http://www.coe.int>).

The Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, and the Parliamentary Assembly as a whole, also serves as a parliamentary forum for the London-based European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Here too during annual debates special attention is paid to the social situation in the many central and eastern European countries where the EBRD is active. The Committee attaches particular importance to ensuring that economic progress is accompanied by social reform, and to avoiding having any new dividing lines develop as Europe integrates economically and socially.

The Committee, and by extension the Parliamentary Assembly as a whole, also serves as a regular parliamentary forum for debates on the activities of such worldwide institutions as the World Bank, the International Mone-

examine the results of work finalised by various Expert Committees in the following areas: Review of Article 11 of the Social Charter; the impact of information technologies on health care – the patient and internet; media and health. On this occasion, the CDSP will also review the progress of its current work programme, which includes studies on the following topics: health services in a multicultural society; management of safety and quality in health care – prevention of adverse events in health care, a system approach; hospitals in transition: new balance between institutional and community care; transborder mobility of health professionals and its implications for functioning of health care systems.

Further information can be found by visiting the following Websites: http://www.coe.int/T/E/Social_Cohesion/Health/ and http://www.coe.int/T/E/Communication_and_Research/Press/Theme_Files/Health_policy

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Forum for children and families: a debate on ombudspersons for children

On 25 March 2003 in Strasbourg the Council of Europe Forum for Children and Families held a debate on the role and powers of national ombudspersons for children. Ways to support setting up ombudspersons for children in each Council of Europe member State and the possibility of creating a post for a European ombudsperson for children were also widely discussed.

Mr Claude Lelièvre, General Delegate for Children's Rights in the French-speaking Community of Belgium and Head of the European Network of Ombudsmen for Children (ENOC, <http://www.ombudsnet.org/>) described the current structure of the Network, which has 19 members in some 15 countries, and the envisaged enlargement of the network to 22 members. He described its mission, emphasising the necessity of the Ombudsperson's independence, which should be guaranteed by the law and through financial autonomy.

A highlight of the Forum was the intervention by representatives of a group of young people, Ms Ingeborg Jørgensen and Ms Laura Dent, who introduced their views on the roles of national and European ombudspersons. They valued the following qualities of an Ombudsperson for Children: independence, direct accessibility, the capacity to understand the needs of children of different ages and the sensitivity to treat them as full members of society.

Two Ombudspersons from central and eastern Europe addressed the Forum. Mr Alexey Golovan, Ombudsman for Children in Moscow noted that the Russian Federation has a total of 13 children's ombudspersons. Many differences exist among them, reflecting the diversity of the complex federal structure of the country. Although his area of responsibility is limited to one city, his workload is significant, as the population of children in Moscow is 1.5 million. Ms Nevenka Krusarovska, Deputy Ombudsperson for the Protection of Children's Rights in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is actively involved in legislative changes, particularly the harmonisation of domestic legislation with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the monitoring of norms and the implementation of laws. She stressed that special attention is given to protect the rights of minorities and child victims of trafficking.

Ms Maud De Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe emphasised the importance of the defence of children's rights at both national and international levels, illustrating the advantages of the multidisciplinary approach of the Organisation. She expressed her desire for greater visibility of activities and achievements in this field. Remarking that the debate on the establishment of a European Ombudsperson for Children was just at its beginning, she stated that she would follow future developments with interest.

Mr Tom Cox, Chair of the Sub-Committee on Children of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly's Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, warmly welcomed the growth of ombudsperson institutions in European countries. He stated that a European Ombudsperson for Children could encourage concrete reforms at all levels. He stressed that the Parliamentary Assembly has recognised such a post as being useful to better co-ordinate the work of national ombudspersons for children; to promote communication among

tary Fund and the World Trade Organisation. At a time when the downside risks of globalisation are becoming increasingly apparent, the Committee tries to ensure that the process of globalisation can take place in a socially responsible manner both *vis-à-vis* developing countries and as regards vulnerable populations in Europe.

The Committee also regularly addresses ways of tackling unemployment in close cooperation with the Assembly's Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee.

Thus, in conclusion, the work of the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Economic Affairs and Development can be said to reflect the belief that economic and social progress depend vitally on one another. The Committee, and the Parliamentary Assembly, in this way remain true to the aim of the Council of Europe as expressed in Article I of its Statutes, namely that the organisation is there to "facilitate the economic and social progress" of its member states.

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Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe: Employment of vulnerable groups

In 2002, the Council of Europe set up a new Group of Specialists on Employment for Marginalised Groups (CS-MA) to work on access to employment for marginalised and disadvantaged groups. The Group's ultimate aim is to draw up guidelines for improving member states' policies (*see article on page 5 in the Special Issue N°2 of the Newsletter on employment*).

At its third working meeting, in June 2003, the CS-MA used two studies as the basis for its discussions. One of these was prepared, at the Group's request, by Ms Jane Pillinger, an Irish expert on access to employment, while the other was commissioned by the Committee on Social Cohesion of the

various authorities responsible for safeguarding children's rights; and to better involve children in the process of developing best practices in all member States. Moreover, the act of creating such a post would be a powerful message to children that they are being taken seriously.

While Mr. Cox's ideas found full understanding and support among the group of young people participating in the meeting, many others found this post redundant. The Forum would prefer to concentrate efforts on promoting national ombudspersons for children in each member State of the Council of Europe. It was nevertheless suggested that some complicated "transfrontier" issues concerning children's rights might be handled at the European level. The Forum agreed that the co-operation among ombudspeople for children, as well as between ENOC and the Council of Europe should be reinforced in the future.

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Initiatives to promote dialogue on migration issues

At the 7th Ministerial Conference of Ministers responsible for Migration Affairs (Helsinki, September 2002), where non-member States from the Southern shore of the Mediterranean participated as invited guests for the first time, Council of Europe Secretary General announced his wish "to create a structure (...) which would facilitate or, where needed, provoke (...) dialogue between sending, transit and receiving countries" (see article on page 4 of Newsletter No. 7).

