

## Editorial

### 2004, a year of new challenges and new horizons

The *Strategy for Social Cohesion*, which was drawn up by the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS) in the early days of its work has just been revised to take account of the achievements of the first five years. The new text, which will form the basis for our work over the next few years, makes clear that the Council of Europe's approach to social cohesion is firmly based on human rights and also calls on all social actors (especially government, business and civil society) to accept a shared responsibility for building a society "capable of ensuring the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation". Subject to final approval from the Committee of Ministers, the revised Strategy will be published shortly.

Several new areas of work are currently under consideration by the CDCS. A new study on housing and social cohesion is in an advanced stage of planning; activities on children and families are likely to be reinforced; and new work on the socially responsible economy is likely to result from a Forum which will take place in November 2004.

We shall be working to give effect to the results of two major conferences held last year. First, the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of European Health Ministers (Oslo, 12-13 June 2003) focused on *health, dignity and human rights*. The European Health Committee is now considering what action to take in order to give effect to the Ministers' conclusions. Secondly, following the initiative launched by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe at the 2nd European Conference of Ministers responsible for integration policies for people with disabilities (Malaga, 7-8 May 2003), the activities on people with disabilities, at present carried out within the framework of the Partial Agreement in the Social and Public Health Field, will be extended to all member States of the Council of Europe. At the same time, work is starting on preparing a *Disability Action Plan*, a new policy framework to set the European disability agenda for the next decade.

Although the first responsibility of the Council of Europe is to its member States, it is increasingly necessary in a globalising world to enter into dialogue and co-operation with countries outside Europe on problems of common concern. This conviction underlies two important new developments in our work. The *Political Platform of the Council of Europe on Migration*, which brings together European countries and selected

countries from which migrants coming to Europe originate, held its first session in Rotterdam in December 2003. Discussion focused on two themes: the role of information policies and their contribution to orderly migration, and integration as a factor for development. The next session of the Platform will take place in May 2004 on the theme of student migration and exchange in the context of co-development and the transfer of skills. (See article on page 3)

Moreover, on 27-28 May 2004, a Euro-Mediterranean conference is being organised in Cyprus in cooperation with the ILO on *social security: a factor of social cohesion*. The Conference aims to promote the concept of social security as a universal right of the human being and as a fundamental element for social development. It also intends to develop the exchange of information between the member states of the Council of Europe and the Southern-Eastern Mediterranean countries in order to raise awareness and co-ordinate the defence of the basic principles of social security. (See article on page 5)

In all these ways, we shall be aiming in the coming year to take our work on social cohesion forward into a new phase.

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**Newsletter:** You have spent five years of your career in the Directorate General for Social Cohesion, following a theme which is close to your heart. During that time, you have had a special chance to see how Council of Europe member states are developing their social policies. Which are the main challenges still facing us and what remains to be done?



During the last five years we have seen some worrying trends. First of all, the issue of “modernising” is one that is of concern to our populations, since the term was often used to hide the dismantling of social security systems. Also, we should look at the way in which employment is being modified, the fact that in our job markets we have more and more informal, precarious, unstable and delocalised forms of work. Another troubling issue is the increased cost of health care and the fact that, because of the aging of the population and the need to keep in good health, the costs that the health services will have to face will continue to increase. Environmental challenges also exist, with the degradation of our resources and our climate. Also, we are confronted with the difficulty member states have to manage migratory flows in an orderly manner, along with the difficulty of managing cultural diversity so as to prevent conflicts. Such a list shows that there is still a lot of work to be done for the next five or ten years at least.

**Newsletter:** The Council of Europe is developing projects along with others at international level in the area of social policies and economics, but what must we do to combat the potential problems caused by globalisation, which tend to override people’s social, civil and economic rights?

I think that we should go on doing what we have been trying to do through the Strategy for Social Cohesion, which is to basically maintain our system of social protection for all. This is an important way of avoiding exclusion and, in the end, poverty. We very often say we need to modernise social security in order to spend less money. This only leads to the creation of poverty. When member states come up with targeted anti-poverty strategies they often end up spending more than they would have in keeping the social security systems running properly. It is therefore very important

to keep the essential elements of present systems of social security in place.

But also it is important to emphasise equity in access. This means equity in access to resources, to knowledge, and to basic rights. These are the prerequisites to ensure that our societies would be cohesive and sustainable in the future.

**Newsletter:** DG III is developing projects to respond to social needs. According to you, which are the most important? What is your legacy and which part of your work has given you the most satisfaction?

The first result was the Strategy for Social Cohesion and the later revision. The pillar activity in this strategy has been access to social rights and in particular access to social rights for the disabled. When we dealt with access to social rights we looked at employment, health, social protection and also housing. Another very important result was the platform on migration, of which I’m very proud. The Council of Europe has at its disposal, in the field of migration, a very interesting policy paper: “The strategy on the orderly management of migratory flow”. It was important to implement this Strategy and I understood that without a political body able to understand, implement and give effect to it we would go nowhere. The idea came to create a platform bringing together countries of origin, transit and destination of migration, to extensively cooperate on migratory flows and integration of migrants in hosting countries as well as to curb illegal migration. The platform is now a reality and will become an important asset for the Council of Europe future works in managing migration policies.

Another major achievement was the campaign to get countries to sign and ratify the Code of Social Security, making the Council of Europe’s standard setting texts better known by member states.

**Newsletter:** Which areas or subjects should be more closely targeted in order to react to current social challenges?

There are three additional areas which I would have liked to develop. The first is the interrelationship between culture and social cohesion. At first we concentrated on the social dimension and did not dedicate enough attention to aspects of cultural diversity, with the exception of work in the field of inter-community relations in the migration field. Recently the European Ministers of Culture adopted the “Opatija Declaration” which highlights the importance of managing culture diversity in

order to prevent conflicts and to foster dialogue between different groups and religions; the recommendations of this ministerial conference are indeed relevant for the Social Cohesion Strategy.

Secondly, the economic dimension of social cohesion needs more attention. The macro economic determinants of social cohesion should be analysed closely. In the field of economic rights, I believe that we need to envisage a new right – the right to credit for vulnerable groups, to make inclusion a reality. The Social Cohesion Development Division Forum on ethical financing in 2004 will be a very important first step in this direction by opening up the debate on access to credit for the most vulnerable.

Thirdly, I believe that the Council of Europe should ideally offer the member states adequate tools of measurement to assess whether the social cohesion strategy is being implemented or not. An index of social indicators that would include social, economic, cultural and environmental factors could be elaborated and be put at the disposal of the member states or local authorities. This should be a new chapter of work for the future.

**Newsletter:** The Council of Europe is better known for its work on human rights and democracy. Are social affairs perhaps considered as an “add on”?

Not at all. More and more attention is being paid to the idea that we don’t enjoy our rights in abstract but we need an environment which is beneficial and conducive to the enjoyment of these rights. At the same time, we become aware of the importance of education to promote human rights as well as democratic citizenship and participation.

**Newsletter:** What are your main messages about social affairs in the Council of Europe?

Reducing inequalities and polarisations, as stated in the revised strategy on social cohesion remains the main political task of the Council of Europe to promote social justice (i. e. Council of Europe Statute)

Thanks to the Revised Strategy we are engaged in the fight against inequality both inside our member States and at continental level. This is a way of summing up the work of DG III and explains why social cohesion is one of the main priorities set for the organisation.

**Interviewer:** Cathie Burton

## THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE POLITICAL PLATFORM ON MIGRATION

### A step towards the establishment of a Migration Agency

The Political Platform on Migration represents one of the most ambitious projects on which the Council of Europe is currently engaged. Ambitious because it implies opening out in search of an active dialogue and partnership with countries outside Europe, small and large alike. Ambitious also because the policy implications for member states are both extensive and complex. The migration debate crosses over almost every policy areas and the migration equation in, for example, the fields of integration/community relations, social policy, employment policy, economic development, demography and security is far from being straight forward and easy to handle. The human rights of the men, women and children, who experience the daily challenges of a migrants' life call to be protected.

