

IPSE PRESS RELEASE
Thursday, October 11, 2012

Ipsse plays its role as a federator, creating synergy among the families of social protection with an eye towards new developments

In spite of the crisis, the difficulties we face and a remote Europe, the debates at the 38th Ipsse Meeting in Dublin featured lucid and determined leaders prepared to go beyond sheer austerity and advance the role and place of solidarity-based social protection in Europe.

The Institute for European Social Protection – Ipsse – in partnership with the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions – Eurofound – held its annual meeting on October 4 and 5. The event, which took place in Dublin, explored the theme “Social Protection: Between Discipline and New Developments.” It was an opportunity for a number of political and social protection actors, as well as social partners and European researchers, to discuss how social protection and the various crises are developing in Europe, with particular insight into the situation in Ireland.

Observation: the crisis is taking hold in Europe

Europe fell into the trap of austerity that has taken hold in several European countries. Throughout the continent, budget cuts add to the recession, leading to more drastic austerity policies. As a result, a majority of governments attack social protection systems, wages, labor laws and even fundamental rights.

The consequences are many and varied: a sharp rise in unemployment and a suffocating economy, as well as deepening inequalities, insecurity and poverty and general social despair. Discipline may be an ordinary virtue, but austerity is an affliction for populations. Policies are reducing the percentage of public spending devoted to social protection, and governments are looking to offset cutbacks by inviting the private sector into the “social protection market.” It is all too clear that the welfare state is no longer seen as a factor of economic growth, but as an expense that must be reduced.

Ongoing transformations

The economic environment in Europe and throughout the world has changed drastically over the past thirty years, with more open economies, heightened competition, labor transformations, etc. Society has changed as well, particularly with diversification of household models, more women on the labor market and an aging population.

Faced with these developments, social protection systems are dealing with three interwoven crises:

- A crisis of **funding**, increasingly exacerbated by slower growth and an increase in social needs;

- A crisis of **effectiveness**, with deepening inequalities in spite of systems' redistributive effect; approaches implemented in the past appear less and less suited to the needs of a changed society;
- A crisis of **legitimacy** for our collective social protection systems in Europe. These structures have endured severe economic tensions and seem to be up against a rise in individualistic values.

Moreover, changing risks lead to new situations of insecurity, exclusion and poverty that undermine social cohesion. One of the central issues in the coming years is to identify these new needs and implement social policies capable of meeting them, by individualizing "social benefits" while organizing them within an overall framework.

Iipse's work

Iipse aims to bring together actors of social protection to present a credible alternative to providers driven by a commercial rationale and meet general-interest specifications as defined by public authorities. Our notion of solidarity and our ideas for putting this value into practice are constantly expanding into new areas. Europe itself is a new area. Economic and societal developments must lead our institutions to question their organization and internal governance to develop territorial and intergenerational solidarities.

This means:

- **adapting to the terrain, with implementation mechanisms based on local needs, varying according to situations;**
- **adopting a cross-cutting approach to all dimensions of the social problems in question;**
- **calling on all actors (administrative, political and economic, as well as associations) open to participation in a contract-based partnership;**

Iipse's charter must not therefore be reduced to a mere proclamation of values shared by the different branches of supplementary schemes. It must be embraced by the entire Iipse community and serve as a foundation to promote and extend the field of solidarity-based social protection in Europe. Iipse will persist in this undertaking in 2013 by organizing an event wherein each member of the Iipse community will be invited to present a best practice in the social sphere.

The conclusions of this 38th Iipse Meeting will be conveyed to the Irish Presidency, EU institutions and European social partners, as well as associations working in the field of social protection.

Iipse Contacts:

Dominique Boucher: Delegate General

email: dominiqueboucher@euroipse.org

Simon Loréal: Policy officer

email: simon.loreal@euroipse.org

Tel.: +33 1 40 37 13 88

Website: www.euroipse.org