



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

# EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY & HEALTH

Sectoral Committee

Weekly Update

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## **...Commission**

### **Social security regulations**

**New regulations on social security coordination in the European Union entered into force on 1 May 2010. The new rules will make it easier for people to move to other European countries to work, helping to promote worker mobility in the EU – a pillar of the EU's new strategy for jobs and growth "Europe 2020". They will also help pensioners, job seekers and tourists.**

The provisions stipulate that information must be provided actively and delivered rapidly by the social security institutions in Member States. Institutions should communicate with the citizen in a way that can be easily understood. A limited number of paper documents will be issued covering the situations in which citizens need to carry proof of their entitlements. These "portable documents" have a new, easily identifiable design and present the information in a user-friendly way. For pensions, for example, the P1 document will provide citizens a summary of all the decisions on their claim made by each of the countries where she/he was previously employed.

Another new aspect is temporary affiliation. Whenever the institutions of different EU countries are unable to agree on an individual's status with a view to identifying which social security legislation applies to him/her, temporary affiliation to a social security scheme is put in place, with the payment of benefits. For the person concerned, this means they have access to treatment and sickness insurance benefits under a statutory scheme during this period.

The Commission set up a new website (<http://ec.europa.eu/social-security-coordination>), an updated citizens' guide and access to a new online directory of social security institutions in Europe (<http://ec.europa.eu/social-security-directory>).

#### **The EU's role in the social security field**

Social security systems are the exclusive responsibility of the national authorities, and are very diverse in terms of both their organisation and the benefits offered.

Rather than harmonising the national social security systems, the EU coordinates them. The coordination rules create bridges between national systems to guarantee that citizens can enjoy uninterrupted cover when moving within Europe. By preventing citizens from losing out as a result of their choice to live or work in another country, the coordination rules make the right of free-movement within the Union effective.

The EU provisions on coordination of social security schemes have existed for the past 50 years, being updated and extended many times. As from 1 May 2010 a new legislative package, referred to as "modernised coordination" is in force. This includes Regulation 988/2009 which amended Regulation 883/2004, and Implementing Regulation 987/2009.

**Social security rights:** <http://ec.europa.eu/social-security-coordination>

**The 2010 update of the guide "The EU provisions on social security":**

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=486&visible=1>



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## **... Parliament**

### **Social protection for self-employed women and wives**

**The Women's Rights committee approved the second-reading recommendation on a draft directive laying down equal treatment rules for self-employed men and women and their spouses.**

The committee proposes that EU Member States should organise social protection, including at least 14 weeks' maternity allowance, for self-employed women and self-employed men's wives or life partners, in accordance with national laws. The committee inserted amendments to this effect in a draft directive to be put to a plenary vote in May.

#### **Maternity benefits for self-employed women and wives**

As pregnant self-employed women and pregnant spouses or life partners of self-employed men are economically and physically vulnerable, it is necessary to grant them the right to maternity benefits.

The duration of maternity benefits granted to self-employed women and self-employed workers' female spouses or life partners (where recognised by national law), should be similar to that maternity leave for employees currently in place at EU level.

A sufficient maternity allowance to cover interruptions in their work for at least 14 weeks should be granted by all Member States in cases of pregnancy or motherhood of self-employed women and wives and life partners.

The committee said that if the forthcoming (separate) proposal for a maternity leave directive changes this period, then the corresponding period in the directive for self-employed workers and their spouses or life partners should be updated accordingly.

Access to any existing services which supply temporary replacements enabling interruptions in occupational activity owing to pregnancy or motherhood may be an alternative to, or a part of, the maternity allowance.



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## **... Eurobarometer**

### **Perceptions on the quality of life of European citizens**

A Eurobarometer opinion poll, carried out in 75 major European cities, looks at how citizens view the quality of life in these challenging economic times, in which the availability of jobs and housing costs remain dominant concerns. Although responses reveal wide disparities overall, the level of service for transport, health and education generally scores well.

#### **Health care, transport, jobs and housing**

- Residents of north-western European cities are most satisfied with health care services. This is lower in many southern and eastern European cities.
- On public transport, the level of satisfaction ranges from 12% in Palermo to 93% in Helsinki. Unsurprisingly, commuting times are the longest in Europe's capitals and major cities, irrespective of the transport mode. In Amsterdam 48% of interviewees walk or cycle to their workplace. The motorbike is a common alternative to cars in Greek, Italian and Spanish cities.
- Only in six cities (Stockholm, Copenhagen, Prague, Munich, Amsterdam and Warsaw) more than half of respondents agree that it is easy to find a good job.
- Availability of affordable housing is an issue for respondents in two-thirds of the cities surveyed, with particularly striking results for Paris (96%) and Rome (88%).

