

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

2006/2134(INI)

22.11.2006

OPINION

of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on social services of general interest in the European Union
(2006/2134(INI))

Draftsman: Roberto Musacchio

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the aim of the Communication on Social services of general interest to promote the modernisation of social services within the Community in order to provide services with a high level of quality, safety and efficiency, respecting consumer and user rights, patient dignity and the freedom to provide cross-border services; considers it desirable to ensure greater legal safety regarding services of general interest, in particular social services and medical and pharmaceutical treatment, by means of a proposal for a specific sectoral European Parliament and Council directive if necessary;
2. Points out that social services of general interest are essential for the economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU as they respond to public service obligations and objectives of general interest defined by each Member State's competent authorities in accordance with the subsidiarity principle; underlines the importance of transparency in the definition of these objectives particularly given that such services are increasingly delivered by third parties, by way of public-private partnerships and outsourcing, and as such come under Community law;
3. Considers that the freedom to provide social services of general interest and the freedom of establishment of the service providers concerned should entail respect for and contribute to the implementation of the objectives of equal universal access and fair conditions in delivering such services within the general requirements as defined by Member States;
4. Argues that social services of general interest make it possible to guarantee the exercise of the fundamental rights of EU citizens, as they concern primary services for everyday life; considers, therefore, that they need to be regarded as a specific sector responding mainly to the principles of solidarity, social inclusion, efficiency and financial sustainability; recognises the role of the private sector in this regard;
5. Stresses that in evaluating the characteristics in the supply of such services, public authorities should take into account as an overriding consideration the advantages of guaranteeing social cohesion and better social inclusion when users are often directly involved in providing the service by means of non-profit organisations;
6. Stresses that, in providing for the risks of everyday life, such as those concerning health, work related accidents, etc., particular attention must be given to dependent persons, whether their dependency relates to disability or age;
7. Points out that a European level governance should help to ensure that in the provision of these services, Member States guarantee the following principles:
 - equal universal access;
 - full territorial coverage, geographical and social access to reliable high-quality service at affordable prices and uniform quality standards;

- socially acceptable concessionary charges for disabled persons, low-income groups and mechanisms designed to combat social exclusion;
 - measures to avoid regional disparities, ensure legal certainty, transparency and compliance with the framework conditions for the provision of services;
8. Is of the opinion that in accordance with these principles, the competent authorities should be free to set up authorisation schemes governing the access to the organisation of social services, simultaneously respecting the principle of non-discrimination;
 9. Accordingly, calls for further consultation and cooperation between those concerned to establish the framework necessary for the functioning and realisation of the objectives of social services of general interest while respecting their guiding principles and values.

PROCEDURE

Title	Social services of general interest in the European Union						
Procedure number	(2006/2134(INI))						
Committee responsible	EMPL						
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	ENVI 15.6.2006						
Enhanced cooperation – date announced in plenary							
Draftsman Date appointed	Roberto Musacchio 14.6.2006						
Previous draftsman							
Discussed in committee	3.10.2006						
Date adopted	21.11.2006						
Result of final vote	<table> <tr> <td>+: </td><td>44</td></tr> <tr> <td>–: </td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>0: </td><td>3</td></tr> </table>	+:	44	–:	1	0:	3
+:	44						
–:	1						
0:	3						
Members present for the final vote	Adamos Adamou, Georgs Andrejevs, Irena Belohorská, Johannes Blokland, Frieda Brepoels, Dorette Corbey, Chris Davies, Avril Doyle, Mojca Drčar Murko, Edite Estrela, Jill Evans, Anne Ferreira, Karl-Heinz Florenz, Alessandro Foglietta, Matthias Groote, Françoise Grossetête, Satu Hassi, Jens Holm, Mary Honeyball, Caroline Jackson, Aldis Kušķis, Peter Liese, Jules Maaten, Roberto Musacchio, Péter Olajos, Adriana Poli Bortone, Vittorio Prodi, Frédérique Ries, Dagmar Roth-Behrendt, Guido Sacconi, Kathy Sinnott, Antonios Trakatellis, Evangelia Tzampazi, Thomas Ulmer, Marcello Vernola, Anja Weisgerber, Åsa Westlund, Anders Wijkman						
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Bairbre de Brún, Christofer Fjellner, Milan Gaľa, Vasco Graça Moura, Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Pál Schmitt, Renate Sommer, Bart Staes, Andres Tarand						
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote							
Comments (available in one language only)							