

Implementing the Community Lisbon programme: social services of general interest in the European Union

2006/2134(INI) - 26/04/2006 - Document attached to the procedure

This report complements the Commission Communication on “Social services of general interest in the European Union”. It is divided into two Annexes.

The content of the first Annex is based on reports sent to the Commission from the Member States on their national social services. The issues examined include:

- **The role of the State:** Public intervention appears to be critical to the equitable uptake of many services. In the absence of state intervention many services (such as those offered to the disadvantaged and elderly) would be characterised by substantial inequality in terms of access, coverage and quality.
- **Social Services in the Member States:** This chapter examines, in detail, the role of social security (guaranteeing a minimum income) and personal social services (housing, drug addiction, language training for immigrants etc.).
- **The process of change:** Fundamental societal changes and changes in the labour market have led to more complex social service needs. Increased female participation in the workforce as well as increased life expectancy has changed the focus of Member State social services in recent years.
- **The response of public authorities:** Member States are reacting to changing trends through the use of three policy tools: i) more use of non-profit organisations; ii) the partial privatisation of social services and iii) the partial shifting of activities to non-public funding.
- **Past and present employment trends in social services:** This heading examines the impact of continuous job creation; the increase of women and educated workers in the workforce and ageing, on social security services.

The second Annex, entitled, “Social services of general interest and Community law” sets out competition (state aid, anti-trust) jurisprudence as well as the jurisprudence of the internal market. It examines in considerable detail:

- the central role of Article 86;
- the distinction between activities of an economic and non-economic nature;
- the effect of social services on trade;
- the role of public procurement legislation on social services; and
- the role of insurance on the provision of social services.