The European Committee on Migration (CDMG) decided at its plenary meeting in March 2003 to institutionalise contacts at a political level through a regular dialogue with origin and transit countries. This dialogue will take place twice a year on the 3rd day of the CDMG plenary meetings. It will offer a political platform where non-member States would be sitting at the table on an equal footing with member States.

The Committee of Ministers agreed in June 2003 to allow this political platform to meet for the first time at the next CDMG meeting taking place from 8-10 December 2003 in Rotterdam at the invitation of the Dutch authorities. The choice to convene this meeting in Rotterdam, which is a multicultural city where different integration poli-

cies have been put into practice, is a strong political signal from the Dutch chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers.

The added value of such a political platform is its unique geographic dimension and its regularity of contacts. For the very first time, the 45 member States of the Council of Europe (among which origin, transit and receiving countries are to be found) will meet twice a year with six non-European countries of origin and transit of migrants. These meetings will allow for close co-operation not only on a multilateral basis but also bilaterally. The selection of the countries is based on the migration routes most frequently used by migrants coming to Europe. The CDMG has chosen an African and an Asian route to start the dialogue and partnership.

One of the roles of this platform will be to devise a programme of activities decided by all of the members of the platform (i.e. not only by Council of Europe member States, but decided in consultation with the non-member countries) to effectively implement the Council of Europe strategy for the orderly management of migration.

The creation of a Council of Europe instrument on migration issues, as requested by the Committee of Ministers at their last Ministerial meeting (Strasbourg, 14-15 May 2003), could be one of the first tasks of this platform.

The operational tool of this political platform could take the form of an Agency or a Centre on Migration. Its main tasks would be to analyse migration trends (flows) and to develop projects in the various fields covered by the migration strategy (reception, integration, return and reintegration in the country of origin, etc.). Moreover, it should strongly interact with international partner organisations such as the EU, the IOM, the ILO and UNHCR and should extensively cooperate with the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB).

The Greek authorities have already shown their interest in hosting such a structure in Athens.

The political platform and the Agency would indeed add a new dimension to the work carried out by the Council of Europe in the migration field.

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Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) from two Spanish consultants, Mr Gonzalez and Ms Gavira from Seville University.

The purpose of the latter, which was based on a questionnaire sent to local authorities and on an analysis of good practices, was to study the role of local and regional authorities in seeking means of promoting access to employment for vulnerable groups. The two consultants put forward conclusions and recommendations, addressed to all levels concerned by access to employment – local, regional, national and European.

The consultants first clarified the terms used in the study, pointing out that vulnerable groups comprise a wide range of social categories, which often overlap. They nevertheless decided to focus on the following groups: people with disabilities, unemployed people who could become self-employed, immigrants and people belonging to ethnic minorities.

The first conclusion they reached was that problems cannot be dealt separately as exclusion from the labour market goes hand in hand with difficulties as regards housing, education, health, the family, etc. As a result, comprehensive, fully co-ordinated solutions are required to deal with the many problems encountered by vulnerable groups. It is also necessary to devise more individual approaches, with greater emphasis on the many complex needs of welfare service users in general and the users of employment services in particular.

Local and regional authorities naturally play a key role in seeking solutions to these problems, especially in member states where decentralisation policies are being implemented. Decentralisation requires improved co-ordination, both vertically (between national policies and the local level) and horizontally (between the different services concerned). Decentralisation also means that resources and powers have to be transferred to local and regional authorities so that they do not simply find themselves responsible for coming up with solutions without having the means to do so.

In their recommendations to the various decision-making levels concerned,

European Forum for Roma and Travellers: From a Finnish initiative to a Franco-Finnish proposal

On 24 January 2001, the President of Finland, Ms. Tarja Halonen, proposed in her speech to the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly that “serious consideration be given to a need to create for the Roma some kind of consultative assembly to represent them at pan-European level”. At the Committee of Ministers November 2001 session, the Finnish State Secretary, Mr. J. Laajava, declared that “given its broad membership and extensive expertise in human rights, the Council of Europe provides in our view the most appropriate framework for such a body. An ad hoc group will study in detail the various aspects related to establishing such a body.”

An informal exploratory group composed of members of international Romani organisations, Roma and, governmental experts, as well as the EU, the Council of Europe and the OSCE, headed by Mr Gunnar Jansson, Chairman of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, was set up in autumn 2001. It held regular meetings to discuss the feasibility of such a consultative body at pan-European level.

During this period international Romani organisations showed a great sense of responsibility and managed to go beyond some conflictual interests to reach a compromise. A debate also took place between those Roma who favoured a transversal representation based on belonging to international organisations, tribes, and religious groups and those who opted for a country-based composition.

In September 2002, the exploratory group drew up a final report containing proposals for the setting up of a pan-European Roma advisory body. The recommendations covered the aims and objectives, the composition (totally non-governmental) and functions of the Forum, its funding and possible links with the Council of Europe and other international organisations.

In October 2002, this report was submitted within the Council of Europe to the Committee of Ministers and to the Specialist Group on Roma, Gypsies and Travellers (MG-S-ROM) - the unique inter-governmental body dealing specifically with Roma/Gypsy and more recently Traveller issues. The Committee of Ministers in a communiqué dated November 2002 “noted with interest the Finnish initiative concerning a “European Forum for Roma””. The Committee of ministers’ working group on Social and Health Questions (GR-SOC) was instructed “to continue its work

relating to the Finnish initiative concerning a European Roma Forum, bearing in mind its topical nature, and to submit proposals to them concerning suitable follow-up to be given to that initiative”. It expressed itself in favour of setting up an open-ended *Ad hoc* Working Party with the task of examining the question of a possible forum for Roma and travellers (GT-ROMS) under the chairmanship of the Finnish ambassador.

So far, the GT-ROMS has met three times: after approving its terms of reference, it drew up a list of issues to be addressed, and examined whether the proposal to establish such a forum is appropriate and compatible with the principle of non-discrimination as contained in Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights. It also circulated a questionnaire to collect information about the level of participation of Roma in member States.

