

REVES comments regarding the future CoR opinion on “Equal treatment outside of employment”

1. In its “Proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation”, Article 27, reference is made to the Council calling “for the full association of civil society, including organizations representing people at risk of discrimination, the social partners and stakeholders in the design of policies and programmes aimed at preventing discrimination and promoting equality and equal opportunities, both at European and national levels.” REVES welcomes this proposal.

However, REVES members consider it crucial to explicitly name, among the different actors, “**social economy and public social service providers**”:

It is often social economy and public service providers finding themselves in direct contact with persons experiencing discrimination. Social economy organizations (co-operatives, associations, community businesses and other structures – *definition below*) often deal **directly** with the most disadvantaged and those suffering *multiple discriminations* (i.e. a young Muslim woman).

The promotion and strengthening of advocacy organizations is *crucial*, but does not necessarily reach all relevant stakeholders, as persons experiencing discrimination might *not in every case* turn to these structures. When it comes to the development and application of effective instruments/programmes/action plans, it is important to involve actors that work in the **direct** living environment of persons who *are or risk to be* discriminated. They also have a crucial role to play in monitoring actions (national bodies or agencies for the promotion of equal opportunities therefore need to work in close collaboration with the local level and actors such as social economy and public service providers).

Social economy service providers do not only have important knowledge of situations of discrimination and features of persons that are discriminated against, they do not only represent them, but they also foster participation and active self-realization of these persons in society and economy. **Representation and awareness-raising measures, but above all the promotion of self-realization and participation of those discriminated again are vital in order to fight discrimination.** (Self-realization, fostered through social economy, does not only refer to employment and entrepreneurship, but also participation in social and political life. Many social economy organizations also provide services in the field of education, culture, leisure activities etc. Examples for relevant social economy activities: 1) affordable IT training for young women in a neighbourhood with a high percentage of migrants; 2) management of kindergartens with additional offers of encounters and activities for young mothers, migrant mothers and locals – promotion of participation in society etc.).

The **involvement of social economy and public service providers in the elaboration of actions against discrimination** at local and national level is therefore vital. **Local partnerships** between local authorities, public and social economy service providers, NGOs and other stakeholders **in implementing these actions** is equally important and should be **promoted at European level**.

2. REVES considers it important to point to the weakness of the Commission's communication "Non-discrimination and equal opportunities" and of the directive regarding discrimination on the ground of nationality. The CoR opinion should mention the need to take complementary measures in order to tackle discrimination against third-country nationals: So far, an ever growing part of the EU population will not find themselves in the scope of application of the directive. Measures should be adopted to encourage member states to promote anti-discrimination also vis-à-vis citizens of states lying outside EU borders.
3. REVES welcomes the proposal by the European Commission to foster, through the publication of a guide, socially responsible public procurement in order to fight discrimination in all spheres of life (Communication on "Non-discrimination and equal opportunities: A renewed commitment", 3.1.). However, it encourages the Commission to also organize training for local/regional authorities, which is necessary to encourage them to really make use of such means (even though EU legislation provides for possibilities to include, for instance, social clauses in calls for tender or social considerations in service contracts, local authorities do often not dare to make use of them because of legal uncertainties and lack of knowledge regarding the application of such clauses). In recent years, the Commission had already announced specific training for local administration. Yet, as to REVES' knowledge, such measures have not been realized so far.

Annex:

Some explanations on Social Economy (Source: Social Economy Europe)

SOCIAL ECONOMY

Social economy enterprises and organisations are economic and social actors present in all sectors of society, which are set up in order to meet citizens' needs. Above all they are characterised by their purpose: a different way of doing business which continuously associates the general interest, economic performance and democratic operation.

Social economy includes cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations as well as new forms of businesses which share the values defined in **SOCIAL ECONOMY EUROPE's** Charter of principles.

Social economy is everywhere, for anyone, at anytime. Social economy enterprises and organisations are particularly active in the following domains: social security, social and health services, insurance services, banking services, local services, education, training and research, social tourism, energy, consumer services, industrial and agricultural production, handicraft, building, residential environment and cooperative housing, associated work, as well as in the domains of culture, sport and leisure activities. They are an integral part of the European social

model and play an important role within the objectives of European policies, in particular for employment, social cohesion, entrepreneurial spirit, governance, local development etc... to which they actively contribute.

Social economy is present in many different forms, at all levels, national and European, but its roots are local.

Social economy creates new jobs and has the capacity to meet today's challenges, not only through labour-intensive production, but also through new technologies. It also contributes to the social integration of vulnerable sectors of society.

By linking economic aspects with social aspects, by establishing partnerships with the public sector, private enterprises and trade unions with a view to developing areas and making them more cohesive, the social economy helps businesses to gain a local foothold in a globalised economy.

STRONG VALUES SHARED

Social economy emphasises "a different approach to entrepreneurship", based on the following common characteristics and values:

- the primacy of the individual and of social objectives over capital,
- the defence and implementation of principles of solidarity and responsibility,
- conjunction of member users' interests and the general interest,
- democratic control by members,
- voluntary and open membership,
- management autonomy and independence with regard to the authorities,
- surpluses are primarily intended for sustainable development projects, for member services interests and for the general interest.