

IFSW Europe – 2017 Delegates Meeting - Iceland

Report by Ian Johnston - Representative to the European Social Platform, and the Horizon 2020 Funding Bids with the European Federation of Nurses (EFN)

Summary of Work Undertaken:

European Social Platform: www.socialplatform.org

IFSW Europe is a full member of the European Social Platform (SP) which is a civil society alliance of 47 Pan European networks of NGO's fighting for social justice and participatory democracy and campaigning to ensure that EU policies are developed in partnership with people they affect, respect fundamental rights and promote solidarity. These include organisations of women, older people, people with disabilities, people affected by poverty, young people, children and families, gays and lesbians and transgenders. Members of the Platform represent more than 2,800 individual national organisations, associations and other voluntary groups at local, regional and national level in every Member State including those campaigning on issues such as social justice, homelessness, life-long learning, health and reproductive rights and racism.

Based in Brussels, close to the European Parliament, the SP has successfully lobbied the Commission and Parliament about a range of issues of concern to social workers and those using our services.

IFSW Europe pays an annual membership fee of 737euros and the SP reimburses expenses we incur attending Steering Group Meetings and General Assemblies (8 per year) and participating in networking meetings with EU member countries assuming responsibility for the European Presidency. We therefore receive significantly more funds back from the SP than we contribute. However, our membership of the SP entails a considerable time commitment attending meetings and responding to correspondence.

The SP currently has 6 Task Forces addressing: Digital Inclusion; Inclusion of Migrants; EU Funding; Services, The Social Economy & Social Enterprises; Social Standards; and Tax Justice.

Some recent press releases issued by the SP can be accessed at the following web links:

<http://www.socialplatform.org/news/violence-against-women-and-girls-will-europe-rise-up-in-2017/>

<http://www.socialplatform.org/news/activists-demonstrate-at-the-european-parliament-calling-for-a-strong-law-on-accessibility-in-europe/>

<http://www.socialplatform.org/news/leading-rights-ngo-cites-protection-of-social-rights-as-red-line-in-white-paper-discussions/>

<http://www.socialplatform.org/news/largest-eu-alliance-of-social-ngos-call-on-decision-makers-to-put-social-rights-at-the-heart-of-economic-governance/>

<http://www.socialplatform.org/news/meps-pledge-support-for-social-rights-but-not-adequate-wages-for-europes-workers/>

<http://www.socialplatform.org/news/trade-union-and-civil-society-representatives-launch-talks-with-eu-decision-makers-on-ways-towards-more-public-social-investment-in-europe/>

In recent years' IFSW Europe has appointed members to a small working group designated the Social Platform Team (SPT), which communicates by email and SKYPE conference calls to manage the complex range of work and cross-cutting issues that SP membership and our partnerships with other member organisations generates.

Members of the SPT this year have been myself and Fran McDonnell from the UK, Graca André from Portugal and John Brennan from Ireland. IFSW's Brussels based Representative, Dale Kabašinskaitė, resigned from her position following the 2016 Delegates Meeting and has not been replaced. I presented our work with the Social Platform and other partners at the Human Rights Seminar in Zagreb that followed that meeting.

In June, myself and Fran attended a Pre-Brexit event in London entitled "Social Boom or Bust" organised by the SP to encourage debate and promote solidarity and more recently I delivered a presentation on Digital

Inclusion to an SP Workshop.

Over the past year, I have attended 6 meetings of the SP Steering Group and 3 SP Task Force Meetings and contributed to the drafting of position papers and other documents, such as the following publication on Myth Busting which has already been drawn to members' attention.

http://www.socialplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/final_complete_document.pdf

I have also arranged for IFSW E to countersign representations to the European Parliament and Commission and Heads of Member States about issues of concern to social workers, notably the treatment of migrants and refugees.

The SP hold 2 General Assemblies each year. The first of these takes place in October and was attended by Fran. Ana Lima-Fernandez, myself and Juan Sevilla Rebolo plan to attend the second such event which will be held in Brussels on 27th April 2017.

Pierre Baussand, Director of the SP for the past decade, moved to another job at the end of last year. He is being replaced by Kélig Puyet, who is currently employed at SOS Children's Villages International. Kélig was Institutional Relations Coordinator & Human Rights and Equality Policy Officer at the European Youth Forum, before joining SOS Children's Villages ten years ago, firstly as Head of EU Office, and currently as Head of Global Advocacy. She will join the Secretariat team as Director on 2 May 2017.

Horizon 2020 Funding Bids:

Following the successful conclusion of the ENS4Care Project to develop guidance on the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to support people challenged by illness or disability to maintain their independence, IFSW Europe were invited by the European Federation of Nurses (EFN) to participate in 2 further EU funding bids under the Horizon 2020 Programme.

The first of these funding bids was for a 2-year project concerning the development of IT skills within the nursing and social care workforce during professional and post qualifying training.

Other partners in this bid were:

European Union of General Practitioners,
Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union
European Foundation for Physiotherapy and Physical Activity
European Nursing Research Foundation
European Association Working for Carers (Eurocarers).

The second bid was for funding for a 4-year project to develop Integrated Health and Social Care Services.

Other partners in the second bid were:

European Nursing Research Foundation
European Hospital and Healthcare Federation
European Union of General Practitioners
Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union
European Foundation for Physiotherapy & Physical Activity
European Association Working for Carers
European Institute of Women's Health

Had these bids succeeded IFSW Europe would have secured funding to engage staff to carry out the developmental work that would have been required. Regrettably however, bidding for these funds was fiercely competitive and neither bid was successful.

Informal contact with EFN about common concerns and the need to develop closer working arrangements between social workers and nurses has been maintained.

Ian Johnston
2017

17th April