



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY & HEALTH



27.02.2009

THE COTONOU AGREEMENT

COM (2009) 72 - Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION on the position to be adopted by the European Community within the ACP(African, Carribean and Pacific States)-EC Council of Ministers regarding a decision to revise Annex II to the Cotonou ACP-EC Partnership Agreement

The Commission's proposal to revise Annex II is to; facilitate its own resources leading to the poorer ACP countries and other internationally agreed debt sustainability initiatives which require greater flexibility especially in respect to interest rate subsidies. The objectives of including new paragraphs in Article 1 and new text for Articles 1, 2 and 4 of Annex II to the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement is to apply uniform conditions to both EIB own resources and the Investment Facilities and to align EIB own resources and the Investment Facility provisions in the HIPC framework respectively. Furthermore, such amendments to Annex II include: funds for interest rate subsidies, interest subsidies may be capitalised or may be used in the form of grants. Nearly up to 10% of this allocation for interest rate subsidies may also be used to support project related technical assistance in ACP countries. A reduction in the interest rate of a loan, ordinary loans may be extended on concessional terms and conditions such as in the case for infrastructure projects in the Least Developed Countries, post conflict countries and in post-natural disaster countries and also for projects which involve restructuring operations in the framework of privatisation or for projects with substantial and clearly demonstrable social or environmental benefits. Add to this, loans from the Bank's own resources shall be granted under terms and conditions.



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

ANNUAL POLICY STRATEGY

COM (2009) 73 - Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

This Annual Policy Strategy paves the way for establishing a policy agenda for 2010 and launches the inter-institutional dialogue on the priorities for next year. While it is the responsibility of the current Commission to ensure the continuity of the institution's strategic planning and programming system, it must also take account of the fact that a new Commission will be in office in 2010. It will be for the next Commission to review the policy priorities in the light of its strategic objectives, and to turn them into an operational programme when it draws up its Work Programme for 2010. As a follow-up to the renewed Social Agenda, the next Commission will continue to work in the fields of employment, social affairs, gender equality and youth to help meet key policy challenges such as globalisation, technological development and demographic change. The Commission should also present a follow-up strategy to the Roadmap on gender equality, which will end in 2010, and pursue its work to make equal opportunities for disabled people a reality. The 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion will help to underline the EU's political commitment to eradicating poverty and fighting social exclusion.

The European Economic Recovery Plan (see summary further down), provides a solid basis for building the conditions for recovery. Its implementation during the rest of 2009 and into 2010 will be a matter of high priority. To make sure that the EU comes out of the crisis stronger and better able to take advantage of the upturn, the structural reforms under the Lisbon Growth and Jobs Strategy need to be continued, in a spirit of partnership between the European institutions and Member States.

Communicating EU issues will be crucial in a year marked by several institutional changes and amongst these issues is the economic and social recovery issue which is of direct interest to citizens. Thus, the Commission will seek that all member states meet their commitment to pursue and coordinate their national



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

efforts under the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs and under the Stability and Growth Pact. And as further crisis develops, then the EU can use its levers to assist member states in tackling unemployment. The EU dimensions must be used creatively by the member states to help them develop strategies in order to tackle such crisis. This will also involve better cooperation with national and regional public authorities on the preparation of projects to make for more investment in energy efficiency, low-carbon and renewable energy technologies, infrastructure projects and measures to combat climate change.

In line with the existing programming of the structural and cohesion funds, the financial resources allocated to Cohesion for Growth and Employment will increase by EUR 980 million, or 2%, compared to 2009.

Protecting employment and promoting entrepreneurship

The top priority must be to protect Europe's citizens from the worst effects of the financial crisis. They are the first to be hit whether as workers, households, or as entrepreneurs. In addressing the employment and social impact of the financial crisis, Member States should actively involve the social partners.

a) People

The implementation of active inclusion and integrated flexicurity policies, focused on activation measures, re-training and skills upgrading, are essential to promote employability, ensure rapid re-integration into the labour market of workers who have been made redundant and avoid long term unemployment. Within this context, adequate social protection that provides incentives to work whilst preserving purchasing power will also be important.