The Political Platform and the proposed Migration Agency represent the two halves of the structure which the Secretary General called for to implement the Council of Europe strategy for orderly migration at the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of European Ministers responsible for Migration Affairs in Helsinki in September 2002: *"To my mind, time is ripe to create a structure (...), which would facilitate or, where needed, provoke the dialogue between sending, transit and receiving countries. It would actively promote co-ordination with ministries and non-governmental organisations of the countries concerned and establish co-operation to fight the economic, political and sociological causes of (irregular) migration. It would launch analyses on issues of interest to member States in the preparation of their political decision-making and would propose innovative policies and law. This structure would help implement the strategy at the national level and would subsequently monitor the progress made."*

It is intended that the Political Platform will provide a forum for strategic policy making in the field of migration and its orderly

management and guidance for the migration agency. The agency on the other hand would be an implementation or development tool, laying emphasis on actions and project development. This would include, for example, micro-projects aimed at dealing with problems of integration in countries of destination and problems of development in countries of origin and transit. Migrants represent a tremendous potential for promoting the development of their countries of origin, and here the Agency could play a role in supporting their initiatives as "vectors of sustainable development".

Whilst preparatory work is being undertaken on the feasibility of establishing a migration agency - a report will be submitted to the Secretary General in June 2004- the Political Platform has already been launched. Its 1st session took place on the third day of the meeting of the European Committee for Migration (CDMG) in Rotterdam on 10 December 2003. In addition to the member States of the Council of Europe, the Platform brought together a selected number of non European countries with migration flows of origin or transit into Europe. Representatives from Bangladesh, China, Morocco and Pakistan took part in this first session with India, Somalia and Tunisia also having been invited.

In anticipation of the establishment of the Migration Agency, the Political Platform has already adopted a practical approach to its work. Two themes have been discussed: the role of information and its contribution to orderly migration; and integration as a factor for development. Various areas for practical co-operation were identified and included the development, implementation and evaluation of targeted information policies leading for a call that project proposals be drawn up to implement them. A preliminary project proposal has since been prepared by the Council of Europe Migration Division

giving priority for voluntary funding on North-South, East-West dialogue and co-operation on migration.

Further sessions of the Political Platform will be held during 2004 in conjunction with the meetings of the CDMG. The 2<sup>nd</sup> session on 13 May 2004 will be devoted to the theme of student mobility and the promotion of co-development through the transfer of skills. During 2004, one of the main objectives will be to strengthen the Political Platform in two ways:

- firstly, efforts will be made to improve the participation of non European countries through identification of the correct institutional partners and establishment of a working relationship at technical level. The decision of the CDMG to invite the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (also know under the name of North-South Centre) to take part in its meetings will hopefully assist in this process;
- secondly, the *quadrilogue* character of the Platform will be improved through co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the NGOs working with the Council of Europe. It is hoped, for example, that a delegation of parliamentarians will take part in the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the Platform.

Migration being one of the major issues of common interest for Europe and its partners, the Political Platform and the proposed Migration Agency will be instrumental in promoting a real North-South, East-West dialogue and co-operation.

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# The Report *Access to social rights for people with disabilities in Europe* by Marc Maudinet (Author of the report and Director of the CTNERHI)



Prepared for the Council of Europe's Directorate General of Social Cohesion, the report on access to social rights for people with disabilities in Europe is based on the work of a drafting group of government experts from the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS) and the Committee on the Rehabilitation and Integration of People with Disabilities (CD-P-RR), as well as representatives of European NGOs concerned with disability.

It follows on from the report on "*Access to Social Rights in Europe*" by Professor Mary Daly (Queen's University, Belfast), highlighting the specific concerns of people with disabilities in relation to access to social rights.

The report forms part of the process launched at the Council of Europe's 2<sup>nd</sup> European Conference of Ministers responsible for Integration Policies for People with Disabilities (Malaga, May 2003). It was also one of the Council's main contributions to the *European Year of People with Disabilities (2003)*, and is helping to fuel discussion of the action plan for people with disabilities which the organisation will shortly be preparing.

Against the backdrop of efforts to combat all forms of discrimination, it sets out to:

- describe general principles and measures designed to give people with disabilities better access to social rights in Europe;
- pinpoint obstacles which are still a significant impediment to such access today;
- suggest a co-ordinated series of recommendations in various fields, with a view to framing integrated policies to give people with disabilities improved access to social rights.

The report starts from the principle that implementing access to social rights in societies founded on universal

citizenship and respect for dignity implies that everyone has legal rights and a basic human identity. It defines "access" as "*the possibility of taking possession and availing of the legal and social prerogatives attaching to a specific type of dignity. For everyone, this involves being able to choose, participate and commit oneself.*"

It begins by discussing general principles and measures to give people with disabilities better access social rights throughout their lives, with reference to the Council of Europe's work in this area from 1992 to 2003, and the founding texts of our modern era. On this basis, it also looks at the action taken by various international organisations, on the principle that society's response to disability must allow for the dynamic interaction of several factors - individual, environmental and societal.

It then lists obstacles which people with disabilities encounter in various areas, e.g. social, economic and legal protection, the built environment, employment, schooling and higher education, participation in the life of the community, and health systems and medical care. It focuses on measures taken by various member states to overcome these obstacles, giving numerous practical examples.

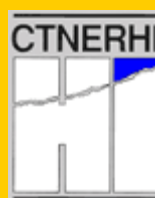
The report ends with a series of recommendations. Specifically, it notes that it is essential to:

- adopt integrated political strategies, followed by co-ordinated action plans for the integration of people with disabilities, at regional, national and European level. Global, coherent policies are needed to guarantee them citizenship (including the right to lead an independent life), full participation including freedom of choice (self-determination) and active involvement in the life of the community (covering economic, social, cultural, leisure and recreational aspects);
- pay special attention to overcoming obstacles encountered by people suffering from psychiatric illness;

- introduce a universal "security" income, distinct from supplementary benefits to compensate for disability;
- introduce and enforce minimum accessibility standards throughout Europe;
- launch European co-operation and research programmes on the social issues raised by disability.

To order this publication, please visit the Council of Europe Publishing Website: <http://book.coe.int/EN>

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The National Technical Centre for Studies and Research concerning Disability and Maladjustment (CTNERHI) was set up in 1975 to focus

attention on the needs of children and adults with disabilities.

It keeps an updated collection of French and foreign reference material – 19 000 references – which can be accessed free of charge via the Internet, with systematic coverage of French-language publications on disability since 1989.

The "Saphir" data base, which was set up in association with the Quebec Office for People with Disabilities, incorporates the concepts developed by the WHO Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, and the Quebec Classification of the Disability Production Process.

Topics covered by the CTNERHI's data base include ordinary and sheltered employment, vocational training, educational integration, accessibility, ageing, social policies, social protection and social research.

For more information, consult the Internet site: <http://www.ctnerhi.com.fr>

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### Social security: ongoing progress

Social security has become a part of human rights, and the need for it is now universally acknowledged.

The Council of Europe's social security instruments are designed to harmonise standards or co-ordinate systems.

Co-ordination's first priority is to ensure fair treatment for migrants.

A short guide to the Council's work on co-ordinating social security is now available in English, and a training course on co-ordination instruments is being held in Romania on 26-27 March 2004.

Harmonisation of social security standards is based on the European Code of Social Security, its Protocol and the revised Code, which lay down minimum standards for nine contingencies or "social risks", e.g. illness, old age and unemployment.

So far, the Code has been ratified by 19 European countries, Slovenia being the latest in February 2004. The Council of Europe is continuing its efforts to help countries to sign and ratify these instruments. Moldova and Latvia signed the Code in 2003, and have indicated that they wish to ratify it speedily. Romania also wants to ratify, Lithuania plans to sign by the end of 2004, and the Netherlands intends to ratify the revised Code.

The Committee of Experts on Standard-Setting Instruments in the Social Security Field (CS-CO) is responsible for monitoring compliance with the Code. At its 5<sup>th</sup> meeting in September 2003, it adopted its conclusions on the government reports for the period from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002, and sent them to the Committee of Ministers for final adoption in December 2003.

The intergovernmental reports show that application of the Code is improving steadily. In their law and practice, 18 countries now give full

effect to those parts of the Code which they have accepted. Otherwise, there still seem to be some problems - particularly concerning unemployment, industrial accidents and occupational illness.

In connection with its task of monitoring pan-European developments and trends in the social security field, the CS-CO recently commissioned studies on the rise of privatised retirement schemes, and on access to social security benefits for illegal migrant workers.