At its latest meeting in July 2003, a joint Franco-Finnish proposal was presented. Both the governments of France and Finland stressed that the aim of the Forum was not to accord special rights but to bring about the integration of the Roma populations into the societies in which they live. According to the joint proposal, the Forum would not be an organ of the Council of Europe, nor would it be totally independent. It would be a partnership between an association, set up by Roma and Travellers under French law, and the Council of Europe. The interest of such a partnership lies in the financial and practical contribution, which the Council of Europe can make in having representatives of the Forum attending meetings of the various organs and bodies of the Council of Europe. Further discussions were about the heterogeneity of the population to be represented, the need for a geographical and gender balance, as well as the funding of the Forum.

On the 17 September 2003, the Specialist Group on Roma, Gypsies and Travellers (MG-S-ROM) will hold an extraordinary session in Strasbourg to offer its opinion on the Franco-Finnish proposals and on how the Group sees its collaboration with this possible future partner. This opinion will be presented the next day at the 4th GT-ROMS meeting which will also be given the opportunity to comment on the draft Franco-Finnish proposal.

The questions of the composition, representativity and funding of the Forum remain undecided but are crucial and difficult issues which should be clarified by the end of this year.

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the consultants also drew attention to the following points:

- governments ought to draw up active policies to promote equal opportunities and combat discrimination, on grounds both of ethnic origin and sex, and abolish local and regional disparities;
- the monitoring and evaluation of policies and of the functioning of services need to be stepped up and extended to all levels; it is therefore necessary to continue devising and promoting quality indicators and to make such procedures more transparent; it is also essential to realise that evaluation requires specific skills and resources and that it is therefore necessary to ensure that the means required are available, by training the people who will have to evaluate policies and providing for adequate funding; evaluation is also a process in which everyone should take an active part;
- the circulation of information, in particular feedback from the grassroots to the decision-making level, and the gathering of information on vulnerable groups need to be improved;
- finally, at local level, it is important to ensure that users can genuinely participate and to develop local partnerships.

These are some of the main conclusions of the very comprehensive survey by Mr Gonzalez and Ms Gavira, which can be found on the CLRAE website: http://www.coe.int/t/e/CLRAE/4_Sessions_of_the_CLRAE/1_Plenary_sessions/1_10th_Session/partII_CG_10_07_E.asp

At its 10th Plenary Session in May 2003, the CLRAE adopted Recommendation 129 (2003)I on employment and vulnerable groups and Resolution 153 (2003) on employment and vulnerable groups, which were drawn up on the basis of this survey.

The CLRAE Committee on Social Cohesion decided to continue its work in this field by focusing its attention on the role of local and regional authorities in the social integration of refugees and in ensuring they have employment opportunities.

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Integrated Project “Making democratic institutions work”

The Integrated Project “Making democratic institutions work” (IPI) has actively contributed to the preparation of the 2004 Forum organised by the Social Cohesion Development Division on “Social solidarity and citizen commitment to promote social cohesion”.

As part of IPI’s preparation of a Committee of Ministers recommendation on e-governance, the Group of specialists on User involvement in social services will advise on the social policy aspects of e-governance. With this in mind, IPI is giving financial support to the drafting of a background paper, commissioned by the group of specialists, on the role of information and communications technology (ICT) in social services, particularly with regard to user participation. This theme was also addressed at the international event of the annual German Welfare Congress, held in Freiburg, Germany, in May and co-organised by the Council of Europe – DG III in co-operation with IPI.

User participation in the shaping of social services using ICT is one of the issues underlined in the Committee of Ministers’ political message to the UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which will take place in Geneva in December 2003. The DG III expert who took part in the drafting of the message confirmed that ICT can provide ways of overcoming obstacles that prevent people from effectively claiming their rights and of improving the quality of life of vulnerable people, such as the elderly, the chronically ill, people with disabilities and all who are at risk of social marginalisation.

IPI provided substantial financial support to the Participation of children in schools and the local community programme, carried out by the working group on Children, democracy and participation, in partnership with the Directorate of youth and sport and the Project on Education for democratic citizenship (DG IV). The programme will identify the conditions necessary for children to take part in decision-making on matters concerning them at school and in the local community. Results will be used for the drafting of a European school charter on the theme “For a democratic school

without violence” with the participation of a large number of schools across Europe.

The issue of participation of young people in decision-making processes will be further explored during the following activities which will look, *inter alia*, into the social factors affecting participation:

- seminar on the “Participation of young women in political life”, to be held on 16-17 September 2003 in Strasbourg. By bringing together Council of Europe expertise in promoting youth participation and gender parity in political life, the seminar will generate recommendations for measures to encourage young women’s involvement in politics.
- symposium “Young people – from disillusionment to participation”, to be held on 26-28 November 2003 in Strasbourg, which will focus on the causes underlying the lack of involvement in, and indifference to, democratic institutions and will aim to identify ways to overcome this disillusionment.

The Integrated Project “Making democratic institutions work” will present its final results at a Ministerial session in 2004. Specific thematic conferences will also be organised in order to disseminate targeted findings.

Information about the Integrated Project “Making democratic institutions work” can also be found on the website: <http://www.coe.int/democracy>

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Integrated Project “Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society”

The Integrated Project “Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society” (2002-2004) was set up to help decision-makers and other people involved to combat everyday violence in accordance with European human rights standards. The priority lies in the development of a comprehensive policy for preventing violence in everyday life along with a series of concrete tools for its implementation. The project covers violence in towns, at home, in schools and in sport as well as violence that may be related to cultural and religious diversity,

social exclusion, trafficking in human beings and the media. It also develops new approaches to awareness-raising and training of young people, assistance to the victims of violence and mediation.

In carrying out the project, different organs and departments of the Council of Europe are pooling their resources to prepare co-ordinated responses to violence. The project functions as a clearing house between the departments in facilitating co-operation and information exchange while it also co-finances certain activities and assures the co-ordination for comprehensive policy development. In 2003, the project has focused on the completion of the policy documents and implementation tools begun in 2002. At the same time, preparations for the final report and concluding events in 2004 have also started.

