

## **WORKSHOP A TASKS (MISSIONS) – OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS**

**NOVEMBER 9<sup>th</sup> 2007**

This workshop looked at the role of civil society commenting on tasks arising from new areas of competences in the Lisbon Treaty. The areas of most interest like the social dimension, climate protection and energy as well as migration were well covered.

The unifying themes of the workshop emerged clearly:

Solidarity as a driver in terms in these themes, whether that be in migration, climate protection, energy matters or the promotion of a strong social policy in European countries.

A human vision in a range of policy areas in terms of combating discrimination, developing asylum policy, and remaining consistent in its internal and external policies.

The role and relevance of civil society in both enriching the knowledge and understanding of European institutions in measuring the impact of social and economic policies and in diffusing information and developing a participative democracy.

Interest in the Social model and Public services was a consistent area of debate but complex and with few areas of consensus-the proposition for a Commissioner in this area is therefore interesting.

These aspects of the discussion, adding value to the process of taking the work of the European Union forward suggest that the function of consulting civil society routinely should be considered and the means by which that might be achieved included a variety of models, notably the convention on the Future of Europe but also ECOSOC and the INGO group in the Council of Europe.

### **Migration**

- The workshop looked at questions of solidarity and support for migrants rather than sanctions and more secure borders.
- The New Treaty offers more opportunities to develop positive migration policy
- There is a role for Europe taking a lead internationally on promoting peace, development and the struggle against corruption
- National government should continue to determine access to their national labour markets.
- There is a need to strengthen the cooperation with and in the Mediterranean region and develop partnerships with African countries.
- To recognise the inevitability of migration due to demographic changes
- The position of migrant women needs to be focussed upon.

### **Equalities**

- The gender perspective needs to be strengthened in the European policies.
- There need a to be a strengthening of the perspective of the young people with regard to mobility, education and housing.
- Combating discrimination in all its forms was also raised in relation to migrants and other groups.
- The European social model appears not to be working for young people.

### **Social policy**

- Majority of citizens are in favour of more social policy at a European level and propose the transformation of the EU from an economic to a social union.
- Some felt that social policy should remain the responsibility of national government due to the complexity and sensitivity of the issue
- Discussion on the of social services
- There was an example of good practice in the Joint Labour Market Analyses of the European social partners which looked at the labour markets and social challenges in member states

### **Status of civil society**

- Definition of civil society
- “Institutionalisation” of civil society dialogue
- Consultation with the civil society on a regular basis
- A solution for the democratic deficit
- The means of measuring the impact of European social and economic policy on the citizens
- Council of Europe model cited as good practise as well as ECOSOC and the Convention on the Future of Europe

### **Climate and energy**

- Strong call for sustainable development
- The need to promote European public goods
- The New Treaty offers a stronger basis for work on sustainable development
- One proposal suggested a Commissioner for sustainable development would give a focus to these matters in the EU institutions.
- Europe has an important role globally to help minimise social and environmental costs associated with energy production and also water management .

### **Physicality**

- Among various instruments of solidarity taxation was much discussed
- Need to identify a new basis for taxation from wages, no consensus was arrived at the nature of the basis (commodities, financial transactions).
- One position proposed the detaxation of labour and the introduction of unconditional basic income
- The negative effect of VAT on charities

### **Conclusion**

The Agora is a very good method for assuring the participation of civil society which should be maintained. It recognises the role and relevance of civil society in both enriching the knowledge and understanding of European institutions in measuring the impact of social and economic policies and in diffusing information and developing a participative democracy.