The CS-CO's next meeting will be held in Cyprus on 25-26 May 2004, and will be immediately followed by the Euro-Mediterranean Conference on "Social Security: Factor of Social Cohesion" (27-28 May 2004). This major event will be attended by Council of Europe member countries and non-European countries in the south and west Mediterranean. It is being organised with the International Labour Organisation, and is part of the Global Campaign on Social Security and Coverage for All. A crucial meeting, it will help to promote exchange between European and south and west Mediterranean, for the purpose of raising awareness and co-ordinating efforts to uphold social security principles.



#### MISSCEO

Work will be starting shortly on the 13<sup>th</sup> edition (2004) of the comparative tables of social protection systems, produced by the

Mutual Information System on Social Protection of the Council of Europe (MISSCEO). Four new countries will be furnishing tables for the first time. The ten new EU member countries will be leaving MISSCEO to join MISSOC, an equivalent EU structure.

For further information, please visit the Website: [http://www.coe.int/T/E/social\\_cohesion/social\\_policies/04.Activities/3.Social\\_Security/4.Missceo](http://www.coe.int/T/E/social_cohesion/social_policies/04.Activities/3.Social_Security/4.Missceo)

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### North-South Centre: Intercultural dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean region

The Council of Europe's North-South Centre, in partnership with the Jordan Institute for Diplomacy, organised a conference, "Intercultural Dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean Region: the Foundation of Peace and Stability", in Amman (Jordan) on 6-7 December 2004. This attracted some 100 "quadrilogue" participants (representing governments, parliaments, local authorities and NGOs) and journalists from European and south Mediterranean countries, from Morocco to Turkey.

The plenary sessions addressed various topics:

- Conflicts and interests: what kind of dialogue for the Euro-Mediterranean region?
- Dialogue and human dignity between respect for diversity and the "clash of civilisations"
- The media and representations of the Other: weapon of war or instrument of peace?
- Intercultural dialogue: the path to peace and stability

Having acknowledged that failures of comprehension, misunderstandings and ignorance were the real problem, and not a clash of cultures, the participants stressed the need for ongoing dialogue in the region.

They emphasised that this dialogue must not be just a one-off response at times of crisis, but must aim, first and foremost, at prevention and foster mutual, enduring trust between Euro-Mediterranean societies. It was suggested that one way of establishing a sound basis for mutual trust, understanding and acceptance of other people's cultures was to target opinion-formers, who could do much to spread the message. Education systems and the media were vital here.

Dialogue between the European and Arab cultures was crucial, providing a

### User involvement in social services

The Group of Specialists on User Involvement in Social Services (CS-US) held its second meeting in Strasbourg early last December. After the first meeting, held in Freiburg (Germany), reports had been prepared on three issues: trends in the debate on user involvement in social services in Europe, obstacles to user involvement, and the use of new information technologies to improve user involvement. These were discussed in December, and points identified for the final report. These points included an overview of social services and user involvement, and the situation on the ground.

Schemes tested and practices followed in various countries were examined in this context: Norway's new law, which makes user consultation mandatory when social services are being planned; the Netherlands' setting-up of a National Client Council, comprising user representatives; Latvia's similar approach, with a law giving users the right to take part in decision-making on social services.

This new approach is clearly more widespread in northern than in other parts of Europe – which is partly due to historical, cultural and political differences. Nonetheless, examining innovative practices made it possible to identify various ways of involving users in social services. In Albania, for instance, pilot projects co-funded by the World Bank focus explicitly on user involvement at local level. Romania has set up advisory committees to involve user representatives in planning youth support services. Armenia claims to have no tradition of participation – but its new integrated services consult users and work with them. The discussion had previously been fairly theoretical, but these presentations gave it a more practical slant.

The next meeting of the CS-US will be held in Strasbourg in mid-March

2004. Since its terms of reference expire at the end of June 2004, it will endorse the final draft guidelines at a last meeting.

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### Social cohesion indicators: the guide gets tested, and a seminar confirms its usefulness

The *Methodological Guide to the Use of Social Cohesion Indicators* was tested in a number of cities, regions and countries between July and December 2003. Authorities involved included the Economic and Social Council of Portugal, the Government of the Walloon Region, the Strasbourg Metropolitan Authority and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic.

Conducted in various contexts, these tests validated the proposed methodology, provided an opportunity to fine-tune questions and indicators for the various levels and fields of application, and yielded examples of use, which will be incorporated into the guide.

Testing in the Czech Republic in December 2003 made it possible to assess the approach's suitability for central and east European countries; as a result, certain concepts and indicators have been adjusted and clarified, and the guide's scope has been broadened in the three areas covered by the tests (employment, income and health). The Czech Republic suggests, for example, that poverty be defined, not in relative terms, but on the basis of a minimum basket of consumer items needed for survival. This has the advantage of making the concept more accessible, and making it possible to compare consumption levels and connect with other concepts, such as that of responsible consumption.

foundation for partnership and stability in the region. Peoples could not co-operate if they did not know one another, and their relations were built on prejudice and stereotypes.

The events of 11 September had crystallised fears and various forms of extremism. Respect for others and the things that made them different was the best way to disarm all types of fundamentalism. At the same time, diversity must rest on an unshakeable foundation of shared and universal values - human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

This was the prerequisite for developing a genuine political, social, economic and cultural contract between Europe and its south Mediterranean neighbours. Everyone knew that dialogue was vitally needed – and European and Arab commitment must give it concrete form. This would require political determination, involvement of all the players and increased public awareness.

The need to create the right climate for constructive dialogue, which was vital to peace and stability in the Euro-Mediterranean region, was stressed throughout the conference.

The participants also emphasised the key role which the Council of Europe and its North-South Centre could play in this process of stepping up dialogue between European and Arab cultures and societies.

The wide-ranging discussions produced numerous recommendations to various members of the partnership.

The full conference report is currently being drafted, and should be available in April 2004.

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As a further step, the Directorate General of Social Cohesion, with help from the Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport, then organised a seminar on social cohesion indicators at the WHO office in Venice on 12-13 February 2004. This served to wind up the work done in this area in the previous two years, prior to publication of the guide later this year.

Specifically, the seminar offered an opportunity to present and discuss the results of the tests, and the lessons learned from them, with representatives of institutions in the various cities, regions and countries in which the guide had been used - and to validate the guide itself as an instrument for measuring social cohesion, in support of the Council of Europe's social cohesion strategy. The presence of the Director of WHO's Venice office, and of experts from Hong Kong, Canada, Brazil and Mexico, also made it possible to compare the Council of Europe's concepts, methods and approach with approaches followed in other parts of the world.

After discussing how to proceed with the guide, the participants decided that application of the proposed methodology should be extended to other European countries, regions and cities. They also discussed the utility and feasibility of developing a social cohesion index, summarising social cohesion measurement data. They felt that such an index, which would primarily focus on trends over time, rather than comparisons between regions or countries, might be an extremely useful means of highlighting the need for social cohesion in society.

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## **Parliamentary Assembly : deadlock on euthanasia ?**

In 1999 the Assembly considered the question of euthanasia when adopting Recommendation 1418 (1999) on "the protection of the human rights and dignity of the terminally ill and the dying". It was split on the question, and eventually approved a text which expressed a minimum consensus, focussing primarily on the improvement of access to, and the quality of, palliative care. While recognising a terminally-ill and dying person's right to self-determination, the recommendation underlined the physician's ultimate therapeutic responsibility and stated that the "terminally-ill and dying person's wish to die cannot in itself constitute legal justification to carry out actions intended to bring about death". The recommendation also evoked member states' obligation to guarantee the right to life in accordance with Article 2 of the [European Convention on Human Rights](#), and upheld the prohibition on active euthanasia.

Replying to the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers asked its experts on the Steering Committee on Bioethics (CDBI) to undertake a comparative study of the current situation, practices, laws and policies in member states with regard to euthanasia. The CDBI study gives a valid snap-shot of the way the states describe and apply different concepts, such as active and passive euthanasia, assisted suicide and withdrawal of treatment, and pointed to the great diversity of practice and differing views concerning end-of-life decisions. Meanwhile, in its Recommendation (2003) 24, the Committee of Ministers spelled out a comprehensive package of laws and policies for improving palliative care.