Work in the social field, where the Directorate General for Social Cohesion obviously has a leading role, has ranged from identifying causes and background factors to violence to studying the effects of violence on certain groups of victims with the aim of devising preventive strategies. Reports from the viewpoint of the victims of violence have been prepared on vulnerable people (e.g. children, people with disabilities and older people) and minorities (e.g. Roma/Gypsies). An innovative strategy to prevent violence related to drugs and alcohol in selected settings (places of entertainment, major events and small groups in public areas) is about to be completed while another strategy for the social integration of young people from disadvantaged urban areas is under preparation. The latter will be based on in-depth studies in several violence-prone areas in European cities. A migration management strategy has already been published soon to be followed by a report on new patterns of illegal migration in Europe. One of the highlights this autumn will be the Forum “Social cohesion or public security: how should Europe respond to collective feelings of insecurity?” (Strasbourg, 23-24 October 2003 – [more information about this event in article on page 3](#)).

Information about the Integrated Project “Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society” can also be found on the website: www.coe.int/violence.

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Citizen commitment to the economy and social solidarity

The various forms of citizen commitment to the economy, in particular ethical and solidarity-based financing, fair trade and responsible consumption, have a key role to play in social cohesion, in line with the Council of Europe's Social Cohesion Strategy. Quite apart from the fact that they offer opportunities for integrating those on the margins of society or the victims of exclusion, they also help form new social bonds and a sense of community in key areas of society, such as relations between producers and consumers, shareholders and workers, inhabitants of a given area, citizens of the wealthy and poorer countries, etc.

These forms of commitment are also in keeping with a society seeking to improve the way responsibilities are shared, and help generate new identity and integration references which are not solely linked to employment: these new references can be seen in particular in the way citizenship is expressed. Lastly, they offer opportunities for substantial added value with regard to economic performance, particularly in terms of quality, and are compatible with the principles of sustainable development.

Which is why in early 2003 the Social Cohesion Development Division launched a project, co-financed by the governments of the Walloon Region and Austria, aimed at understanding, publicising and optimising the positive advantages of citizen commitment to the economy, in its various forms. The project also seeks to facilitate transfers, in particular between western and eastern Europe, and establish dialogue with governments to acknowledge the specific nature of these initiatives, to suggest appropriate legal frameworks and to look into the possibilities of partnerships and other forms of support.

Ultimately, the project hopes to set up a European platform for citizen commitment, operating as a forum for ongoing dialogue and exchanges. This could take shape during the annual forum to be held on this topic in October 2004.

To this end, several meetings have already been held with the relevant European networks. As a result, two working parties have been set up. The first will be seeking to come up with a more comprehensive definition and description of citizen commitment to the economy and identify its positive external factors (i.e. its impact in terms of social cohesion and sustainable development which are not taken into account in the price of products and services). To achieve this, it will rely heavily on the networks relating to this field. The second working party will be putting forward possible legal frameworks, once again in close consultation with the relevant networks. Lastly, a questionnaire will be sent to governments in September and October 2003.

The results of all this will be presented at a seminar taking place in the Walloon Region in late 2003. This will mark a transition from the planning and study stage in 2003 to a more practical one in which action will be focused on setting up the platform in 2004.

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Engaging demographers in policy-making

Increased life spans, declining fertility, pension and social security systems in deficit – all this has the merit of bringing demographic issues, once a subject of selected few, to general public debate.

The demographers have long argued that the knowledge of population trends is crucial when designing government policies and, at last, we observe a growing demand from policy-makers for demographic analysis and an improved understanding of the importance of demographic implications. A recent Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1591 (2003) on challenges of social policy in Europe's ageing societies, for example, is requesting to reinforce the work on the implications of ageing, while another one, Rec 1564 (2002), looks at the state of the world population and expresses

A High-level Housing conference, jointly organised by the Council of Europe Development Bank and the World Bank under the auspices of the *Initiative for Social Cohesion of the Stability Pact for South-east Europe*, gathered 15 ministers responsible for housing and finance from South-east Europe and 10 international organisations in Paris on 23-24 April 2003.

Social, economic and financial challenges facing the housing sector were discussed, among which the legal, regulatory and financial conditions needed to maintain property and develop the private rental housing sector; finding the right balance between private initiative, private finance and public support; making the housing sector an engine of growth and facilitator of labour mobility.

The Council of Europe, represented by Mrs. Battaini-Dragoni, Director General of Social Cohesion, highlighted the importance of housing and the corresponding responsibilities of national governments. Indeed, the Council of Europe's Revised European Social Charter of 1996 and its Art. 31 on the right to housing has been signed or ratified by several SEE countries. Mrs. Battaini-Dragoni pointed out that the Council of Europe provides member States with the highest quality of legislative advice in the field of access to housing, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable populations. She presented the Policy Guidelines on Access to Housing for Vulnerable Categories of People (CS-LO (2001) 25), adopted in 2001 by the Group of Specialists on Access to Housing (CS-LO) of the Council of Europe.

The Conference was the occasion to discuss the housing situation and the particular needs facing low-income groups, refugees, international displaced persons and other vulnerable groups.

The Joint Programme between the Council of Europe and the Council of Europe Development Bank presented three reports on:

- The Management of the Housing Stock in South-east Europe;
- Refugee-related Housing Issues in selected South-east European countries;
- Social Housing in South-Eastern Europe: situation, reforms and policy

The importance of regional cooperation in promoting social and economic development in South-East Europe was also addressed in detail.

Conference participants agreed on a programme of action in order to consult

support for the work on demographic trends within the Council of Europe.

Since 1973, the European Population Committee has been providing policy-makers with demographic indicators and studies, assisting them in policy choices. Perhaps its most well known publications are the yearly “Recent demographic trends in Europe” and the *Population studies* series. Lately, with the change of its terms of reference, the work of the Committee is increasingly focused on serving other Council of Europe bodies with timely demographic input on priority topics, such as ageing societies, increased labour migration, social exclusion and poverty.

Recently published and forthcoming studies confirm this focus - the work carried out in 2002 and the new studies under preparation contribute to the work of different Council of Europe committees, such as the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS), the European Committee on Migration (CDMG) and the European Health Committee (CDSP).

