



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY & HEALTH

Sectoral Committee
Weekly Update
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... Council Presidency



Informal meeting of Ministers for Employment Combating unemployment over the next ten years

The Ministers for Employment of the European Union met in an informal council to lay the foundations for drawing up the common policies in the area of employment which the European Union will adopt over the next ten years as part of the "2020 Strategy".

The ministerial discussions have been split into two specific workshops: one on how to incorporate the impact of the crisis into EU policies, and the other focusing on new qualifications for new jobs.

In addition, a Troïka formed by the representatives of Spain, Belgium and Hungary (the three countries to hold the Presidency in succession) will meet with European social partners in order to incorporate their ideas into this process.

The Spanish Presidency wants to place the emphasis in all these meetings on looking for solutions for the particularly vulnerable situation of women and young people in employment.

In the first exchange of views between the Ministers on how to exit the economic crisis in order to maintain and create jobs, they aimed to see what lessons can be learned, what challenges and opportunities there are and what are the most effective policies that the Member States believe are being implemented.

Those present agreed that it would be a mistake to make a solution to the crisis solely dependent on economic growth and they also pointed out that the crisis cannot be considered to be over until employment levels recover.

To encourage this scenario, they supported a move to ensure that all European policies, mainly economic policies, result in an improvement in employment indicators.

They also recommended maintaining the stabilisation and economic stimulus measures, identifying new sectors and areas of emerging employment and guaranteeing appropriate training for people to access these jobs.

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The second workshop focused on ways to stimulate vocational training to provide the skills needed to deal with changes in professions that are already taking place and the ones to come.

Ministers discussed the best way of training professionals for "green jobs" linked to the environment, "blue jobs" referring to technological development, and "white jobs" linked to services to dependent persons.

Informal councils are held to promote the exchange of viewpoints between EU Member States in a relaxed environment, with the aim of laying the foundations for the policies which are subsequently approved in the formal meetings held in Brussels and Luxembourg. The deliberations of the ministers over the course of these two days will be included in the Council of Ministers of Employment and Social Security (EPSCO) which takes place in the European capital on 10 March.

Presidency website: <http://www.eu2010.es/en/index.html>



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... European Parliament

Spanish Ministers for Employment, Health, Equality and Science appear before the European Parliament

The Spanish Ministers for Employment and Immigration; Health and Social Policy; Equality; and Science & Innovation, appeared before the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and announced that the aim of the Spanish Presidency is to focus its objectives and actions on economic recovery, employment generation, social protection and research and development.

During their joint presentation, the Spanish ministers stressed the importance of the 2020 Strategy, which must devise a new European economic and social model in the current environment of economic crisis and institutional change resulting from the coming into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.

The **Minister for Employment and Immigration, Celestino Corbacho**, highlighted the need to build an instrument that will allow for a co-ordinated response to help the EU emerge from the crisis, which must undoubtedly be the strategy for 2020. The minister said it is important to maintain public stimulus plans throughout the EU as a whole, as well as definitively promoting the co-ordination between European institutions, Member States and social partners, in order to help employment recover. He said that social dialogue would be defended and promoted at EU level during the term of the Spanish Presidency.

He added that labour market reform, based on the principle of flexi-security, was also needed. The strategy must also include improving workers' training and qualifications; measures to boost employment among young people, such as micro-loans for small and medium-sized enterprises, and the promotion of new sources of employment linked to the environment, social care and information technologies.

The **Minister for Health and Social Policy, Trinidad Jiménez**, said that the elderly, disabled and ethnic minorities at greatest risk of social exclusion would be priority groups during the Spanish Presidency. She added that the agenda for strengthening social cohesion must take centre stage and that the recently-launched European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion would fortify the Spanish Presidency.

The **Minister for Equality, Bibiana Aído**, said that one of the priorities of the Spanish Presidency would be to ensure that gender equality was incorporated as one of the principles of Europe's 2020 Strategy, along with the fight against sexist violence and discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, disability or ethnic background.

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She also said that gender equality was not only a fundamental right, but also a question of social sustainability and effective resource management. Although 59% of all Europe's graduates are women, only 3% of them occupy management posts in public listed companies, the minister said. This is why the 2020 Strategy must strive to bring about the changes needed to make sure that women and men are equally represented in the public and private worlds, as well as ensuring a better balance between work and family life.

She added that the Spanish Government is working on developing a European Protection Order, which would give protection to female victims of violence throughout the EU, as well as setting up a single, free helpline number.

The **Minister for Science and Innovation**, Cristina Garmendia, said that the Spanish Presidency of the EU would work to ensure that R&D initiatives in Europe are better able to respond to major challenges such as new energy sources, climate change, health, ageing, and particularly economic recovery and growth. By doing this, Spain will clearly promote the role of science in dealing with the most visible challenges and daily concerns, and in economic recovery and growth.

The three core areas that the minister will work on during Spain's Presidency of the Council are:

- **integration**, to progress the creation of the European Research Area (ERA);
- **involvement**, to provide answers to the biggest challenges facing society; and
- **inclusion**, to ensure that science tackles poverty and social exclusion.

In terms of the European Research Area, the minister expressed her wish for this to operate as a single, integrated space, and to be given institutional importance that will not involve setting up any new bureaucratic structures, but will rather introduce mechanisms to help align the priorities of the member states and avoid duplication of effort.



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... Eurostat

Unemployment rate in the EU December 2009

The euro area (EA16) seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 10.0% in December 2009, compared with 9.9% in November. It was 8.2% in December 2008.

The EU27 unemployment rate was 9.6% in December 2009, compared with 9.5% in November. It was 7.6% in December 2008. For the euro area this is the highest rate since August 1998 and for the EU27 since the start of the series in January 2000.

Eurostat estimates that 23.012 million men and women in the **EU27**, of whom 15.763 million were in the **euro area**, were unemployed in December 2009. Compared with November, the number of persons unemployed increased by 163 000 in the **EU27** and by 87 000 in the **euro area**. Compared with December 2008, unemployment went up by 4.628 million in the **EU27** and by 2.787 million in the **euro area**.

Compared with a year ago, all Member States recorded an increase in their unemployment rate. The smallest increases were observed in **Germany** (7.1% to 7.5%), **Luxembourg** (5.3% to 6.2%) and **Belgium** (7.1% to 8.2%). The highest increases were registered in **Latvia** (11.3% to 22.8%), **Estonia** (6.5% to 15.2% between the third quarters of 2008 and 2009) and **Lithuania** (6.5% to 14.6% between the third quarters of 2008 and 2009).

Between December 2008 and December 2009, the unemployment rate for males rose from 7.8% to 10.0% in the **euro area** and from 7.5% to 9.8% in the **EU27**. The female unemployment rate increased from 8.7% to 10.1% in the **euro area** and from 7.9% to 9.3% in the **EU27**.

In December 2009, the youth unemployment rate (under-25s) was 21.0% in the **euro area** and 21.4% in the **EU27**. In December 2008 it was 17.0% and 16.9% respectively. The lowest rate was observed in the **Netherlands** (7.6%), and the highest rates in **Spain** (44.5%) and **Latvia** (43.8% in the fourth quarter of 2009).

In the **USA**, the unemployment rate was 10.0% in December 2009. In **Japan** it was 5.2% in November 2009.