

As you are probably already aware, the Social Economy Intergroup has been relaunched following the newly-elected European Parliament members.

This Intergroup, which provides the opportunity for Social Economy stakeholders to expose their expectations, critics and positions to representatives of the European institutions as well as to members of different political groups inside the European Parliament, was already established in 1990.

Different subjects, all connected, were and will continue to be discussed during the meetings: Services of General Interest and more especially the Social Services of General Interest, the European Statute for Associations, Health directive, etc...

CEDAG, as well as many other organisations, has a longstanding expertise on the matter of SGI and has been defending the implementation of a specific legal framework for Social Services of General Interest and a clarification of the definition of such services at European level in order to reduce some legal misunderstandings. In fact, whereas Services of General Economic Interest, with some exceptions, fall within the scope of application of the Services Directive which was fully transposed into the European national legislations by the end of 2009, the Social Services of General Interest are excluded by this directive.

As it is clearly stated in a Communication from the European Commission (COM 2006, 177, 26.4.2006) *non-economic services are not subject to a specific EU legislation, nor are they covered by the internal market and competition rules of the Treaty.*

Even if the Lisbon Treaty made some improvements by integrating a protocol on SGI and by distinguishing "General Economic Interest" and "Non-Economic General Interest", the second concept does not necessarily reflect the characteristics of the Social Services of General Interest which can, on their turn, be economic.

Uncertainty remains about the EU rules which apply to these specific services and this is exactly what still needs to be clarified.

In order to simplify the comprehension about this subject, the European Commission has released a document on the frequently asked questions concerning the application of public procurement rules to social services of general interest (SEC 2007, 1515).

In addition, the next steps undertaken by the Commission will be the setting up of a strategy for supporting the quality of social services across the EU. This appears to be a positive point. Nonetheless, let's see what the conditions are. More quality means the need for increased resources!