People, demography and social exclusion is a recent publication reacting to new forms of poverty and considered as an input to the work of the European Committee for Social Cohesion. It provides a detailed analysis of the complex relationship between demography and social exclusion and exposure to risks of poverty and social exclusion, related to demographic behaviour.

The demographic characteristics of immigrant populations study is contributing to another priority of the Council of Europe – migration and social exclusion. It provides an in-sight into the demographic dynamics of immigrant populations, fertility, family formation, mortality, space distribution and origin of migrants.

Current research of the European Population Committee includes the following subjects:

International labour migration – analysing trends and patterns of international labour migration according to origin and type (skills, degree of permanency and legal status). The research includes estimates of irregular migration and will evaluate the status and degree of integration of migrants on the labour market. The report will recommend policies

to improve the management of migration flows and strengthen the positive role of migration for the economy and society of both sending and receiving countries.

Reproductive health behaviour of young Europeans – elaborates further on the interrelations of education and reproductive behaviour, notably sexual and contraceptive behaviour and abortion at the individual level.

Active ageing in Europe – the oldest old and the elderly migrants. The report on the ‘oldest old’ (aged 80 years and older) in Europe includes population projections of the ‘oldest old’ by age and sex, marital status, living arrangements, etc. The second part of the report focuses on elderly migrants – elderly who arrived as economic migrants or refugees including their families.

Demographic implications of social exclusion in central and eastern Europe provides an overview of the key changes in the social policies that have an impact on the vulnerable groups and will illustrate changes in income disparities in Eastern Europe.

In keeping with its role of further promoting the work of the Council of Europe in the field of demography, the Committee in cooperation with the Parliamentary Assembly is planning a conference for 2005 which will bring together demographers and policymakers and would present an occasion for a dialogue on policy responses to demographic trends.

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Promoting access to employment: local labour market initiatives

The results of a two year project undertaken by the Council of Europe Directorate General of Social Cohesion with the Russian Ministry of Labour and Social Development were presented at a conference which took place in Pskov on 25 June 2003 and was chaired by Mr Yury Vicktorovich Gertsy, Head of the Federal Employment Department. Seventy employment specialists from the Russian Federation took part in the conference to learn how the regional employment service of Pskov had, with the

regularly on sector issues and policies through a network approach and to review progress with other transition economies. As a follow-up to the conference, a “housing sector note” is being prepared by the Council of Europe Development Bank and the World Bank.

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SOUTH-EAST EUROPE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON EMPLOYMENT 30-31 October 2003, Bucharest

A Ministerial Conference on Employment will be held in Bucharest on 30 and 31 October 2003. This Conference is being jointly organised by the Council of Europe, the Belgian Federal Public Service of Employment and Social Dialogue and the Romanian Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, under the auspices of the Initiative for Social Cohesion of the Stability Pact and the participation of the Council of Europe Development Bank.

The main purpose of this Conference is to establish a structured cooperation in the field of employment in South-east Europe, as strongly recommended by the Employment Network of the Council of Europe, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Stability Pact for South-east Europe. The objective of the conference is to support the countries' efforts to implement Council of Europe standards in employment matters (the European Social Charter and the revised Social Charter); to promote the application of Council of Europe recommendations concerning access to employment; to stimulate economic investment at the national and international level; to regulate more efficiently the labour mobility in the region; assist SEE countries converging towards EU employment policies.

With a view to establishing constructive synergies between the SEE Ministers responsible for employment, the social partners and the international organizations involved, a monitoring process will be launched immediately after the Conference. This evaluation process, coordinated by the Council of Europe in close relation with the ILO, would seek to: encourage the exchange of information; identify common trends, themes and suggestions for external technical cooperation and develop projects proposals eligible for funding by international financial institutions in close cooperation with the Council of Europe Development Bank.

For further information contact
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support of the Council of Europe and a team of Russian and international experts, improved its working methods and begun to provide a more effective service for both employers and job-seekers.

The objective of this project was to develop a training model that can be used by regional and local employment services to improve their effectiveness in promoting job opportunities for vulnerable groups, with local partnership development being a key element of the model. The participants in the conference included 20 directors of regional employment services outside the Pskov region, and 24 directors of local employment services in the region of Pskov together with representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development.

A training manual and a video based on the results of the project were presented to the participants as a vehicle for applying the training model elsewhere in the Russian Federation; and the Head of the Federal Employment Department has confirmed his wish to see the other regional employment services apply the lessons of the Pskov project. Indeed, the training model is likely to be relevant to other transition and post transition labour markets, where there is a need for local employment services to anticipate changes in local conditions, adopt a pro-active approach by adapting their labour market programmes to changing needs and develop local partnerships of all labour market actors.

By way of underlining both the important role of employment services in helping vulnerable groups access the labour market and their potential for achieving more, the training video has been given the title "We ought to be giants". This is a quote from the Anton Chekhov Play, the *Cherry Orchard*: "The Lord God has given us vast forests, immense fields, wide horizons; surely we ought to be giants, living in such a country as this."

Simon Tonelli, formerly responsible for the "Pskov Project"

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The Italian Presidency for the second half of 2003 has published its 6-month programme under the slogan "Europe: citizens of a shared dream", setting out its five priority objectives: organising the intergovernmental conference in preparation for signature of the EU Constitution, the European economy, the path towards "Greater Europe", Europe's presence in the world and citizen security (the fight against terrorism, transnational crime and illegal immigration).

Its most important task will probably be adoption of the European Constitution. This project is currently in the hands of the Heads of State and Government and it will not be officially signed until after the accession of the ten new member states, ie 1 May 2004.

However, there are also other priorities in the Italian Presidency's 6-month programme, including social issues.

In the light of the [conclusions of the spring 2003 European Council](#), the ambitious Lisbon agenda is one of the Italian Presidency's priorities regarding the social and economic pillar. The European Employment Strategy should, Italy believes, promote flexibility in the labour market while ensuring a fair balance between flexibility and social security, adopting active and preventive measures for the unemployed and the non-active and promoting longer working life. The contribution that will be made by the [European Employment Task Force](#), headed by Wim Kok, will be decisive. Italy also believes that the general challenge posed by ageing of the population must be met by reforming pension systems so that they are financially sustainable.

