

Give public services their rightful place in Europe

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European Network for Public Services

Réseau Européen pour les Services Publics

Red europea por los Servicios Publicos

Rete Europea per i Servizi Pubblici

Europäisches Netzwerk für Öffentliche Dienste

The European network for public services, linked to the European Social Forum, is deeply concerned by the Communication on “Services of general interest, including social services of general interest” as well as the communication on “Opportunities, access and solidarity: towards a new social vision for 21st century Europe”, both published on 20th November 2007 in the framework of the single market review. They are all the more worrying with the forthcoming adoption of the Treaties on the Functioning of the European Union.

The European Commission consistently refuses to propose a directive which would protect public services from the uncertainties of both national and European jurisprudences and make the development and renovation of public services feasible on the local, national and European levels.

Price increases, differences in treatment between users, massive job cuts, marginalization of disadvantaged populations, damageable outsourcing, social and fiscal dumping are genuine threats come true. Liberalisation policies do not reflect the aspirations of European citizens nor do they take into account the general interest.

The present and future consequences are all the more striking in a tense socio-economic context marked by the many struggles to defend the fundamental rights of citizens all over Europe. The network firmly denounces the social vision proposed by the Commission which conveys the idea in its communication that since “society cannot guarantee equal outcomes for its citizens, it must become much more resolute in fostering equal opportunities”. Access to rights is not a matter of opportunities, it is a matter of achieving at both European and national levels the cultural, social and political-institutional conditions for the definition and the regulation of public services in order to guarantee universal access to fundamental rights to all.

In fact, the main dimension of European construction consists in total market opening, backed by articles of the European Treaties which are regularly invoked to liberalise public services. Once more, this orientation is confirmed by the content of the European Treaties to be adopted by Member States without any real debate whereas all citizens, regardless of their opinion on the orientation of Europe, must have their say on its policies.

- We demand an inclusive social vision in which public services users are not systematically treated as consumers and in which the relevant authorities retain control of the design, management and funding of their policies, including the special situations in Eastern European Countries.

- We demand a transparent and exhaustive measurement of the impact of liberalisation policies on common welfare.

- We participate in and support all the struggles tending to reinforce and to promote public services in a socially and ecologically responsible environment.

- We support and take part to the European campaigns led by unions, social movements and citizens to demand a framework directive confirming the central place of public services as an instrument of social justice and democracy at the heart of European social model.