Although both sides had sought to invoke the European Convention on Human Rights, the Court had not in fact been called upon to rule on the question of euthanasia. But in its judgment on the Diane Pretty case, delivered in April 2002, the Court for

the first time considered the question of assisted suicide. It held that the right to life (Article 2) did not include the right to die, but according to certain interpretations conceded that the question of euthanasia involved the exercise of personal autonomy (Article 8), paving the way to some degree for recognition of assisted suicide.

When both the Netherlands and Belgium adopted laws decriminalising euthanasia in certain circumstances, the Assembly felt that the time had come for further discussion of the issue at pan-European level. [The Swiss MP Dick Marty was appointed to prepare a report](#), which was approved – by a narrow majority – by the Assembly's Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee in September 2003. It called for more transparency on the question, inviting member states to hold an open public debate on this sensitive issue and – on the basis of that – to consider whether to exempt from prosecution doctors who agree to help "terminally-ill patients who are undergoing constant, unbearable pain and suffering and who make a persistent, voluntary and well-considered request to end their lives".

As in 1999, however, the Assembly is split: its Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights approved an opinion, by [British MP Kevin McNamara](#), which took a strong position against the Marty report. So far, a plenary debate has not yet taken place – the Assembly has already postponed a debate once, and in January again decided to remove the question from its agenda. Both the report of the Social Affairs Committee and the opinion of the Legal Affairs Committee remain on the table, however, and a decision has not yet been taken on when the debate will take place in the Assembly.

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**40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE  
EUROPEAN PHARMACOPOEIA**

## Access to housing in the Russian Federation

In 2003, the Directorate General of Social Cohesion launched a technical assistance programme concerning access to housing for vulnerable groups in the Russian Federation.

Following a fact-finding visit to Moscow on 21-22 February 2003, a report on the situation in the Moscow, Kirov and Briansk regions and in the Komy Republic was prepared by Russian experts between July and October 2003. This was presented at a Council of Europe seminar, held in Moscow on 10-11 November 2003. The experts outlined the Policy Guidelines on Access to Housing for Vulnerable Categories of Persons, which the Group of Specialists on Access to Housing (CS-LO) had produced in 2001. The seminar provided abundant confirmation that an assistance programme was needed.

The Russian Federation appears to be on the brink of a revolution in the housing sector. To form some idea of the situation, one only has to recall that Russian legal experts are currently working, with help from the Council of Europe's Directorate General of Legal Affairs, on a new Housing Code to replace the 1983 Soviet Code, which is still in force. A working group appointed by President Putin is also drafting 36 bills to implement the new Code. The aim is to give all citizens (disadvantaged groups included) access to housing, details being determined by family or individual income. The Duma is expected to approve all these bills during 2004.

With these changes on the way, Russia obviously needs more information on good practices in other countries. Representatives of all the authorities concerned, including the President's Department, the Government and the regions, accordingly attended the seminar, showing great interest in examples of good practice and in the Policy Guidelines. With a view to building on this interest, the regional participants requested that the programme continue and be developed in the regions.

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## Evaluating policies for Roma in South-east Europe

The Roma/Gypsies Department is now implementing for a third year the joint project with the European Commission "Roma under the Stability Pact". The first joint project promoted the development and adoption in South-East European countries of comprehensive national strategies covering such fields as education, accommodation, employment, social issues, health, citizenship and participation of Roma in public life.

The monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of Roma strategies is one of the main challenges of this phase of the project. The majority of the countries have already adopted or are in the process of adopting a National Plan for Roma.

Questions asked in this process include: have the Roma participated in the process of adoption and implementation of the programmes? Are the policies comprehensive and addressing Roma issues in an integrated manner, capable of breaking the social exclusion circle? What is the impact of national strategies in Roma's every day life? Are the Roma programmes mainstreamed within relevant national policies? Have the governments included communication strategies within their Roma National programmes?

Roma policies will fail if they are not accepted as necessary by the majority population, by the lower echelons of the administration and by professional groups. Successful integration of Roma is hardly conceivable without a positive climate of understanding and acceptance. How are national policies for Roma implemented at local level? The project will also focus on the crucial role of local authorities in improving the social status of the Roma population.

The sustainable co-operation between international organisations will also be evaluated. The system of ad hoc information exchange and recent joint programmes on Roma issues between

### Official Ceremony

The 40th Anniversary of the European Pharmacopoeia will be celebrated on **15 June 2004** in the Hemicycle of the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg (2.30 – 5.00 pm). On this occasion, a debate on the theme "What Europe for medicines should we build together?" will take place and a global view of medicines regulations in Europe will be presented by those who participate on a daily basis in the building of a joint Europe.

Thus, not only will it be possible to measure the progress accomplished in the quality of medicines thanks to the European Pharmacopoeia, but also to ask representatives of the different European institutions questions about Europe for medicines.

To participate in this event, a registration form is made available on following Website: [http://www.pheur.org/medias/download/Registration\\_Form\\_40th\\_E.pdf](http://www.pheur.org/medias/download/Registration_Form_40th_E.pdf)

### Exhibition

An exhibition on "Exploring the world of Pharmacopoeia and medicines" will be organised from **19 to 29 June 2004** in Strasbourg. This exhibition, aimed at the general public, offers a journey through time and space to discover the origins of the pharmacopoeia and will help visitors to understand what the work of the European Pharmacopoeia represents today in terms of protection of public health and the quality of our medicines.

It will also be the occasion to discuss the themes centred around the conception and use of medicines throughout the ages and civilisations and to discover how Europe for the quality of medicines works on a daily basis under the aegis of the Council of Europe.

For more information on the events planned for the 40th anniversary of the European Pharmacopoeia, please consult the Council of Europe Website : <http://www.coe.int> and that of the EDQM: <http://www.pheur.org>



the Council of Europe, the OSCE-ODIHR and the European Union have shown positive results in the field of international cooperation. However, the coordination is still insufficient in some areas, and does not respond to the actual needs and challenges, particularly in the field of crisis management.

All these questions will be addressed during this two year project with our partners: governments, local authorities, international experts and Roma NGOs.

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### **From assistance to cooperation and partnership in the field of Health.**

The Council of Europe Health Division aims at linking assistance projects with the policy recommendations adopted by the Committee of Ministers, bridging the principles and standards with the real-life practice. The feedback received from member states helps to improve the process of developing future recommendations.

Some events offer the opportunity to launch a recommendation, for example recommendation Rec (2001)13 “on developing a methodology for drawing up guidelines on best medical practices” was presented at a workshop during the international conference on Information and Quality in Healthcare, held on 9-11 April 2003 in Cracow, Poland. More than 700 participants attended the conference and about 50 people from 15 countries participated in the workshop. Many of them expressed a willingness to put into practice a comprehensive strategy for best practice guidelines

development, as proposed in the recommendation.

Another example of bridging ideals and reality was the third consecutive training programme on “Human rights and social cohesion aspects of tuberculosis control policies” held in Moscow, Russian Federation on 17-19 December 2003. Some fifty senior health administrators from different regions participated in a debate on humanizing the previous command and control approach to public health. The participants have adopted a set of recommendations to be implemented in Russia. Many wished to repeat this course in their own regions.

The well deserved reputation of the Council of Europe as a reference point in blood and organ safety has been also reflected in assistance activities. The head of the Health Division, accompanied by a consultant, carried out a mission on 3-4 July 2003 which provided guidance on the future orientation of the transplant system to be put in place in Hungary.

A training seminar on the organisational issues of organ transplantation was held in Kiev on 26-27 May 2003. Thirty-two experts from Ukraine and six from other countries elaborated a number of guidelines on how to improve the organ transplant system in Ukraine. The Council of Europe was asked to carry out similar seminars in other countries.

The Joint Programme Council of Europe/ Council of Europe Development Bank is funding a series of seminars in South-east Europe on the “Management of the quality and safety of blood and blood products”. One was held on 24-26 February 2003, in Bucharest, Romania. The participants came from Romania (13 participants) and five neighbouring countries. They elaborated recommendations for the regulation and management of

blood transfusion services. Romania might request a loan from the CEB for the restructuring of its blood transfusion services.