1. Launch a major European employment support initiative

a) The Commission is proposing to simplify criteria for European Social Fund (ESF) support and step up advance payments from early 2009, so that Member States have earlier access to up to € 1.8 bn in order to:

- reinforce activation schemes**, within flexicurity strategies, in particular for the low-skilled, involving personalised counselling, intensive (re-)training and up-skilling of workers, apprenticeships, subsidised employment as well as grants for self-employment, business start-up's and;
- concentrate support on the most vulnerable**, and where necessary opt for full Community financing of projects during this period;
- Improve the monitoring and **matching of skills** development and upgrading with existing and anticipated job vacancies; this will be implemented in close cooperation with social partners, public employment services and universities;



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

Working with Member States, the Commission proposes to re-programme ESF expenditure to ensure that immediate priorities are met.

b) The Commission will also propose to revise the rules of the **European Globalisation Adjustment Fund** so that it can intervene more rapidly in key sectors, either to co-finance training and job placements for those who are made redundant or to keep in the labour market skilled workers who will be needed once the economy starts to recover.

The Commission will review the budgetary means available for the Fund in the light of the implementation of the revised rules.

2. Create demand for labour

- Member States should consider **reducing employers' social charges on lower incomes to promote the employability of lower skilled workers**. Member States should also consider the introduction of innovative solutions (e.g. service cheques for household and child care, temporary hiring subsidies for vulnerable groups), which have already been successfully pioneered in parts of the Union;
- The Council should adopt, before the 2009 Spring European Council, the proposed directive to make permanent **reduced VAT rates for labour-intensive services**.

Employment, education and training policies will be at the centre of efforts to deal with the consequences of the crisis. As a follow-up to the renewed Social Agenda, the next Commission will continue to work in the fields of employment, social affairs, gender equality and youth to help meet key policy challenges such as globalisation, technological development and demographic change. The Commission should also present a follow-up strategy to the Roadmap on gender equality, which will end in 2010, and pursue its work to make equal opportunities for disabled people a reality. The 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion will help to underline the EU's political commitment to eradicating poverty and fighting social exclusion. The Commission will prepare, along with the Member States, stakeholders and other EU institutions, to hold a European Year of Volunteering in 2011.

Further steps will be taken to improve public health and ensure consumer safety. This will entail implementing the EU Health Strategy, operating the Second Programme of Community action in the field of health, finishing the co-decision procedures on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare and on organ donation and transplantation, as well as updating the work on pandemic flu and on public health threats. Passing the 2008 Pharmaceuticals package into law will



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

help to ensure safe medicines for patients while safeguarding the competitiveness of the sector. Animal health and welfare may be a further field in which the Commission makes new proposals, in line with the Animal Health Strategy and the Animal Welfare Action Plan.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/pdf/Comm_20081126.pdf

The **European Economic Recovery Plan** has two key pillars, and one underlying principle:

- The first pillar is a major injection of purchasing power into the economy, to boost demand and stimulate confidence. The Commission is proposing that, as a matter of urgency, Member States and the EU agree to an immediate budgetary impulse amounting to € 200 billion (1.5% of GDP), to boost demand in full respect of the Stability and Growth Pact.

- The second pillar rests on the need to direct short-term action to reinforce Europe's competitiveness in the long term. The Plan sets out a comprehensive programme to direct action to "smart" investment. Smart investment means investing in the right skills for tomorrow's needs; investing in energy efficiency to create jobs and save energy; investing in clean technologies to boost sectors like construction and automobiles in the low-carbon markets of the future; and investing in infrastructure and inter-connection to promote efficiency and innovation.

At the same time, the ten Actions for Recovery included in the Plan will help Member States to put the right social and economic levers in place to meet today's challenge: to open up new finance for SMEs, cut administrative burdens and kick-start investment to modernise infrastructure. It will drive a competitive Europe ready for the low-carbon economy.

- The fundamental principle of this Plan is solidarity and social justice. In times of hardship, action must be geared to help those most in need.

 - To work to protect jobs through action on social changes.

 - To immediately address the long-term job prospects of those losing their jobs, through the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund and an accelerated European Social Fund.

 - To cut energy costs for the vulnerable through targeted energy efficiency.

 - To address the needs of those who cannot yet use the internet as a tool to connect.



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

COM (2008) 868 - COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS - New Skills for New Jobs - Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs.

