

WORK FOR ALL

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WORK AND SOCIAL INCLUSION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Debrecen, Hungary, 16 - 18 February 2012

The International SOFT Federation (ISF) organizes in co-operation with the Health and Science Centre of the University of Debrecen, the SOFT Tulip Foundation and the Socires Foundation an international conference on work and social inclusion of persons with a disability. This conference takes place in combination with of the 8th international assembly of ISF, the latter being an umbrella NGO of Dutch, Finnish, Hungarian, Moldavian, Romanian and Ukrainian NGOs working in behalf of persons with a disability, irrespective of the kind of disability, age, gender, religion or ethnicity. SOFT Tulip is a member-organization of ISF. Previous conferences have been held in Hungary, Republic of Moldavia, Romania and Ukraine.

Aims

In order to emerge stronger from the present economic and financial crisis, the European Union's long term strategy¹ is the achievement of a sustainable future and inclusive growth. The latter means empowering people through high levels of employment, investing in skills, fighting poverty and modernising labour markets, training and social protection systems so as to help people anticipate and manage change and build a cohesive society. It is about ensuring access and opportunities for all throughout the lifecycle. Europe needs to make full use of its labour potential to face the challenges of an ageing population and rising global competition. In view of this, the European Commission (EC) will work to design and implement programmes to promote social innovation for the most vulnerable, particular by providing innovative education, training, and employment opportunities for, and fighting discrimination of, among others, people with a disability. In the EC's view, the effectuation of the strategy presupposes a partnership approach that should extend also to social partners and stakeholders and civil society so that everyone is involved in delivering on the vision.

The conference also aims to further the development of innovative educational and training programmes and their implementation in co-operation by the participants of the conference, mobilising expertise on international level.

Backgrounds

Socires, Society and responsibility, is a Dutch expertise centre that focuses on themes relating to the relationship between public and private, such as social organisations in public service delivery, the cooperation between government, market, workers organisations and other social organisations.

Socires organizes research and debate, field programmes and training. In Socires' vision personal commitment, organisational performance, and social vitality are intrinsically connected with each other. With ideas and policy proposals Socires contributes to lasting social renewal.

The Central and Eastern Europe program of Socires stimulates and strengthens civil society, church and worker organizations that are willing and able to bear the responsibility, together with the state, for the realization of adequate social service and education systems. At the same time, the governments of the concerned countries are to be stimulated to support and facilitate the actions taken by social structures in this field. The experiences with the Dutch and other Western European social care systems provide important lessons for other countries. Both policy-makers and representatives of workers and other non-governmental social organizations participate in the program, and they are enabled to exchange their knowledge and experiences. In this way, the activities of non-governmental organizations and the promotion of civil society, as well as cooperation between workers

¹Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. European Commission, Brussels, 3.3.2010.

organisations, private sector and state institutions and within the Central and Eastern European region, are stimulated.

The program gives special attention to the EU policies towards private non-commercial service provision with a special focus on the inclusion of people with disabilities in society; to create new and qualified jobs for them, to make them participate in the regular education system and to support them to live independently. Research will involve the existing policy framework on public service delivery, the (lack of) specific policies for civil society engagement and for inclusion of disabled people in society. This forms the basis for a lobby and advocacy process involving the different networks and federations, in order to change the EU policy framework and to support policy changes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe towards the recognition of civil society initiatives in the field of social service delivery and education.

ISF came into being after the successful completion of a Dutch-Hungarian-Romanian project that has been implemented with the financial support of the European Union. In 2001 twenty-eight NGOs from Hungary, the Netherlands, Romania and Ukraine issued a Declaration of Intent envisaging the establishment of a federation of NGOs working for or with disabled children and young adults. In the course of time its target groups became persons with a disability and its mission is furthering the quality of life of people with a disability in accordance with the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. ISF works under Hungarian law and has an international board. ISF celebrated in 2010 its 10th anniversary. The ISF board launched a new activity in 2006 with establishing an Educational Centre for international training programmes. This ISF EC is affiliated to the Department of Physical and Rehabilitation of the Debrecen University Medical and Health Centre (DE OEC).

DE OEC is one of the most beautiful campuses in Eastern-Central Europe to provide patient care and education for medical and health care professionals along with post graduate training and research. There are 85,000 cases of inpatient care while more than 1,200,000 cases of outpatient care in a year. Nearly 6,700 students study in our faculties, most of them in the Faculty of Medicine. The Health Center plays an exceptional role in producing experts and post graduate training in the region and the country at a very high level. The total number of participants in professional training has exceeded 1,000. There are more than 500 post graduate training courses organized by DE OEC in the region. This prominent intellectual centre of our country can also be proud of its significant research results. There is an increase in the number of European Union research projects granted and in the cooperation agreements with foreign higher education institutions and research centres. Two-thirds of the lecturers have scientific degrees, 9 of the professors are members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. More than 2,000 foreign students participate in the English training program every year. For the benefit of our new generation we provide part-training programs for several hundred students as active participants in the international academic life. Our students can participate in training programs of outstanding foreign universities while foreign students can get an insight into the world of the Hungarian medical education and research.

SOFT Tulip is a member-organization of ISF. It has been established in 1991 and is rooted in basic values characteristic of Dutch culture like freedom, equality and solidarity. Since its establishment it has developed into a network organization of care providers in the Netherlands that aims at furthering abroad the quality of life – comprising social inclusion – of persons with a disability in accordance with the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Doing so, it assists its partners abroad to further in their own country the quality of life of persons with a disability, drawing upon insight, knowledge and experience that have been accumulated within a strong and vibrant civil society encompassing the development of helping networks, the advocacy of the interests of persons with disabilities as well as the fostering of policy changes necessary to develop an inclusive society. It draws also upon insight, knowledge and experience gathered within its unique network of care providing organizations in the Netherlands. The Dutch care providers co-operating within the framework of SOFT Tulip employ altogether about thirty thousand people, while their total annual budget amounts to more than € 1.400 million. The network represents an expertise tank that enables the Foundation to strive effectively at fulfilling its mission. SOFT Tulip celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2010.

The sister organization of SOFT Tulip Foundation, the Hungarian SOFT Foundation was also established in May 1990 by the Government of Debrecen, the Diocese of Tiszántúl of the Reformed Church, the Hajdú-Bihar County Association of People with Motor Disabilities and the Piremon Small

Enterprise, inherently in order to raise the level of rehabilitation and long-term care of children with disabilities. Nearly two decades later the character and aims of the Debrecen based SOFT Foundation have changed, and it increasingly aspires for partnership in solving general problems of persons with disabilities along with the International SOFT Federation. SOFT Foundation was one of the founding members of the ISF. SOFT Foundation operates the „Rainbow“ Early Development Centre providing early intervention for ninety children. SOFT Foundation also celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2010.