A special type of continuous assistance programme is the South-east Europe Health Network, in the framework of the South-east Europe Strategic Review on Social Cohesion and the Social Cohesion Initiative of the Stability Pact. Run jointly with the World Health Organisation (WHO) it has become a model of regional cooperation, where health has become a bridge to peace. The Network comprises of eight beneficiary countries, five donor countries and over 100 members at both political and technical levels. To date, four of the regional projects have attracted over 4 million Euros from donors. The Council of Europe puts particular emphasis on the community mental health and the blood safety projects.

The Health Division has organized the seventh meeting of the Health Network National Counterparts in Tirana, Albania, 16-18 November 2003. The participants developed the 2004-2005 strategy, aiming at the SEE Health Network becoming sustainable and self-governing. A Second Ministerial Forum has been considered to endorse a long-term regional strategy for collaboration in health in the region

In conclusion, the Council of Europe does not limit itself to the one-way traffic of the traditional technical assistance, but aims to create a forum of mutual exchange of experience between participants.

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The fourth World Social Forum (WSF) was held from 16 to 21 January 2004 in Mumbai in India. Almost 200 Indian NGOs, including numerous Dalit NGOs (the lowest caste of “untouchables”), engaged in the fight against illiteracy, the discriminatory caste system and violence against women and children, helped to organise and attended this fourth edition of the Forum, which was a resounding success, with a total of 130,000 participants and 3,000 media representatives present.

The Forum focused on a number of fundamental issues, including:

- having a say in the achievement of globalisation based on human rights, peace, non-occupation by armed forces, justice, solidarity, the sharing by all in the profits of trade, the democratisation of access to learning, information and technology, etc.;
- reflecting on how to maintain man’s capacity to share the world’s goods and resources;
- giving priority to ethics in every field;
- building on the new forms of solidarity and citizens’ involvement in the economy;
- asserting respect for diversity and human dignity as the foundation for globalisation;
- laying down the principles of world governance and redefining the roles of governments as genuine representatives of the citizens’ interests;
- organising labour and employment in decent conditions.

The subjects addressed in the general discussions included the place of human rights in globalisation (particularly for minorities who are victims of discrimination), collective resources (land, water, energy, seeds and food sovereignty), peace, commitment to achieving the “*Millennium Development Goals*”, the mobilisation of solidarities, the consequences of privatisations and liberalisation for the poor (in the health field, for example) and the roles of the media and culture.

The highly appreciated presence of the Council of Europe was seen as a sign of openness on the part of a European institution and a ray of hope. As well as the Council of Europe’s Directorate General of Social Cohesion, the Organisation’s Parliamentary Assembly was also represented,

by Swiss MP Ms Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold (see [article opposite](#)).

Other participants well known for their commitment to human rights, peace and justice made eagerly awaited and noteworthy contributions: Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, who is now in charge of the “*Ethical Globalisation Initiative*”; Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International; Shirin Ebadi, winner of the 2003 Nobel Prize for Peace; Joseph Stiglitz, former Senior Vice-President of the World Bank; Federico Mayor, former Director-General of UNESCO; Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO and its Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation; Eveline Herfkens, former Minister of Co-operation for the Netherlands and now in charge of the United Nations “*Millennium Development Goals*”.

Some of the ideas developed deserve special attention in the social cohesion context: the links between institutional reflection and civil society; the consequences of the weakening of the State in terms of social protection and access to common, shared resources; the relationship between cohesion and pluralism of identity; the relationship between fiscal justice and social cohesion.

Concerning the future of the WSF, it is interesting to note that from a one-off event, it has developed into a fully-fledged process. This can be seen in the succession of regional forums on various themes. Two types of civil society organisations – those on fundamental individual rights and those on issues related to globalisation – have come together and been able to compare notes, strengthen their ideas and hone their arguments.

Following its internal success, the Forum is now in search of external success. International and institutional reforms along the lines of the analyses presented must come to pass. The reform and above all the democratisation of the organs of the United Nations, the IMF and the World Bank are in its sights. Kofi Annan appears to have made a proposal to set up a world parliament within the United Nations.

The 2005 WSF will be held in Porto Alegre again and it is hoped that Cairo or another African city will host the 2006 edition.

**For further information, visit the Website : <http://www.wsfindia.org>**

**The Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe asked Ms Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold, member of the Swiss National Council, to represent it at the Fourth World Social Forum held in Mumbai in India from 16 to 21 January 2004. Following the event, she presents some of her impressions and voices her concerns about the status of women throughout the world.**



The World Social Forum was established in 2001 in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre as a response by civil society to economic globalisation, which pays little heed to its own harmful social and environmental effects.

The Mumbai Forum was attended by between 80 000 and 100 000 people from all over the world. It was such a major event that no one can ignore its impact or disregard the calls made there both by individuals and by organisations, all against a very colourful backdrop in terms of outfits, slogans, dance, symbols, prayer flags, leaflets, theatre and mural newspapers, etc. Some images were particularly striking: a group of young Pakistani women completely shrouded in veils protesting against the exclusion they suffer, the way they are banned from training and education and the general violation of their rights; Indian women protesting against the destruction of their environment; Dalits - the untouchables under the old Indian caste system - demanding their fundamental rights; and theatre groups from Africa presenting the violence that women suffer in their countries. There was also a delegation of very young widows, whose husbands had died of AIDS and who themselves have the disease, struggling against the discrimination related to it. At the same time, hundreds of workshops provided opportunities to discuss issues that are crucial to a “better world”.

The Forum adopted a charter when it was set up. Its aim is not to take policy decisions, but above all to promote civil society through mutual exchanges and empowerment. The importance of the Mumbai Forum was underlined by the presence of leading figures from politics

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and culture such as Arundhati Roy, Shirin Ebadi, Irene Khan, Mary Robinson, Joseph Stiglitz and many others.

### **Putting ideas into practice**

Peace, justice and the absence of violence are the central values of the World Social Forum, which now need to be put into practice. At the opening ceremony attended by over 80 000 participants, the Indian writer, Arundhati Roy, said that fine words had never stopped wars, adding that "This movement of ours needs a major, global victory. It's not good enough to be right. Sometimes (...) it's important to win something." She called for discussion of "strategies of resistance" and, with reference to Cancun, stressed the importance of forging "international alliances".

### **Parliamentary forum**

At the same time, and somewhat overshadowed by the World Social Forum itself, a parliamentary forum was attended by around 600 parliamentarians. Lengthy discussions of parliamentarians' environmental, social and economic responsibilities led to the adoption of a catalogue of requirements to be submitted to the world's parliaments.

### **Global threats**

Apart from economic globalisation, the main themes discussed were debt, the proliferation of regional conflicts, the impact of armed violence on civil society and the increasingly frequent and massive violations of the human rights of both sexes. Alongside mainstream issues, various specialists analysed the fight against trafficking in women and children, slavery in the modern economy and sexual, structural and domestic violence against women.

Some harrowed-looking Bangladeshi women with scarred bodies and faces showed what to do to stand up against patriarchal violence. Other women described their experiences of fighting against the recruitment of child soldiers, female genital mutilation, stoning and forced marriages. Still others explained how they had struggled to achieve personal independence through micro-loans and village banks they ran themselves.

At the Wars against Women - Women against Wars event, Irene Khan from Amnesty International spoke out against war in a remarkable address, calling on everyone to assume responsibility here and help shape developments. Thousands of women and men then raised their hands, leaving no one in any doubt about how right her comments were.

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The theme of the Irish Presidency from an employment and social cohesion perspective is "More and better jobs and greater social cohesion in an enlarged European Union", which is taken from the 10 year goal for the European Union adopted by the European Council in Lisbon (2000).

### **Employment**

On employment, the Spring European Council will provide the first opportunity to assess the working of the new streamlined and coordinated Employment and Broad Economic Guidelines. The findings of the European Employment Taskforce highlights that success in creating more employment will depend on four key requirements:

- increasing adaptability of workers and enterprises;
- attracting more people to the labour market;
- investment in human resources;
- ensuring effective implementation of reforms through better governance.

Conferences to be held in Dublin will address adaptability in the labour market (26-27 February 2004) and investment in human resources (21 June 2004).

Making Work Pay was advanced at the political level at an Informal Meeting of Employment and Social Policy Ministers in Galway in January, 2004, which explored the range of actions needed to ensure that social protection and employment policies are mutually supportive. Issues covered include:

- supporting transitions to employment
- prolonging working life

- reconciling work and family life
- from incapacity to work
- mobility between jobs.

