



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY & HEALTH



28.08.2009

CONTENTS

1. *... from the Council*
 - *Public information service*

2. *... from the Parliament*
 - *Coming political issues*

3. *...from the Commission*
 - PROGRESS
 - Influenza A (H1N1)

4. *...Eurostat*
 - *Work-related health problems*

5. *...NCPE*
 - *National workshop*

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Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

... from the Council

Questions about the Council? Just ask!

In the General Questions & Answers page of the Council's Public Information Service one can find a list of topics based on some of the questions most frequently asked by members of the public. Topical questions are: How many working groups are preparing the work of the Council? What are "A" and "B" points on the agenda? How does voting take place and where can I find the results of votes? How many people are taking part in EU crisis management operations?

Every year, the Public Information Service replies to thousands of questions. It provides general information about the Council and its activities and guide the general public to the appropriate information sources. Questions can be submitted in any of the 23 official languages of the EU and receive an answer in the same language within 15 working days.

Many of the questions received concern the progress of a particular file in the Council's decision-making process. People frequently contact the Council's public information service to find information for work, study or research purposes, but it welcomes all kinds of questions about the Council's work.

If you have a question about the Council of the EU, you can click below. You may first wish to check out the list of topics compiled, based on questions that are frequently asked. If you do not find the information that you are looking for, contact the service by filling in the electronic form.

More information:

www.consilium.europa.eu/infopublic

Tel. 2200 3300 Fax 2122 7580 Email: consult.meusac@gov.mt

28/08/2009

pg 2/7



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

... from the Parliament

The big political issues for MEPs this autumn

This autumn sees the first "term" for newly elected MEPs with 6 plenary parliamentary sessions being held up to Christmas. MEPs will also vote on the candidacy of Commission President Barroso as well as approving the entire new Commission. A poll in Ireland on the Lisbon treaty and the Copenhagen climate summit will also hold MEPs attention. This article looks at some of the issues that will dominate the European news over the coming months.

Ireland votes on Lisbon

The revamped Lisbon treaty will be put to a vote in Ireland on 2nd October in what is seen as the crucial final hurdle before ratification. A "yes" vote would see the treaty come into force on 1st January 2010.

If the vote is yes, Sweden, the holders of the EU presidency, will have the task of gaining consensus around who will be nominated for the two key posts the treaty will create - the **EU President** and the **High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy**. If adopted, the treaty will also give the European Parliament new legislative powers.

Barroso vote and new Commissioners

The European Commission **President José Manuel Barroso** needs a confirmation vote in Parliament before he can take up his second 5 year mandate.

If re-appointed he will then have to allocate portfolios to the people nominated by national capitals. Prior to taking up office, these Commissioners-designate face tough "**Question and Answer job interviews**" with MEPs on their opinions, suitability and skills for their allotted posts. Although no date has yet been set for the hearings, late October or early November would seem the most likely dates.

Copenhagen: Agreement on low-carbon economy?

At the United Nations Climate Change conference in Copenhagen in December, world leaders will have the task of agreeing a post-Kyoto protocol deal on limiting CO₂ emissions.

The European Union has already adopted legislation that commits itself to a 20% cut in CO₂ emissions compared to 1990 levels as well as 20% more efficiency and 20% more usage of renewable energy. If a meaningful agreement is to be reached in Copenhagen, then the world's largest emitters of CO₂ - the US and China - must sign up to CO₂ cuts.

Tel. 2200 3300 Fax 2122 7580 Email: consult.meusac@gov.mt

28/08/2009

pg 3/7



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

Reform of EU asylum policy: new MEPs will pick up the baton

In May MEPs from the outgoing parliament approved steps to improve the way the **European Union's asylum policy** works through legal rights for migrants and more solidarity between the 27 Member States.

In July, the Swedish Presidency launched the "Stockholm Programme" which aims to set out cooperation in areas such as policing, judiciary, visas and immigration cooperation over the next five years. Part of that is a call for countries to show greater solidarity and share the burden of immigration as states like Malta, Spain and Italy are receiving huge amounts of immigrants from Africa, whereas many other Member States are not.

Swedish immigration Minister Tobias Billstrom has said that he would like to unveil proposals this September - expected to include the potentially controversial policy of re-distributing refugees and asylum seekers among the 27 Member States. Given the sensitivity of the issue, lively debates on the proposals among MEPs can be expected when they are submitted to Parliament later this year.

... from the Commission

PROGRESS - Annual Performance Monitoring Report

[Progress's Annual Performance Monitoring Report for 2008](#)

The report highlights the programme's achievements to date and outlines the steps that still need to be taken. Performance data show how Progress has been implemented until now, backed up by case studies recording some of the many ways in which the EU helps the Member States make a difference to people's lives thanks to the programme.

