

## ***INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR - SOCIAL SERVICES OF GENERAL INTEREST AND TERRITORIAL COHESION: EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES***

**13<sup>th</sup> November 2017, CCDR Alentejo, Évora**

### **Conclusions – Afternoon**

#### **Panel II - Challenges in collaborative territorialisation in social services of general interest - the territorial model and demographic issues**

The Treaty of Lisbon gives to the Services of General Interest (SGI) a central role in promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European area.

Their role is essential to ensure a better quality of life for all citizens and to overcome the problems of social exclusion. Take in consideration the weight in the economy and their importance in producing other goods and services, their effectiveness and quality are essential factors for competitiveness and cohesion, especially in the most disadvantaged regions. In addition, social services of general interest (SSGI) are indispensable for European citizenship, embodying some of the rights of European citizens and the principles set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Accordingly, as stated in the White Paper on Services of General Interest (EC, 2004), the political ambition of the European Union (EU) is focused on ensuring the provision of this type of services to all citizens and companies.

Due to this relevance, much attention has been paid to the current challenges of SSGI at the European level, seeking to see disparities in provision and to understand the interrelations between these differences and other phenomena such as demographic dynamics, regional disparities or inequality of opportunity.

In any circumstance, at the more populated and urbanized regions (where migratory flows put great pressure on supply), or in low density regions (where the population loss, or the lack of critical mass have implications at supply rationality), we need to introduce changes in the management of these services and the reduction of financing costs are cross-cutting issues, aggravated by the recent economic and financial crisis.

The progress that has been made in Portugal over the last decades in the provision of education or health services, for example, is remarkable. But even with positive progress at the universalization of responses, new forms of response must be found for the persistent and new specific needs of groups and territories.

This new stage, supported by more integrated approaches - horizontally and vertically - and holistic, requires great clarity in the roles that different actors must play, so that decentralization and the design of multilevel and multiscale governance systems of social services efficiency and efficiency, overcoming the chronic difficulty of articulation between actors.

It also demands a clear leadership in policy implementation and, upstream of funding cycles, up-to-date diagnoses that support options, clear strategic objectives, and territorial planning articulated with the sectoral organization.

The role of the inter-municipal level, as a basis for reinforcing territorially based approaches to the provision of social services of general interest, can be critical in this new governance, which simultaneously requires universality of access and diversity of responses, adjusted to specific realities.

It is also a suitable scale to help tackle problems in asymmetric distribution of equipment, to improve the existing network or to develop new, more flexible and adaptive solutions that respond better to the speed of change and to the increasing diversification of problems, levels of implementation of sectoral policies.

It is, however, essential that the territorialisation of service provision be properly articulated with urban systems - national, regional and local - by giving support for the definition of networks that will simultaneously consolidate the territorial structure and ensure equal opportunities in access to goods and services the public. Only with a coherent territorialisation we can have effective and efficient mobility and accessibility models to ensure the principle of equal opportunities.

Finally, the structuring role of the equipment and the SSGI in the functioning and organization of spaces and at the definition of flows (at multiple scales), must be assumed by urban planning and land use planning, but also by sectorial policies.

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