### **Eradication of Poverty and Social Exclusion**

The European Council at Lisbon pledged to "make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion" by 2010. In July 2003, the 15 member states submitted their second national action plans on these areas to the European Union. The three additional areas chosen for particular consideration under these plans were gender mainstreaming, the situation of immigrants and target setting. The second Joint Council-Commission Report containing an evaluation of the national action plans will be presented for approval by the Council of Ministers on 4-5 March 2004 and later submitted to the Spring European Council. This report will give an indication of the progress being achieved, almost at the halfway point, in meeting the Lisbon objective in relation to poverty for the EU15. The accession countries have already been initiated into the process through preparing, in association with the European Commission, Joint Inclusion Memoranda and should be in a position to enter fully into the next phase.

### **Gender Mainstreaming**

A Conference entitled "New Horizons for Gender Equality" will be held in Limerick on 6 May 2004. The aim of the Conference is to bring together leading practitioners at EU level in the area of gender equality to discuss a number of issues on the theme of gender equality, including the experience of implementing gender mainstreaming. Following the Conference there will be a meeting of EU Ministers with responsibility for equality.

*(Continued on page 12)*

# THE IRISH EUROPEAN UNION PRESIDENCY

## January - June 2004

### **Reconciling Mobility and Social Inclusion**

Mobility within the European Union and migration from outside are likely to be key realities for EU member states for the foreseeable future. This can create significant economic and social benefits for both migrants and the host States. The degree to which these benefits are realised is closely related to the extent to which successful integration is achieved. This issue was identified for special attention in the NAPs/incl reports and is of particular interest in the context of the accession of 10 new member states.

The Presidency, with the support of the Commission, is hosting a major Conference in Bundoran, Co. Donegal on 1-2 April 2004 on "Reconciling Mobility and Social Inclusion: The role of social and economic policy". Issues to be discussed include:

- the reality of mobility in today's enlarged EU;
- how migrant workers can be supported in meeting the labour market needs of member states through information provision, education, skills training and other supports;
- the type of risks to social exclusion that immigrants encounter;
- the risks to social cohesion by immigration without proper supports;
- the ways in which social and employment policies can overcome these risks;
- the need for integrated approaches within member states to the issues involved;
- the need for cooperation between the receiving and sending countries and with NGOs.

### **EU Regulations on Social Security for Migrant Workers**

The Irish Presidency will also advance consideration of the proposals to simplify and

modernise the Regulations (EEC) on social security for migrant workers, with the aim of reaching agreement on the proposals with the European Parliament before the end of its term in May 2004. In addition, the Irish Presidency in cooperation with the Hungarian Government will host a Conference in May 2004, involving all 25 member states of the enlarged European Union on social security for migrant workers. This Conference will address both the implications of the reforms for all member states, and the particular implementation challenges facing the new member states.

### **Families, Change and European Social Policy**

2004 is the tenth anniversary of the UN International Year of the Family. To mark the year the Irish Presidency will hold a major international Conference on "Families, Change and European Social Policy" on 13-14 May 2004 in Dublin, the days before the International Day of the Family on 15 May 2004. The themes to be addressed will include:

- Modernising social protection in light of family change
- Families as a focus of social inclusion and social cohesion
- Reconciling the demands of work and family life
- The caring functions of families.

### **Meeting of people experiencing poverty**

The Presidency will develop further an important initiative taken by the Belgian Presidency and strengthened by the Greek Presidency, with the support of the EU Commission, involving a meeting of people experiencing poverty from EU Countries. The Presidency will host a third such meeting on 28-29 May 2004 in Brussels. The aim will be to develop further ways of promoting the participation at all levels of people experiencing poverty and structural networks to facilitate this. A particular objective will be

to promote their involvement in the development of the national action plans for social inclusion and the social agenda generally at both national and EU levels. The Irish Presidency is working with the EU Commission, Belgium and the EU Anti-Poverty Network, Social Platform and other interested organisations in preparing the meeting.

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**1-2 April 2004:** Conference on "Reconciling mobility and social inclusion - the role of social and economic policy" - Bundoran

**6-7 May 2004:** Conference on "New horizons for gender equality" - Limerick

**13-14 May 2004:** Conference on "Families, changes and social policy in Europe" - Dublin

**21 June 2004:** Conference on "investment in Human Resources" - Dublin

**23-25 June 2004:** 4e **Ministerial Conference** on Environment and Health - Budapest

For further information, please consult the Presidency's Website: <http://www.ue2004.ie>



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### Ukraine

#### Developments in the field of employment services

The Public Employment Service of Ukraine (PESU) was founded in December 1990 and the Law "About Public Employment" was adopted in March 1991.

Priorities of the PESU are:

- to improve the quality and efficiency of services for the unemployed through uniform standards of service performance for unemployed citizens;
- to implement active programmes to promote employment of unemployed citizens;
- to arrange vocational training, retraining, professional development and career guidance in accordance with the market demand;
- to create conditions for self-employment and the development of business initiatives among the unemployed;
- to implement a package of actions aimed at eliminating and reducing periods of long-term unemployment;
- the payment of welfare benefits to unemployed citizens.

Basic types of social services are:

- information and consultation;
- selection of personnel to respond to employers' requirements, specialist training and workplace training;
- providing subsidies to employers for the creation of additional workplaces for unemployed, assistance in organization of paid public and seasonal work.

Within the law "About Obligatory State Social Unemployment Insurance", adopted in 2001, the Obligatory State Social Unemployment Insurance Fund was created.

The functions of the Executive Direction are committed to the Public Employment Service. The structure of PESU incorporates 673 centres, in which more than 15 000 specialists render social services – 87% of them carry out direct contacts with citizens.

The number of unemployed persons applying to the employment service is increasing with every year. According to the International Labour Organization methodology in 1995 every tenth

unemployed person applied to the employment service, in 2001 - every second person, in 2003 - two-thirds of unemployed persons.

During the more than 13-year period of the existence of such services, over 20 million unemployed citizens and over 10 million of employees who wanted to change jobs, as well as students and pensioners took advantage of the Employment service benefits:

- 5,5 million persons found jobs;
- 1,1 million unemployed were involved into vocational training in about 300 professions and trades;
- 1,7 million unemployed were involved in public work.



To improve the effectiveness of the employment service efforts in the area of services rendered to job seekers and employers, the creative group of specialists from the Institute of Training Personnel for Public Employment Service, experts from the State, regional, city and district employment centres have developed a new system of social unemployment protection of the population, adapted to the market economy conditions. The Uniform Technique of servicing unemployed citizens (UTSUC) offers an advanced unique method developed for the social sphere; since the end of 2002 all basic employment centres of Ukraine have been working on the basis of UTSUC.

In 1998, in order to develop information support for UTSUC, and in accordance with "The National Program of Information Service", the Public Employment Centre began implementation of the Uniform Informational and Analytical System of the Public Employment Service, based upon advanced Internet-Intranet techniques. On 15 August 2002 the method of communicating information to the employment service subjects and finding jobs for the employment service clients was confirmed by the State Department

of intellectual property as intervention in the field of public social services. In 2002 the PESU Web-portal ([http://www.dcz.gov.ua/control/en/publish/article/main?art\\_id=5340131&cat\\_id=4053534](http://www.dcz.gov.ua/control/en/publish/article/main?art_id=5340131&cat_id=4053534)) was created to provide reliable and flexible information to the population on social services and to improve the output of the service.

Now 611 centres successfully operate under this system. They have changed their image and become a highly organized state structure which entirely satisfies today's requirements.

In August 2003 the Public Employment Service of Ukraine became the 92<sup>nd</sup> member of the World Association of Public Employment Services. Joining this Association will promote Ukraine's progress along the road of further integration into the European Union and will improve PESU's image.

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### Armenia

#### Ratification of the European Social Charter on Christmas Day

With the collapse of the Soviet Union Armenia became an independent republic which brought about dramatic changes. When Armenia was part of the Soviet Union it was heavily industrialised with a relatively high standard of living where unemployment was unknown. The population of over three million were faced with a sharp economic shock and the need to adapt speedily to a market economy. In addition to a major shift in thinking, a new system of economic, political and human values had to be developed. According to the 1<sup>st</sup> article of the new Constitution adopted in 1995, the Republic of Armenia was declared a sovereign, democratic state, based on social justice and the rule of law

The accession to the Council of Europe in January 2001 was an important step in striving towards these values. Armenia has also made a serious commitment to becoming an active, forward thinking member of the Council.