Special importance also needs attaching to regularisation of the grey economy, a problem common to many European countries. The Italian Presidency will be organising a European seminar, which will take as its basis a Commission study and focus on measuring the phenomenon and the actual situation in the acceding countries and identifying examples of good practice. Italy is prepared to draft a Council Resolution based on the seminar's conclusions

Another major issue in the second half of 2003 will obviously be the EU enlargement and the Italian Presidency will be launching

wide debate on the impact of enlargement on industrial relations, employment legislation and mobility.

With a view to declaring 2004 International Year of the Family, the Italian Presidency will focus on the role of the family in combating social exclusion, and a European conference on the role of the family in social integration will be held in Turin on 16 and 17 October 2003. A new frame of reference will have to be worked out, with social cohesion and social protection policies playing a key role in the promotion of longer working life. Reconciling work and family life is also part of the Italian programme

In the health field, the Presidency particularly regrets the damage caused by smoking, poor diet and road accidents, which place an undue financial burden on social security systems. It therefore intends to focus on consumer protection and reach political agreement on a new legal basis for financing Community action on behalf of the consumer from 2004 to 2007.

The Closing Conference of the [European Year of People with Disabilities](#) will be held in Rome from 5 to 7 December 2003. Integrating people with disabilities into the labour market will be one of the main subjects. A special seminar will also be held on the subject and will include a prize-giving ceremony for European business enterprises which have demonstrated the best practices in support of people with disabilities.

The Italian Presidency also intends drawing attention to the issue of corporate social responsibility (CSR). It considers it necessary to encourage business enterprises not only to comply with social and environmental rules but to finance specific social policy programmes in order to become front-line players in implementing national social policies. A conference will be held on the latest developments in corporate social responsibility. Emphasis will be placed on promoting this concept and comparing the different approaches in member states and candidate countries to identifying a common European scheme for evaluating CSR initiatives, as well as increasing awareness of the opportunities offered by a such a scheme.

All official information and documents can be found on the Italian Presidency website at the following address: <http://www.ueitalia2003.it/EN/>

WORLD BANK CONFERENCE

“Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future”

Budapest, 30 June-1 July 2003

A conference on “Roma in an expanding Europe: Challenges for the future” was organised by the World Bank and the Open Society Institute with the aim of supporting Roma integration and addressing Roma poverty in Central and Eastern Europe. A major World Bank report was published before the conference in June 2003 and identified the complex cycle of Roma poverty as “one of the most critical remaining issues on the agenda of countries of Central and Eastern Europe preparing for European Union membership.”

The conference took place in Budapest on 30 June - 1 July 2003 at the invitation of the Hungarian Government and was chaired by Mr. László Teleki, Member of Parliament and State Secretary. The Conference was co-financed by the World Bank Group, the Open Society Institute, the European Commission, the United Nations Development Programme, the Governments of Hungary, Sweden and Finland and the Council of Europe Development Bank.

The objectives of the conference were:

- *Raising awareness* of policies to address poverty and other human development outcomes;
- *Garnering long-term commitment* by governments and international organisations to improve Roma education and employment opportunities, as well as living conditions, pre and post EU accession;
- *Discussing strategies* that national governments, Roma organisations, NGOs and others can take to reduce poverty and improve welfare outcomes, including education, labour market status, housing and health;
- *Exchanging experience* of projects and programmes targeted at Roma over the past decade, as well as lessons learned by new institutions charged with addressing Roma and ethnicity issues
- *Involving Roma leaders* in the economic development process. Providing networking opportunities for Roma leaders and space for them to interact with policy makers.

The event focused on seven participating countries with a large

Roma population: Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Serbia and Montenegro and “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. Other countries from the region addressing Roma issues were invited as observer countries: Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Poland, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Roma NGO representatives from Kosovo were also invited to attend.

Participants included high-level national authorities, representatives from international institutions such as the EU and OSCE. The Council of Europe was represented by Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General and Mrs. Miranda Vuolasranta, special advisor from the Directorate General for Social Cohesion. Many NGOs and individual young and older Roma activists took part in the conference. It was disappointing that not all (or none of?) the international and European Roma NGOs attended the conference.

The conclusions and proposals drawn up in the different panel sessions aimed to facilitate long-term commitment by governments and international organisations for follow-up action, promote strategies that can be implemented to reduce poverty and improve welfare outcomes, and ensure an exchange of lessons learnt from projects and programmes aimed at Roma populations.

Maud de Boer-Buquicchio presented the long experience of Council of Europe as the first European organisation carrying out normative work in this field based on the principle of equal access of all European citizens – and particularly vulnerable groups – to basic human and social rights and enjoyment of these rights. She underlined that “the Conference is timely, as a number of important initiatives regarding Roma issues are on the European agenda: the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti, the Finnish initiative to set-up a European Roma Forum at the level of the Council of Europe, the recent creation of a European Roma Information Office (ERIO) in Brussels, and the second Joint European Commission/Council of Europe/OSCE-ODIHR Stability Pact Project on Roma in South East Europe.

The fact that numerous events address Roma issues highlights the fact that the Roma communities have become a frequent subject of discussion at European level between governments and/or international institutions. The next challenge is to ensure that they are also becoming the actors of these discussions. Full and effective participation does not just mean a place for consultation (through inter-governmental commissions, consultative bodies, Roma advisers, etc.). Participation requires active involvement, implies negotiations, as well as the feeling of shared ownership of the final product. It should be understood as a partnership at local, national and European level.

That underlying thought inspired Finnish President Halonen to launch the initiative to set up a European Forum for Roma and Travellers enabling them to express their concerns, raise awareness about human rights violations, promote the interests of these communities and advise relevant structures of the Council of Europe and other international institutions. Furthermore, its composition should reflect the variety of groups including their religious, linguistic differences at the European level.