#### **Pollution, fight against climate change**

- A positive finding is that a large proportion of citizens think that their city is committed to tackling climate change.
- In most cities, noise is perceived as a big problem. This proportion ranges from 51% in Rotterdam and Strasbourg to 95% in Athens.
- Air pollution is also perceived as a major issue, though there appears to have been an improvement in the situation regarding air pollution such as in Valletta, Bratislava and Berlin.

#### **Poverty, security and trust**

- A majority of inhabitants think poverty "is a problem" in their city, especially in Miskolc (HU), Riga, Budapest and Lisbon.
- People tend to feel safer in their neighbourhood than in their city in general. When a city is perceived as clean, people also feel safer.
- In about one third of the cities surveyed, a majority of people express doubts that their city spends its resources in a responsible way.

#### **Immigration, presence of foreigners**

- Opinions about the presence of foreigners are generally positive: in 68 cities, a majority of interviewees agree that their presence is beneficial. However they are less likely to consider that they are well-integrated.

This year's survey also looks at satisfaction with public spaces (such as markets, squares and pedestrian areas) and possibilities for outdoor recreation (such as walking and cycling).

[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/flash/fl\\_277\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_277_en.pdf)



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## **...Eurostat**

### **Employment situation March 2010**

**The euro area (EA16) unemployment rate was 10% in March 2010, the same as in February. It was 9.1% in March 2009. The EU27 unemployment rate was 9.6% in March 2010, also unchanged when compared with February. It was 8.5% in March 2009.**

Eurostat estimates that in March 2010, 23 million men and women in the EU27, of whom 5.8 million were in the euro area, were unemployed. Compared with February 2010, the number of persons unemployed increased by 123 000 in the EU27 and by 101 000 in the euro area. Compared with March 2009, unemployment went up by 2.5 million in the EU27 and by 1.4 million in the euro area.

Among the Member States, the lowest unemployment rates were recorded in the Netherlands and Austria, and the highest rates in Latvia and Spain. Compared with a year ago, one Member State recorded a fall in the unemployment rate. The other twenty-six recorded an increase. The fall was observed in Germany, and the smallest increases in Luxembourg and Malta. The highest increases were registered in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

Between March 2009 and March 2010, the unemployment rate for males rose from 8.9% to 10% in the euro area and from 8.6% to 9.8% in the EU27. The female unemployment rate increased from 9.3% to 10.1% in the euro area and from 8.5% to 9.4% in the EU27.

In March 2010, the youth unemployment rate (under-25s) was 19.9% in the euro area and 20.6% in the EU27. In March 2009 it was 19.0% and 18.9% respectively. The lowest rate was observed in the Netherlands, and the highest rates in Latvia and Spain.

In the USA, the unemployment rate was 9.7% in March 2010. In Japan it was 4.8% in February 2010.

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_PUBLIC/3-30042010-BP/EN/3-30042010-BP-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-30042010-BP/EN/3-30042010-BP-EN.PDF)



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## ...Cedefop

### Supply and demand of skills

This report, published by CEDEFOP<sup>1</sup> studied the supply and demand of skills in Europe with a forecast up to 2020. It shows that while general trends are common throughout Europe, there are substantial differences among Member States.

The report updates Cedefop's 2007-08 forecasts with improved data and methods, and includes the medium-term impact of the economic crisis. Developments in the skills supply are categorised by age, gender and country. The demand for skills is categorised by qualification, occupation, economic sector and country.

For nearly all countries, the share of the workforce with high qualifications is projected to be greater in 2020 than in 2010; the share of people with low qualifications is generally projected to fall. Taken together, shares of medium- and high-skilled people are converging across Europe. But the share of those with medium-level qualifications shows greater variation between countries.

#### **The demand for skills: what jobs will be available across Europe?**

The need to replace departing workers (replacement demand) means that even occupations with net job losses will remain viable sources of employment - a total of about 73 million jobs. Net employment change (expansion demand) in 2010-2020 is expected to add over 7 million new jobs, mostly in knowledge- and skill- intensive occupations (high-level managerial, professional and technical jobs). In terms of expansion demand, however, some occupations will experience losses. The total number of job openings (replacement plus expansion) is forecast at around 80 million, bringing total employment in 2020 to slightly less than its peak in 2008.

#### **Forecast report**

[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3052\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3052_en.pdf)

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<sup>1</sup> European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training