

REVES position on the European Commission Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions:

“Services of general interest, including social services of general interest, a new European Commitment” COM (2007) 725

*Local authorities and social economy are key actors for the pursuit of local general wellbeing. Sharing a common vision on values such as democracy, primacy of individuals, solidarity and responsibility, they often join in stable partnerships in order to be able to better guarantee efficacy of local actions aimed at promoting employment, development and social cohesion.*

*REVES, the European Network of Cities and Regions for Social Economy, brings together local authorities working in partnership with social economy organisations from 16 member states. Its members represent approximately 25M inhabitants and several thousands of social economy actors.*

REVES welcomes the opportunity to comment on the EC communication on “Services of general interest, including social services of general interest, a new European Commitment”. At the same time, however, the network would like to draw the Commission’s attention to the fact that the above mentioned communication, even though providing some clarifications on the role and the impact of EC rules, has to be considered a still limited and incomplete approach to the subject matter. The latter should rather be object of a proper and specific proposal of the Commission for a new directive.

Indeed, REVES believes that the protocol annexed to the Treaty of Lisbon still leaves room to uncertainties regarding the definition of the different kind of services of general interest – be they of economic, non-economic or social nature.

REVES strongly disagrees on the principle of the non-relevance of the status of service provider, and this particularly when it comes to social services. On the contrary, our network considers it a discriminatory approach, which proves unable to take full advantage of the social and community-oriented nature of social economy organisations by putting them at the same level as for-profit service providers.

REVES calls for a full application of the principle of subsidiarity. The latter makes it a necessity to leave a wide freedom of evaluation and choice to local authorities in the definition of local general interest, which, in turn, may vary from one territory to another.

Finally, REVES would like to highlight the link between the provision of social services and the actual realisation of fundamental rights, as expressed by the European Charter. It therefore calls for a clarification of the existing relationship between the provision of social and health services and EC internal market regulations.