Mrs De Boer-Buquicchio also emphasized that the Council of Europe will assure the wide range of responsibilities it has assumed at all levels – international, national and local – and will continue to play its role in coordinating and cooperating to provide a common and synergic approach to improve the situation of Roma throughout Europe. “We count on the same commitment from all actors concerned. It is only through this collaborative and participatory approach that we can make progress towards the goal of living all together within cohesive, sustainable societies, respectful of our identities, traditions and cultures,” said the Deputy Secretary General. (The full speech can be consulted on the following Website: http://www.coe.int/T/F/Secrétaire_général/Secrétaire_Générale_adjointe/Discours/ZC_2003_%20300603_Budapest.asp#TopOfPa).

(Continued on page 14)

Mr. Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank, presented two initiatives in his concluding speech. The Decade of Roma Inclusion would run from 2005 to 2015 and would help new actors understand the work that has already been undertaken in this field, they would learn from them and build on them so that they could bring to the attention of the European and global public this decade of progress that we all plan for. The Roma Decade Goals will be finalised in 2004 under the leadership of the Hungarian Prime Minister Mr. Medgyessy together with his colleagues from the other countries. Each leader will appoint representatives to work on this subject specifically and will remain personally involved and committed.

The second initiative consists in creating a Fund for Roma Education, which will be designed in consultation with the same group. This initiative will engage the full cooperation of the European Union, the Soros Foundation, the World Bank and other interested groups that wish to cooperate on Roma education issues. Mr. Wolfensohn emphasised that these initiatives should constitute a true partnership in which Roma leaders and representatives should shape, contribute to and guide the decisions taken, thereby making the announced Roma Decade Goals an inherently open process.

The Council of Europe and the European Commission will participate fully in the forthcoming discussions on the goals to be achieved within "the Decade of Roma Inclusion".

More information about the conference is available on the following Websites: <http://www.worldbank.org/romaconference> and <http://www.worldbank.org/roma>

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France

The National Plan for Strengthening Measures to tackle Financial Insecurity and Exclusion

During his presentation of the government's general policy on 3 July 2003, the French Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, announced the adoption of a national plan to strengthen measures to tackle financial insecurity and exclusion (PNLE) in order to facilitate the practical application of the Outline Act of July 1998 on combating exclusion.

A broad consultation exercise involving associations, local and regional authorities and the National Council for Policies to Combat Poverty And Social Exclusion (CNLE) was conducted before the plan was drafted and made it possible to enhance its content.

The PNLE is an important step in the implementation of a genuine policy for combating exclusion. It was presented to the Cabinet on 19 March 2003 by Ms Dominique Versini, the minister of state responsible for combating financial insecurity and exclusion.

All of the national authorities and the country as a whole will join forces in implementing the PNLE, which includes 41 measures, and a billion euros will be earmarked for its implementation between now and 2005.

The plan reflects a major priority, i.e. to give people in situations of poverty or exclusion access to their rights. It has five main thrusts:

- *giving people access to their rights as full members of the community:* the principle aims here are to simplify relations between administrative services and the most disadvantaged members of the public, to inform people of their rights and to give them opportunities for self-expression and participation so that they have a measure of control over their own lives;
- *improving access to housing:* the priorities here are preventing evictions, creating and expanding a stock of private subsidised housing, ensuring that available housing is decent and building a stock of housing for large families and people living alone;
- *improving social emergency arrangements,* including advice and

guidance, accommodation and measures to ensure the social integration of the homeless. This service needs to be modernised and co-ordinated;

- *improving access to healthcare for people suffering hardship:* in this field the government intends to reinforce the regional programmes for access to preventive measures and healthcare (PRAPSeS), improve the care offered to disadvantaged people with mental health problems and use nutritional aid as an integration tool;
- *introducing special schemes in response to a number of specific problems* facing disadvantaged people in order, for example, to combat illiteracy and give them access not only to electricity and a telephone line but also to culture and the arts.

In keeping with its European Union commitments, France has introduced its second National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (PNAI) 2003-2005, which was presented in July 2003 by Mr François Fillon, Minister for Social Affairs, Employment and Solidarity.

It is also interesting to note that France and the Council of Europe share the same points of view, as can be seen in Mary Daly's Report on "Access to Social Rights in Europe", with regard, for example, to both the obstacles encountered by policies for combating financial insecurity and exclusion and the recommended solutions.

That is why the French authorities considered it a good idea to hold a conference on access to social rights in Paris in November 2003 in co-operation with the Council of Europe. The conference will provide an opportunity, through three round tables, to take stock of practical measures to achieve the above-mentioned objectives in France and to hold interesting discussions on this subject, thanks to the presence of prominent European figures and examples of good practice from other European countries. It is hoped that this event will give rise to fruitful discussions and provide useful lessons for the future.

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CARITAS Georgia - Saving the children from the street

Since 1994 I have been working in Georgia, a small country in Trans-Caucasus, as Director of the charitable foundation "Caritas Georgia" and have witnessed a lot of problems people in Georgia have had to face in recent years.

Given the traditionally strong family institution and exceptionally developed inter-family relations in Georgia, one could hardly imagine that the country would ever face the problem of street children. The children were born in these troubled and uneasy years of deprivation, when many families have been destabilised or lost everything they once had, in particular their homes, during the internal armed conflicts carried out by different separatist groups. According to UNICEF there are about 6000 children identified as street children in Tbilisi. Every child has experienced their own tragedy which drove them out of childhood and into the evil world of struggle for existence. The street children are of different origins, but the largest group are children born in the most vulnerable internally displaced persons families from Abkhazia and Samachablo. The majority are far from being free and safe: the adult criminal world has seized them and uses them as the "cheapest and obedient tool".

At present there are only three NGOs in Tbilisi trying to help the street children to change their life: Child and Environment, "Mkurnali" (Healer) and Caritas Georgia. Through our different youth programmes we at Caritas are working particularly with children at risk of becoming street children and we try to ensure that the 200 children attending our two youth centres will never be subjected to the evil influence of the street. We are able to do this work thanks to the support we have received for several years from *Deutscher Caritasverband* (Germany) and *CORDAID* (The Netherlands).

