

At the end of summer, we are all looking with renewed vigour at the agenda for the coming months. For CEDAG there are many important issues and dossiers to follow, which will be discussed at this Friday's board meeting.

High on the agenda at the moment are various issues surrounding social services in the EU. In the

European Parliament, an 'own initiative report' by Proinsias de Rossa (S&D, IE) will argue for a focus on the quality of services.

CEDAG is a member of the Informal network of social services providers, who have met with Mr de Rossa at various times during his research, to underline the need for a differentiated approach to services which takes account of the huge differences within and between Member States.

Funding of social services is also up for debate at the moment. We have received a good response from our members about the 'State Aids' consultation, and will now be drafting a unified CEDAG response. Like many other stakeholders in this issue, we feel that the European Commission needs to work hard to bring a lot more transparency to this issue. It is also important to consider that for social services of general interest, the quality of their provision must be a more important concern than making a profit.

Other points on the EU agenda this autumn include a parliamentary hearing on the new Citizens' Initiative, a tool introduced by the Lisbon Treaty which will allow citizens to ask the European Commission to propose legislation on any issue within its competence. The Belgian presidency of the Council of ministers will also be living up to its promise to prioritise social issues by organizing a two day conference on the social economy at the end of October, which will be of interest to many CEDAG members. The Belgians are also organizing the third EU forum on social services of general interest.

CEDAG is also taking part in agenda-setting activities, to place the concerns of our members on the table for debate. We will be at the forefront of efforts to improve EU democracy through the inclusion of a coherent, pluralist voice from organised civil society. We will be revitalizing the dormant work on an EU charter for civil dialogue, which will follow the precedent set by many Member States to guarantee that EU legislators work in close cooperation with civil society when designing and implementing laws, so that they genuinely correspond to the needs of society, rather than simply to those of vested interests. We will also be working with ECAS, the European civil action service, on the establishment of a Civil Society House for the EU.

Internally there will also be some important actions for CEDAG. A redesigned website will soon be put in place, which is intended to raise the profile of our organization by disseminating news

about our activities, but also and more importantly, to be a forum for communication with you our members. It will include a resource centre which helps to demystify the world of EU politics as it affects your organisation's work, and also feature information about members' work and activities. We want this to be an interactive process to better respond to members' needs, and encourage you to get in touch with us to share your views.

One of CEDAGs fundamental goals is to serve as a network for non profit organizations throughout Europe, and this means good two way communication between us and you. We encourage you to communicate your priorities and main activities to us regularly so that we can better understand your interests, and work for them at EU level.

We look forward to working with you on all of these issues, and wish everyone a pleasant return to work!