

As participants on a Social Work conference in Lodz (Poland 2001) Theo Koning and Jan Van Passel, two young men at the time, got to know each other. The cooperation between their two universities started with the first Social Europe Days in 2001 (SED). With the coming of Ute Kötter, *enthusiastic social law lecturer from Cologne UAS*, WAF (which means We Are Family) started a fruitful international family with 13 members from which some left the house (Riga, Lisbon, Vienna, Cologne and Tallinn) with love whereas the other members stayed with love at home (Leuven, Munich, Zurich, Hasselt, Bremen, Malaga, Malta and Groningen) even without being locked down before the crisis until now (and new members like Sibiu joining and helping in times of crisis, under the lead of Radu Popa!).

As the years went by the concept of the SED proved to be good basis for a strong and growing network, oriented towards both social work and HRM. The soul of the SED is about building bridges between people and regions, starting with youngsters. Key issues remain social welfare, social justice and international solidarity next to decent work and sustainable HRM.

The founders together with all engaged lecturers and students are touched and proud to see that SED even after 20 years is not stopped in spite of the heavy storm that has the name of what used to be a marvelous Mexican beer and they feel strengthened by all the friends from all these international years. Jan esp. in Latin America and Asia (International Cooperation North South) and Theo as a guest lecturer in for instance Bremen University of Applied Sciences (2000-2001) and for the marvelous University of Malta (2018-2019).

They especially thank all the wonderful colleagues that tackled the challenge to transform the SED into an entire online format, Virtual Social Europe Days (VSED)! In 2020, our thanks go especially to the A-Team, **Patricia Arnold and Anna Borg** together with **Maria-Luisa Gomez Jimenez, Radu Popa, Anne Schillig, and Christiane Trüe**. In 2021, VSED 2021 is a collaborative effort of **all the creative organizers listed below**. In addition, we are grateful for having **Manuela Freudenberg-Liheouel** on board who provides quick and efficient support as regards the educational technologies we are using.

A lot of challenges are lying ahead of us. Dreams for the future are about peace & sustainable development, but most of all about the future for the next generations. It is up to them to face these challenges. Our wish is a clear choice for building bridges of solidarity with respect for people, planet and profit. Continuing to inspire young people was more of a political choice for engagement than a professional assignment for the founders of SED. Together we keep our fingers crossed for a bright future of this WAF network. And let's hope we can and will celebrate **an on-site Social Europe Days in 2022**.

Jan van Passel and Theo Koning. 1 April 2021