



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY & HEALTH

Sectoral Committee

Weekly Update

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... Council presidency



The Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union

On 1 July, Belgium took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Belgium's role mainly consists of organising and managing the work of each Council configuration through its competent ministers. The Foreign Affairs Council is the only exception to this rule. Since the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force, it has been presided by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

The rotating Presidency doesn't only chair the various configurations of the Council; it also chairs the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the large majority of working groups during its presidency.

Before the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force, the six-month Presidency also presided over the European Council. That is no longer the case. The European Council is now a separate Union institution with a permanent president who is elected for a two-and-a-half year term of office and may be re-elected once. Since 1 December 2009, this function has been exercised by former Belgian Prime Minister Herman Van Rompuy.

Working together with the eighteen-month common work programme set up as a "trio" with Spain and Hungary, Belgium has set out its own priorities which it will pursue throughout its Presidency of the Council of the EU. Below, you can find the link to the Belgian presidency's programme.

Presidency Website

<http://www.eu2010.be/>

Programme of the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council

http://www.eu2010.be/files/bveu/media/documents/Programme_EN.pdf

Council improves the safety and exchange of organ transplants

The Council adopted a directive setting out the basic quality and safety requirements for human organs intended for transplantation, following a first-reading agreement with the European Parliament. The directive aims to minimise the risk for organ transplant recipients and to facilitate the exchange of human organs between member states. It indirectly also seeks to contribute to combating organ trafficking and increasing organ availability.



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In order to ensure a high level of protection for patients receiving a new organ, the new Directive obliges the member states to establish a national authority to ensure compliance with the requirements of the directive. They are also obliged to establish a system for the authorisation of programmes of organ procurement and transplantation based on common quality and safety criteria. This system would provide a complete list of authorised centres throughout the EU. They are also to ensure that any organ donation is unpaid and voluntary.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/115529.pdf

... Parliament

Fighting poverty: a minimum income and better access to jobs

The Parliament's Employment Committee adopted a draft resolution on combating poverty. The measures recommended are: a minimum income, better access to the job market, public services and social protection. A call for an EU framework law on a minimum income did not receive the support of a majority of members of the committee.

Poverty affects around 85 million people or 17% of the EU's population. The risk of poverty is greater for children and young people up to 17 years of age (20%) and for older people, than for the population as a whole.

Minimum income

MEPs called on the Commission to present an initiative to introduce minimum income schemes in all EU Member States as one of the most effective ways to combat poverty, guarantee an adequate standard of living and foster social integration. They also urge the Commission to give "genuine meaning and content" to this year's European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

The working poor

In the resolution, MEPs also seek to draw attention to the increasing number of "working poor". They stress that a living wage must always be above the poverty threshold and that workers who remain below the poverty threshold should receive top-ups that are unconditional.

**European Parliament Newsletter
Strasbourg Plenary Session
5-8 July 2010**

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/newsletter_page/20100618NEW76363/default_en.htm



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... Commission

Health-EU Newsletter Issue 53

Stay healthy – even on holiday

http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/newsletter/53/newsletter_en.htm

... Eurofound

Social partners and the socio-economic climate

According to the new annual review of industrial relations developments in the EU from Eurofound's European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO), maintaining jobs and avoiding redundancies were at the top of the agenda in social partner discussions and actions across Europe in 2009.

The 'Industrial relations developments in Europe 2009', which was presented at the 9th European Congress of the International Industrial Relations Association (IIRA) in Copenhagen on June 29, highlights the most significant developments that took place in industrial relations in the EU Member States and Norway in 2009, both at national and EU level.

The economic crisis that took hold across much of Europe from mid-2008 had multiple direct and more subtle effects in 2009 on employment, labour markets and industrial features. One key feature in 2009 has been that many governments faced with deteriorating public finances, cut or froze public expenses. These cuts had dramatic effects on employment in public services, central administrations and public agencies; moreover while the number of industrial actions seriously declined, the main actions dealt with pay cuts in the public sector.

The recession affected wage increases in most countries in 2009. Since the inflation rate fell sharply, from 3.7% in 2008 to 1% in 2009, average real pay rose by 2.9%, compared to 0.5% in 2008.

One main feature during 2009 has been the development of 'Short working time' schemes (SWT) as a response to the economic downturn. These schemes included negotiation on reduction of working time, training and governments' support, both for compensation of earning losses and for financing training schemes.

Report:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=840&furtherNews=yes>