*(Continued on page 14)*

## AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Like many other Republics of the former Soviet Union, Armenia faced all the challenges of developing a market economy, creating a sustainable, democratic and civil society based on respect for human rights, democracy and respect for the rule of law. A crucial aspect of the transition process is to achieve social cohesion in society. Following changes in the political and economic realities in Armenia, the country has carried out a variety of structural changes in the area of social rights. Over the past decade the legislation has gradually been adapted to the new economic rules.

Against this background, Armenia signed the Revised European Social Charter. The Charter was signed on 18 October 2001 during a ceremony to commemorate the celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Charter.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Issues was responsible for the full ratification process. A special working group was created to prepare the country for ratification. One of the main tasks of the working group was to identify the provisions of the Charter that required changes in legislation, highlighting gaps and anomalies in the current legislation, analysing statistical data, working on the list of legal changes needed for the Charter to be ratified, drafting new laws, regulations and amendments. During the meetings of the working group, representatives of other state agencies, social partners and non-

governmental organisations were fully involved.

The Council of Europe has played a crucial role in this process by organising seminars, providing the recommendations of experts, assistance in translating the Charter, the Report Form and highlights of Charter case law.

As the result of these activities, the National Assembly of Armenia ratified the Revised European Social Charter at a special session on 25 December 2003. By ratifying the Charter (which Armenia undertook to ratify before January 2004), Armenia concluded the convention's section of its obligations to the Council of Europe.

The ratification of the Charter has influenced the preparation of the Armenian Draft Labour Code and Armenian Draft Family Code. They have been revised taking into account the provisions of the Charter. These two important codes have passed their first reading in Parliament (the National Assembly) and are likely to be fully adopted in 2004.

In conformity with the Charter, Armenia is to create a labour inspection function that will monitor social rights in the relations between employers and employees.

Another significant outcome of the ratification is the increased interest of

Armenian authorities in access to social rights. Here again the Council of Europe has played a significant role in promoting European experience in this field. The Council of Europe Report *Access to Social rights in Europe* has been translated into Armenian (by PADCO Inc., a US firm involved in providing social protection advice to the Ministry). This report was launched mid 2003 at a ceremony attended by Council of Europe representatives, Government ministers and NGOs. The report was disseminated among government ministries, social workers, educational institutions, NGOs and social partners. Training sessions for workers in the social sector were carried out based on the contents of this report. A number of pilot projects to improve access to social rights have been implemented also with the assistance of the Council of Europe. The projects involved NGOs and Government agencies working together on projects to improve public access to information on social rights.

As the next step towards establishing a socially cohesive society, Armenia is now looking forward to signing the European Code of Social Security.

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## SOCIAL INCLUSION – TOWARDS A EUROPEAN BEST PRACTICE

### Oslo, Norway, 5. – 6. February 2004

As part of Norway's participation in the European Union Community Action Programme to Combat Social Exclusion, the Ministry of Social Affairs hosted its first European Conference on Social Inclusion in Oslo 5-6 February 2004, with the participation of representatives of the European Commission, European Union member states and accession countries, NGOs and European researchers.

Norway's participation in the programme gives an important opportunity to share knowledge and build new partnerships and coalitions in the social field to fight poverty and social exclusion. The Norwegian Government seeks to link Norway more closely to the Lisbon Strategy and to ensure EFTA/EEA participation in projects and measures in the various areas and follow up the EU's implementation of the Lisbon Strategy.

In her opening speech the Norwegian Minister of Social Affairs, Mrs Ingerd Shcou said

that in many ways it seems like a paradox to talk about poverty and social exclusion in a wealthy country like Norway. Most people enjoy a good living standard, the social welfare system is by many foreigners regarded as being among the best in the world and the unemployment rate is low. Still, affecting only a small minority of the population, the causes of poverty are often complex and interlinked. A low income over a long period of time is often linked to other problems such as lack of qualifications or basic language skills. Sometimes people suffer from underlying causes like health and substance-abuse problems that cannot be solved only through general welfare schemes.

She underlined the important role of non-profit and non-governmental organisations as well as the role of the social partners as important actors in all aspects of fighting poverty. Governments alone cannot solve these problems.

Norway shares the common objectives and concerns with the European Union member states and the accession countries as regards the need to strengthen social integration, the future of the social protection systems and the sustainability of pensions. To carve out measures to deal with such problems, the Norwegian Government aims at adopting a knowledge-based policy in order to prevent people from being excluded or falling into poverty.

There were 180 participants in the conference. Keynote speakers included Sir Tony Atkinson from the University of Oxford, Robert Walker of the University of Nottingham and Mr Fintan Farrel of the European Anti-Poverty Network.

All the keynote speeches and other interventions of the conference will be available shortly on the Internet: <http://odin.dep.no/sos/engelsk>

The first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was held in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003. Although Mr Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) concluded that the Summit had closed on an optimistic note of consensus and commitment, he nevertheless emphasised that it was only the start of a long and complex process. The second phase, which will be held in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005, will measure the progress achieved since Geneva.

The Geneva WSIS was the first multi-stakeholder meeting in the information and communication technologies (ICT) sector and brought together leaders, policy-makers, ICT business people, voluntary and non-governmental organisations of every possible kind and top-level thinkers and speakers. Its aim was to shape the use of ICTs for a better world by offering an opportunity to discuss a wide range of themes concerning the information society. Alongside the three days of plenary meetings and high-level roundtables, nearly 300 side-events helped bring “the dream of an inclusive information society one step closer to becoming reality”.

A [Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action](#) were adopted. The declaration sets out the common vision of the information society and lists 11 key principles for building an inclusive information society: the role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development; information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for an inclusive information society; access to information and knowledge; capacity building; building confidence and security in the use of ICTs; creating an enabling environment; ICT applications: benefits in all aspects of life;

cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content; media; ethical dimensions of the information society; and international and regional co-operation.

The plan of action was adopted to give shape to this vision of an inclusive information society based on the principles set out in the declaration and to bring the benefits of ICTs to underserved countries. In this connection, Mr Utsumi said: “The realisation of the plan of action is crucial to the long-term success of the Summit. We need imagination and creativity to develop projects and programmes that can really make a difference. We need commitment — on the part of governments, the private sector and civil society — to realistic targets and concrete actions. We need the mobilisation of resources and investment”.

The Council of Europe contributed to the WSIS through a political message adopted by the Committee of Ministers and the participation of a delegation of representatives from various Council sectors. The message set out all the principles which the Council of Europe believes are essential for building an inclusive information society “based on the values of human rights, democracy, rule of law, social cohesion, respect for cultural diversity and trust between individuals and between peoples.” It also lists a set of possible initiatives in which the Council is willing to become involved so as to help implement the decisions. In conclusion, it would definitely seem that the message helped ensure that certain non-technical aspects of ICTs that had not previously received sufficient attention were taken into account in the discussions and the texts adopted.

For more information and the WSIS documents, please go to: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/>

## Elected representatives involved in local welfare – network on the way



The *Union nationale des centres communaux d'action sociale* (UNCCAS), which was founded in 1926, is France's oldest association of elected representatives, and now covers 3300 local authorities.

Municipal welfare centres are public bodies (not NGOs) set up under local government legislation. Their many tasks include:

- informing people of their rights and helping them to obtain the benefits to which they are entitled (income support, universal health coverage, disability allowances, etc.);
- helping people in difficulty by analysing their problems (health, housing, debt, violence, employment, etc.);
- running public welfare and and/or medical facilities (homes for the elderly and people with disabilities, hostels for asylum seekers and the homeless, child-minding services, etc.).

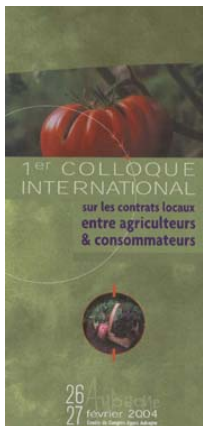
CCAS are neighbourhood bodies, tackling the full range of social issues.