This Annual Performance Report presents the results of the performance of **the Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – Progress (2007-2013)** against the commitments made in the Progress Strategic Framework and detailed in the Annual Work Plan 2007 and the Annual Work Plan 2008. The report's structure is as follows:

Section I - Introduction to Progress and measuring its performance, contains an introductory message from the European Commission, which is responsible for the programme's management. This section also contains summaries of the Progress vision, its mandate and anticipated strategic outcomes, and the benefits accruing to European citizens from its

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28/08/2009

pg 4/7



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

activities to date, as well as a presentation of the strategic and monitoring framework that the programme adheres to in delivering its results.

Section II - Performance, provides a detailed presentation of performance by the five immediate outcomes defined for Progress, which are:

- *Effective information sharing and learning in the Commission and across the Member States;*
- *Evidence-based EU policies and legislation;*
- *High-quality and participatory policy debate;*
- *Greater capacity of national and EU networks; and*
- *Integration of cross-cutting issues and consistency.*

Each of these is assessed across the five different, yet closely interrelated policy areas covered by Progress, namely:

- Employment;
- Social inclusion and protection;
- Working conditions;
- Non-discrimination; and
- Gender equality.

Section III - Supplementary Information, contains financial tables and other information which applies to the performance of Progress during the reporting period.

Additional information is provided in a number of technical annexes to the Report.

Influenza A (H1N1): EU Health Security Committee agrees statement on target and priority groups for vaccination

The European Union Health Security Committee and the Early Warning and Response authorities (HSC/EWRS) adopted a policy statement proposed by the European Commission which outlines a shared European approach towards identifying target and priority groups for A (H1N1) vaccination.

On the basis of current scientific evidence and taking into account guidance by the European Centre for Disease Control and the World Health Organisation, the HSC/EWRS statement recommends the following groups as constituting the first priority groups for A(H1N1) vaccination:

Tel. 2200 3300 Fax 2122 7580 Email: consult.meusac@gov.mt

28/08/2009

pg 5/7



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

- All persons from 6 months old with underlying chronic conditions (e.g. Chronic respiratory diseases; chronic cardiovascular diseases and persons with congenital or acquired immunodeficiency) starting with those with most severe symptoms
- Pregnant women
- Health care workers

Once these first priority groups have been vaccinated, the vaccination proceeds until the national targets have been met.

The statement stresses that it is the responsibility and mandate of each Member State to develop a vaccination strategy for Influenza A(H1N1). Each country identifies national target groups which are defined as all those population groups where A(H1N1) vaccination is recommended. In some cases, this may be the entire population and in other cases only specific groups. However, it is unlikely that the vaccine will be immediately available for all target groups at the same time and therefore, it is necessary to define priority groups.

For more information:

The statement of the EU Health Security Committee and of the Early Warning and Response authorities in Member States can be found at the website of the DG Health and Consumers:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_threats/com/Influenza/novelflu_en.htm

... Eurostat

8.6% of workers in the EU experienced work-related health problems Results from the Labour Force Survey 2007 ad hoc module on accidents at work and work-related health problems

The promotion of health and safety at work, and the promotion of more and better jobs are important goals in the European Union. To achieve these goals, assessment and monitoring is necessary. This issue presents an overview of the first results of the European Union Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2007 ad hoc module on accidents at work, work-related health problems and exposure to risk factors. Almost 7 million workers had an accident at work and around 20 million persons experienced a work related health problem in the 12 months preceding the interview. The statistical data refer to the workers aged 15 - 64 years in the EU-27.

Report

Tel. 2200 3300 Fax 2122 7580 Email: consult.meusac@gov.mt

28/08/2009

pg 6/7



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

... National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

Establishment of a network of socio-economic experts in the non-discrimination field – National workshop - 18th September 2009

On 18th September, NCPE will be organizing a full day workshop on non-discrimination targeting namely equality bodies, NGOs, trade unions, employer organizations and representatives from civil society. The venue of the seminar will be announced at a later date.

As part of the project *Establishment of a network of socio-economic experts in the non-discrimination field*, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) will be organising a full day National workshop on the 18th September 2009.

This project was commissioned by the European Commission as part of the EU PROGRESS programme and assigned to ÖSB Consulting (Austria) and Human European Consultancy (Netherlands) to set up and coordinate a network of socio-economic experts across all EU Member States.

The purpose of the network is to provide the European Commission with independent expertise and advice. In particular, an analysis of national situations and policy developments with regard to discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, disability, sexual orientation as well as on multiple grounds (SEN) will be developed throughout bi-annual reports.

With this regards, as the national organiser NCPE will be inviting various identified stakeholders to take part during this one day national workshop. During this National workshop, participants will be presented with a draft version of the Maltese reports (prepared by Dr. Therese Comodini Cachia), have the opportunity to discuss the national situations and policy development and propose any suggestions with regards to the finalisation of the same national report.

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28/08/2009

pg 7/7