

According to CEDAG/FAMNA joint seminar, organized on November 24, 2009 in Stockholm, the impact of EU policies and regulations on the provision of social and health services has increased over the last years. Social services of general interest are often regarded as economic activities and therefore fall under EU competition and internal market regulations.

But what is the relation between non-profit and for-profit actors in the EU? Is there a vision for non-profit providers in Europe so their role can be improved and strengthened? How do the different Member States apply EU initiatives for these services and how these initiatives affect non-profit service provision at national and local level?

Concerning the opportunities of EU initiatives and application at member state level, European Commission policy line is currently clarification. The tools, which provide clarification, are already put in place, namely the Interactive Information Service (IIS) and the Frequently Asked Question document, which will be updated on basis of the Social Protection Committee work. EU initiatives are applied in a different way across Member States and at local level. For instance, in Germany, law is general for the whole State but there is some leeway to interpret general federal law on public procurement in a different way in each land.

CEDAG/FAMNA joint seminar brought up diversity of issues facing non-profit social service providers but also the opportunities relative EU initiatives on SSGIs. The country cases illustrated the various challenges non-profit actors are facing well and the innovative measures that are being developed at national level. The main issue continues to be the lack of knowledge among public authorities in applying EU initiatives related to SSGI which has resulted in a great diversity of solutions and lack of consistency for providers at local level.

A few recommendations and follow-ups are to be highlight by both CEDAG and FAMNA: national law can lead to situations which can be favorable to nonprofit actors referring to the opportunity to exempt service for non-profit providers only; situations of political uncertainty in the different countries, such as Sweden with unprecedented changes towards public procurement, France and *services à la personne*, UK and forthcoming general elections etc.; inventive ways and alternatives to public procurement do exist; training program for local authorities should be set up but also include non-profit actors and the idea of a European agency for non-profit social services was raised and should be developed further, along with enhanced European dialogue to define common principles and guidelines.