A European Congress held in 2000 gave UNCCAS the idea of looking for partners to set up a European network of elected representatives involved in local welfare initiatives. This network could pool lessons learned and prepare European legal instruments in the social field. Thanks to its work on social cohesion, and to bodies like its Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the Council of Europe seems well qualified to take on this task.

For more information on UNCCAS or to receive the European newsletter (in French or English), see the Website: [www.unccas.org](http://www.unccas.org)

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### International Colloquy on the Maintenance of Community Supported Agriculture



The first international colloquy on "Local contracts between farmers and consumers" took place on 26-27 February 2004 in Aubagne (Provence/France) with over 500 people including farmers, development officers, local councillors and

representatives of consumer groups from all over the world (including Europe, Brazil, Canada, Morocco, Japan, USA). The first association for the maintenance of rural agriculture (AMAP) was founded in 2001 in Aubagne; today there are 28 more associations in France. The movement was set up originally in Japan 40 years ago, developed in Europe (e.g. Germany, England) and spread in the 1980s to North America.

AMAP fosters a new economic system with an associative approach which implies direct relations and mutual trust between farmers and consumers. The community members, who are often from urban areas, support the farm directly and pay regularly in advance for one season, receiving in return a share of the weekly harvest. Members commit themselves to ensure the continued existence of the local farm by sharing the surplus of abundant harvests and the risk of poor harvests. The support of the members allows the farm to devote their energies to sustainable practices such as environmentally friendly agriculture, development of natural areas or bio-diversity and quality production with respect to nature and the environment. Social links between the farmers and consumers through farm visits, discussions, farm work and volunteer participation generate strong and confident relationships. The consumers are concerned with the production planning, the price of

the subscription, events, meals at the farm, supporting poorer consumers and the redistribution of any surplus.

The colloquy focused on the existing experiences and tried to make the most of diverse initiatives and existing methods worldwide, particularly concerning health, food, links between farmers and consumers, citizen commitment, education, social links, agriculture and the environment. At the Forum the delegations decided to create an international network of all the existing initiatives which will facilitate the continuous exchange of knowledge and transfer of good practice. It will also promote analysis of the support needs within the context of the EU Common Agricultural Policy and develop methodologies to support the multiplication of projects and initiatives and ensure their long term durability. From now until the end of 2004 a Network Charter and a common reference frame for the different initiatives are being elaborated which will serve as a solid basis to further dialogue with public institutions.

The Council of Europe participated in the colloquy in Aubagne. Amongst other organisations, AMAP will also be part of the European Platform for Economic Solidarity (fair trade, ethical finance, responsible consumption), which will be launched on 4-5<sup>th</sup> November 2004 at the Council of Europe's annual Forum. Some DG III staff members even support the movement through their active membership as consumers in AMAP Strasbourg, thereby promoting not only the continuity and existence of local farms, but also responsible consumption, citizen engagement and social cohesion.

Further information on the AMAP initiatives can be found on the following website: <http://www.urgenci.net>

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### ECRI: 10 YEARS OF COMBATING RACISM

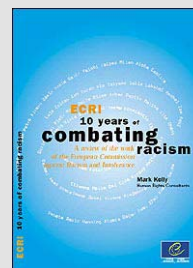
On 18 March 2004 the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), will celebrate its 10th anniversary with its long-standing partners in the fight against racism and intolerance with a major conference.

The aim of the conference will be to take stock of ECRI's contribution to the fight against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance in Europe in the past ten years, and to provide ECRI with fresh ideas for its ongoing and future work.

Furthermore, the conference will address in more detail the following themes:

- "Combating racism while fighting terrorism";
- "Combating racism in the context of migration in Europe";
- and "Racism: a "mutating bacillus" - islamophobia, anti-Semitism and "cultural" racism as new challenges in our societies".

Renowned experts in these fields have been invited to prepare discussion papers on these topical subjects of public debate, which will be discussed in more depth in three separate workshops in the afternoon.



This conference will also be the occasion for the launch of the publication "ECRI - 10 years of combating racism in Europe". This publication, whose author is an independent

consultant, provides a synthesis of the gist of ECRI's work, drawing out the main messages of ECRI's country-by-country reports as well as its General Policy Recommendations, and outlining its relations with civil society.

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## ADOPTED TEXTS

### Recommendations:

- Rec 1648 (2004) of the Parliamentary Assembly on the consequences of European Union enlargement for freedom of movement between Council of Europe member states (adopted on 30 January 2004)
- Rec 1647 (2004) of the Parliamentary Assembly on the Economic aspects of European Union enlargement: the crucial years ahead (adopted on 30 January 2004)
- Rec 1645 (2004) I of the Parliamentary Assembly on access to assistance and protection for asylum-seekers at European seaports and coastal areas (adopted 29 January 2004)
- Rec 1632 (2003) I of the Parliamentary Assembly on Teenagers in distress: a social and health-based approach to youth malaise (adopted on 25 November 2003)
- **Rec (2003) 19 of the Committee of Ministers on improving access to social rights (adopted on 24 September 2003)**

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

### Publications:

- *Recent demographic developments in Europe (2003 Edition)*, Council of Europe Publishing, January 2004, ISBN 92-871-5388-4, 23 Euros
- *Demographic and social implications of low fertility for family structures in Europe*, Population studies No. 43, Nico Keilman, Council of Europe Publishing, 2003, ISBN 92-871-5342-6, 8 Euros
- *Preventing Illegal Immigration : Juggling Economic Imperatives, Political Risks and Individual Rights*, Claude-Valentin Marie, Council of Europe Publishing, 2004, ISBN 92-871-5360-4, 10 Euros
- *Access to social rights for people with disabilities in Europe*, Marc Maudinet, Council of Europe Publishing, ISBN 92-871-5328-0, 8 Euros
- *Legislation to counter discrimination against persons with disabilities (2nd edition)*, Council of Europe Publishing, 2003, ISBN 92-871-5314-0, 13 Euros
- *Discrimination against women with disabilities*, Council of Europe Publishing, 2003, ISBN 92-871-5316-7, 8 Euros
- *Guide to the preparation, use and quality assurance of blood components - 10th edition (2004)*, Council of Europe Publishing, ISBN 92-871-5393-0, 19 Euros
- *Ethical eye: Euthanasia - Volume II, national and European perspectives*, Yvon Englert, Jørn Vestergaard, Givi Javashvili et Guram Kiknadze, Bela Blasszauer, Johannes JM van Delden, Daniel Serrao, Alberto Bondolfi, Sheila McLean, Lois Snyder, Dick Marty, Elaine Gadd and Piotr Mierzewski, Council of Europe Publishing, 2004, ISBN 92-871-5200-4, 15 Euros

## CALENDAR FROM MARCH TO JUNE 2004

- 20 March: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- 15 May: International Day of Families
- 15 June: Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the European Pharmacopoeia - Strasbourg

### Conferences:

- 15-18 April: Conference on "Women and Minorities in Elections Process"- Bucharest (Romania)
- 27-28 May: Euro-Mediterranean Conference on "Social Security: factor of social cohesion" - Larnaka (Cyprus)

### Seminars and other meetings:

- 25-28 March: Training course on the coordination in the social security field - Bucharest (Romania)
- 7-9 June: 8<sup>th</sup> Training session for lawyers on legal assistance to Roma- Strasbourg

### Committee Meetings:

- 29-30 March: 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Group of Specialists on Roma, Gypsies and Travellers (MG-S-ROM) - Strasbourg
- 5-7 April: 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Committee of experts on the education and integration of children with autism (P-RR-AUT) - Strasbourg
- 29-30 April: 7<sup>th</sup> Forum for Children and Families - Vienna (Austria)
- 17-19 May: 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS)- Strasbourg
- 17-19 May: 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Committee of experts on Universal Design (Accessibility) (P-RR-UD) - Strasbourg
- 25-26 May: 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Committee of Experts on standards-setting instruments in the social security field - Larnaka (Cyprus)
- 9-11 June: 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the European Population Committee (CAHP) - Strasbourg
- 15-16 June: 55<sup>th</sup> meeting of the European Health Committee (CDSP) - Strasbourg
- 29-30 June: Committee of Experts for the co-ordination in the social security field - Strasbourg

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