

European networks of not-for-profit providers of social and health services join forces

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Caritas Europa

Eurodiaconia

European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)

European Council for Non-profit Organisations (CEDAG)

European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA)

European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR)

Solidar

Workability Europe

Agree on the following:

I. Background and rationale

The European networks supporting this Memorandum of Understanding represent providers of various social and health care services. These services allow persons in need to reintegrate into society and lead a life in dignity in full accordance with fundamental rights. The European networks represent together many thousands of service providers which deliver a significant proportion of all social and health services in Europe. Social and health services are important factors in European policy, contributing greatly to economic growth, job creation and social cohesion.

During the last few years, the impact of EU decisions on the provision of social and health services has grown. Therefore the European networks of social service providers have decided to address together some current and future challenges, especially those related to the further development of the EU internal market.

II. Our common goals are to:

- **Demonstrate the value and promote the role of not for profit providers of social and health services by engaging in a constructive dialogue with EU institutions and other stakeholders**

Service providers are involved in both policy implementation (i.e. service delivery) and policy development (i.e. advocacy work). Our knowledge and expertise as well as our unique

position between decision-makers and service users, make service providers key actors in the fight against social exclusion and poverty and major contributors to social cohesion.

Service providers are experts in mobilising social capital, as well as laboratories where innovative social policies are developed and tested. Service providers are often the first to detect flaws in policies addressing poverty and social exclusion, and have a long tradition in developing and formulating effective answers to policy challenges at an early stage.

The networks of European social and health service providers supporting the Memorandum are very committed to cooperation with other stakeholders involved in policies addressing social exclusion and poverty in Europe. Service providers are valuable partners for EU institutions because they integrate in their approach both the urgent and genuine needs of the service users and the realism and pragmatism of effective policy making.

The EU should further develop a **stakeholder approach** to decision-making (including decision related to the creation of budget lines and action programmes to fund transnational exchanges) and pay due attention to all relevant perspectives, including the perspective of social and health service providers.

- **Contribute to the modernisation and improvement of social and health services provision**

All social and health services should be of high quality, affordable, accessible and available, and adapted to the changing needs of existing and potential service users. Some recent developments at European level are making it increasingly difficult for social and health service providers to provide such services. The EU should be more actively engaged in guaranteeing and promoting the provision of social and health services that contribute to a more equal, just and cohesive society

The European networks of service providers supporting the Memorandum want the EU to do everything that is within its competences to increase the quality of service provision in both its non-legislative and legislative work.

Transnational exchanges and mutual learning initiatives can contribute to improved service provision. The EU recently identified quality of service provision as a key priority for EU policy in the area of social inclusion and social protection, which should be a strong enough basis for non-legislative work of the EU to promote the role of social and health service providers in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

Legislative work on issues such as the mutual recognition of professional qualifications and working time, impact strongly on the quality of service provision. The EU should develop a legal European quality reference framework in guaranteeing the best possible provision of social and health services.

- **Strive to find the balance between the specificities of social services and the principles of the internal market and competition**

Competition between providers of social and health services can make service provision more effective and efficient, and have a positive impact for both service users and funders, but only on the condition that competition is organised on the basis of both quality and cost criteria. The objectives of social services providers related to the social inclusion of service users and the development of social cohesion for the wider community should not be put in jeopardy. Social and health service are key players to guarantee an effective functioning of the *European Social Model*.

The European networks of service providers can provide a very valuable input to EU institutions on how European internal market policies (issues of particular attention will be public tendering rules, European-wide recognition of professional qualifications and diploma's, and free movement of services) impact on the quality, affordability, availability, sustainability, and accessibility of social and health services. The European networks can help to develop policies which combine the objective of the EU to establish free movement of persons, capital and services with the more fundamental objectives of social inclusion and social cohesion.

III. Final provision

This Memorandum of Understanding will be evaluated and, if necessary, updated every two years.

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