The decision to initiate this work with street children was not easy to take; we had no experience, no funds, no consultant – but we could not stay

aside and watch. We had to try and help so a small pilot project was initiated on a voluntary basis by enthusiasts who liked children and who could befriend them. They began with very prudently watching several children and their behaviour nearby the metro station. It took more than two months before being able to speak with the younger ones. Step by step, this approach led to bringing several children to a 3-room-flat, named "Chveni Sakhli" (Our Home) arranged like a real family-flat where the children should feel only calm and warm attitudes. Many of them didn't even know their real names; they had only nicknames. They had never seen a lavatory-pan, never cleaned their teeth, weren't familiar with soap. When we asked a 5-year-old girl why she didn't wash her hands, she answered that they had never had soap at her home, nor did they have plates or spoons, and her mother never cooked, she only pounded garlic, dissolved it in water poured in a large bowl which the whole family of four children dunked their bread into and ate. This was the reality of life for Maya, a charming child with bright sherry-eyes. Since this beginning the children have changed a lot; they make friends with each other but still the youngest are literally hanging onto Nika, the teacher, looking into his eyes and trying to hold his hand, maybe to feel his warmth and to be sure that he won't leave.

"Chveni Sakhli" is not an institution, not a boarding type house – it is already small for 15 children – but it is open to all children. We managed to divert the majority from the street. We have overcome the struggle with those who have family who used the child to bring in money. We managed to adapt the young ones to present day life, make the children attend school - where many of them are definitely good - to reveal their talents and make them proud of themselves for some small victory – a good mark at school, washing plates after dinner or drawing beautiful pictures.

Trying to solve in an original but rather efficient way the great problem of financing, we decided to make the children the beneficiaries of the existing Caritas Georgia programme "Long-distance adoption". We are extremely

pleased with the dozens of Italian families who are involved in this noble project. Every child in our small pilot project "Chveni Sakhli" can fully cover their living and studying expenses through the support of their long-distance family. In a few months we will expand the project by moving to the newly built part of the "House for Children" where we will be able to help a further 35-40 street children to escape from the street.

But let's have one more look into "Our Home"; it's late evening now, all the children are ready to go to bed and their favourite moment comes: when all of them, big and small, are holding their breath for the continuation of the fairy-tale their "granny" (the teacher) is telling them. This moment is a moment of true happiness for all of us – the family.

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Caritas Europa was created in 1971 and brings together 48 organisations that are working in 44 European countries.

Caritas Europa is one of the seven regions of *Caritas Internationalis*, a confederation of 162 Catholic relief, development and social service organisations working to build a better world, especially for the poor and oppressed, in over 200 countries and territories.

Caritas Internationalis works without regard to creed, race, gender, or ethnicity.

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ADOPTED TEXTS

Recommendations:

- Recommendation Rec(2003)10 of the Committee of Ministers on xenotransplantation (adopted on 19 June 2003)
- Recommendation Rec(2003)11 of the Committee of Ministers on the introduction of pathogen inactivation procedures for blood components (adopted on 19 June 2003)
- Recommendation Rec(2003)12 of the Committee of Ministers on organ donor registers (adopted on 19 June 2003)

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Publications:

- "We ought to be giants" - *Promoting access to employment: local labour market initiatives*, Video and training manual for the staff of local employment services, manual prepared by Bertil Oskarsson, published by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development of the Russian Federation and Council of Europe (available in English and Russian).
- *Combating poverty and access to social rights in the countries of the South Caucasus: a territorial approach*, Trends in social cohesion, Volume No. 5, Council of Europe Publishing, ISBN 92-871-5096
- *The state and new social responsibilities in a globalising world*, Trends in social cohesion, Volume No. 6, Council of Europe Publishing, ISBN 92-871-5168-7

CALENDAR FROM SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER 2003

- **1 October: International Day of Older Persons**
- **17 October: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty**

Conferences:

- 9-10 October: 4th Regional conference on "Migration policies on the eve of the EU enlargement: what challenges for future co-operation within the East European region" - Kiev (Ukraine)
- 23-24 October: Forum 2003 "Social cohesion or public security: how should Europe respond to collective feelings of insecurity?" - Strasbourg (France)
- 30-31 October: South-East Europe Ministerial Conference on Employment - Bucharest (Romania)

Seminars and other meetings:

- 1-4 October: Seminar on strengthening the co-ordination of social security systems in South-east Europe - Budapest (Hungary)
- 3-4 October: Multilateral round table on Roma mediators in the Health, social and education fields - (Romania)
- 15 October: Round table on the role of local authorities in implementing Roma policies - Rome (Italy)
- 16 October: Round table on the Roma and European education policies: discrimination and integration - Paris (France)
- 27-28 October: "Social solidarity and committed citizenship to promote social cohesion" 2nd meeting of the two working groups: identification of a reference system to analyse the externalities and definition of the legal framework - Strasbourg (France)

Committee Meetings:

- 23-24 September: 12th meeting of the Bureau of the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS-BU) - Strasbourg (France)
- 1-2 October: Forum for Children and Families: Working group on children at risk and in care - Paris (France)
- 28-29 October: Forum for Children and Families: Working group on children, democracy and participation in society - Strasbourg (France)
- 6-7 November: Group of specialists on employment for marginalised groups (CS-MA) - Strasbourg (France)
- 25-27 November: 11th meeting of the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS) - Strasbourg (France)
- 25-26 November: 54th meeting of the European Health Committee (CDSP) - Strasbourg (France)

"Social Cohesion: Developments" is the DG III - Social Cohesion Directorate's electronic newsletter - **Publication:** issued three times a year - **Members of the editorial committee:** **Gilda Farrell** (responsible editor), Head of the Social Cohesion Development Division - Maria Ochoa-Llido, Head of the Migration and Roma/Gypsies Division - Cathie Burton, Press Officer - John Murray, Head of the Social Policy Department - **Françoise Zahn** (co-ordination, editing and layout), Tel.: + 33 (0)3 90 21 47 94, E-mail: francoise.zahn@coe.int