Skills upgrading is critically important for Europe's short-term recovery and longer term growth and productivity, for its jobs and its capacity to adapt to change, for equity, gender equality and social cohesion.

The European Council stressed in March 2008 that investing in people and modernising labour markets is one of the four priority areas of the Lisbon strategy, and invited the Commission "to present a comprehensive assessment of the future skills requirements in Europe up to 2020, taking account of the impacts of technological change and ageing populations and to propose steps to anticipate future needs".

In response to the European Council mandate, chapter 2 of this Communication presents a first assessment of future skills requirements up to 2020. But this analysis cannot be a one-shot exercise. It must be followed by a sustained, strategic effort as new sectors increase their potential to spark growth and job creation, assessments need to be updated regularly to integrate these new developments.

**Community programme for employment and solidarity -
PROGRESS (2007-2013)**

The aim of the PROGRESS programme is to provide financial support for the implementation of the European Union's objectives in the field of employment and social affairs. It will thus contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy objectives. PROGRESS, the budget for which is €743 million, will finance analysis, mutual learning, awareness-raising and dissemination activities, as well as assistance for the main players over the period 2007-2013. The programme will be divided into five sections corresponding to five main fields of activity: employment, social protection and inclusion, working conditions, diversity and combating discrimination, and equality between women and men.

<http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11332.htm>



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE – COURT RULING C-350/06 & C-520/06

A WORKER DOES NOT LOSE HIS RIGHT TO PAID ANNUAL LEAVE WHICH HE HAS BEEN UNABLE TO EXERCISE BECAUSE OF SICKNESS

The Court applied the Working Time Directive in two similar cases in which the subjects were unable to take in part or in full, the annual leave entitled to them because of sickness.

For more details see:

<http://curia.europa.eu/en/actu/communiqués/cp09/aff/cp090004en.pdf>



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

Public consultation on the future of Europe's Workforce for Health

The need for this green paper emerged from the work carried out by the High Level Group on Health Services and Medical care (2004-2006) and its work developing indicators to assess the impact of EU enlargement on the movement of doctors and nurses. During that period Member States indicated an interest in a broader discussion on planning for the future health and care workforce.

In an ageing Europe, with growing healthcare costs and rising expectations from both citizens and patients, a high quality health workforce is crucial for successful health systems. The health workforce plays an important role in the EU economy accounting for about 10% of all jobs. In addition, 70% of EU healthcare budgets are allocated to salaries and employment related issues.

The ageing population is changing the pattern of disease and placing new and increasing demands on healthcare workers. It also means that the health workforce is itself an ageing one and there are insufficient new recruits to replace those that are retiring or leaving the EU. Migration of health professionals into and out of the EU and mobility within the EU also has impacts on the supply and distribution of health workers.

The green paper launched a debate on how best to tackle the challenges facing the health workforce in Europe and to engage stakeholders in discussion. The green paper describes the 'workforce for health' as all people engaged in the planning and delivery of health services including health promotion.

Important issues raised in the green paper include investing in training and developing robust human resource strategies to improve recruitment and retention. One such area is, for example, improving the status and participation of women in the health workforce. The green paper also raises the importance of balancing how shortages are addressed within the EU with broader global healthcare considerations.



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

OPEN CONSULTATIONS

ON THE EUROPEAN WORKFORCE FOR HEALTH

CLOSING DATE – 31.03.2009

ON EU ACTION TO REDUCE HEALTH INEQUALITIES

CLOSING DATE – 01.04.2009

THE RELEVANT DOCUMENTS ARE FOUND IN MEUSAC'S WEBSITE

SEND YOUR CONSULTATIONS TO:

SANCO-C4-HEALTH-INEQUALITIES@ec.europa.eu

RARE DISEASE DAY

27th FEBRUARY 2009

Main Objectives of Rare Disease Day:

- Raise awareness on rare diseases
- Strengthen one voice of patients
- Give hope and information to patients
- Bring stakeholders closer together
- Coordinate policy actions in different countries
- Inspire continued growth of the awareness of rare diseases
- Get equity in access to care and treatment



<http://www.rarediseaseday.org/>

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

2930TH SESSION – 9TH MARCH 2009

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/106380.pdf

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