



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY & HEALTH

Sectoral Committee
Weekly Update
12.02.10

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...European Council

EUROPE 2020 strategy Presentation to Heads of State or Government

A strategy for sustainable growth and jobs

During the informal meeting of Heads of State or Government, the President of the European Commission, made a presentation on the EUROPE 2020 strategy. He spoke about the effects of the financial crisis and the implications of interdependence. President Barroso outlined the parameters on how to chart the way out of the crisis while building a new economic model for Europe in 2020.

FULL TEXT OF THE SPEECH

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/president/news/statements/pdf/20100210_en.pdf

PRESENTATION

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/president/news/statements/pdf/20102010_2_en.pdf

... European Parliament



Relations between the Parliament and the Commission

The European Parliament approved a set of key principles to be implemented in the cooperation agreement governing relations between the European Parliament and the Commission. Commission President Barroso endorsed MEPs' demands, reflecting the new position of Parliament under the Lisbon Treaty.

The Parliament and the Commission are currently revising the Framework Agreement that defines relations between the two institutions, including their political responsibilities, the flow of information and legislative coordination. The negotiators of the two institutions agreed on a set of key principles in late January and approved these principles this week.

The second stage of the negotiations, starting immediately after the Commission takes office, should lead by May-June 2010 to an ambitious Framework Agreement text that will be adopted by plenary.

READ ABOUT THE WHOLE SET OF AGREEMENTS

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/008-68606-039-02-07-901-20100208IPR68605-08-02-2010-2010-false/default_en.htm

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Gender Equality

In its annual resolution on equality between men and women in the EU, the European Parliament called for greater efforts to tackle violence against women, for paternity leave to be addressed at EU level and for equal pay legislation to be revised.

Eradicating violence against women

MEPs called on the Commission to draft a comprehensive directive on preventing and combating all forms of violence against women. They called for a European Year of Combating Violence against Women, pointing out that almost one in four women in the EU suffer physical violence and more than 10% sexual violence. MEPs also endorsed the Spanish Presidency's proposals to introduce an EU-wide 'European protection order for victims' and a common EU-wide telephone helpline for victims.

Sexual and reproductive rights

The European Parliament believes that recognition of the full physical and sexual autonomy of women is a first step for any policies designed to combat violence against women. Women must have control over their sexual and reproductive rights, notably through easy access to contraception and abortion (this point was adopted by 361 votes to 237, with 40 abstentions) and abortion consultations must be free of charge. A majority of MEPs thus backed measures to improve women's access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Fighting human trafficking

So far, only 16 EU Member States have ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, which is the strongest European legal instrument in the fight against trafficking in human beings, which can be considered as a modern form of slavery. MEPs called on the Member States that have not yet done so (i.e. the Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Hungary, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden) to ratify this Convention.

Establishing paternity leave entitlement

The EU has a directive on maternity leave and a directive on parental leave, but no legislation on paternity leave. Parliament therefore called on the Commission "to support any moves to establish paternity-leave entitlement on a Europe-wide basis" and said that maternity and paternity leave should be linked so as to afford better protection to women in the labour market.

Equal pay

Parliament deplored the fact that the Commission has not responded to its request to present draft legislation revising the existing law on the application of the principle of equal pay and requested the Commission that it present such a proposal without delay.

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Gender balance in high-level positions

MEPs also agreed that a better gender balance in corporate, administrative and political positions of responsibility in the Member States should be encouraged. They pointed to the Norwegian Government's decision to increase the rate of female members on the boards of private and public companies to at least 40%.

As to the composition of the Commission, a majority of MEPs called on Member States, in future nominations, to put forward two candidates, one of each gender, so as to facilitate the composition of a more representative Commission.

Small business start-ups by the unemployed: deal agreed on funding

MEPs gave the green light for EU funding to help Europe's unemployed start up small businesses. Credit will be made available to entrepreneurs through a "microfinance facility" funded partly from the existing Progress programme and partly from unallocated money in the EU budget.

A compromise was reached between the Parliament and the Commission to make available €60million from the Progress programme and €40 million from unallocated margins in the EU budget. For 2010, the Parliament and the European Council have already agreed to release €25 million from the 2010 EU budget.

... Commission

Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion

COM (2010) 25 - COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Proposal for the Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2010.

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0025:FIN:EN:PDF>

The proposed Joint Report will examine the Member States' integrated national strategies on social inclusion, pensions, healthcare and long-term care. It reviews the main trends across the EU and at national level and is the outcome of a process involving the European Commission and the Council. Most of the work involves the Social Protection Committee (a

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group of high-level officials established in 2000 to serve as a vehicle for cooperative exchange between the Commission and the Member States).

The Proposal for the Joint Report 2010 gives a clear signal of the need for effective and efficient social inclusion and employment policies in and after the crisis, to tackle housing exclusion and homelessness, to ensure long-term adequacy and sustainability of pensions, and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare spending under aggravated conditions and tighter budget constraints.

The proposal also highlights the fact that Member States' efforts to react swiftly to the crisis has led many Member States to reinforce their capacity to detect social problems and intensify cooperation among social and institutional actors. They have enlarged their knowledge base on the social impact of the crisis, using specific monitoring tools, including new surveys.

Finally, the proposal delineates that the European Year 2010 for combating poverty and social exclusion will help to generate new impetus by raising awareness, reinforcing partnerships and reaching out to new actors. It should lead the EU to strongly reaffirm the commitment made ten years ago to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion.

The EU's system of common objectives, assessment and reporting for social protection and inclusion – the 'open method of coordination' – operates in tandem with the EU Strategy for Growth and Jobs. The Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion is presented to EU leaders and feeds into the conclusions of the Spring European Council.

EU to combat major chronic diseases by determining health risk levels for citizens

The EU is in the process of launching a pilot Europe-wide health examination survey (EHES) in a determined effort to estimate future risk levels for the major life-threatening diseases, such as heart attack, stroke and diabetes.

Four in ten deaths of Europeans are currently caused by cardiovascular diseases such as heart attack and stroke, many of whom are of working age. Many others will become incapacitated due to the same diseases.

The major modifiable risk factors for these diseases, namely obesity, blood pressure, smoking, and blood cholesterols and glucose are well known. But their true levels and trends among European populations are not, as is neither the full potential for their prevention. Where data is available, it is not comparable between countries.

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The European Union is now addressing this problem by setting up the European Health Examination Survey (EHES), which will consist of a series of representative national population surveys. A preparation and pilot phase has started in 14 participating countries: Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and UK/England.

The surveys will provide information on socio-economic differences in health, thus helping to focus future activities aimed at narrowing these.

Malta's participation

The health authorities in Malta have long been feeling the need for such a survey to be carried out. While the Department of Health Information and Research (DHIR) has already organised two Health Interview Surveys, it does recognise the limitation of self-reported data, when compared to the prevalence rates obtained when actually screening the respondents for any diseases, as in a Health Examination Survey. The latter survey would also capture those who may be suffering from a disease but are, as yet, unaware. For this reason, DHIR decided to participate in this European pilot project to gather the information required to validate data obtained from other types of survey.

Malta is also planning to join the full European Health Examination Survey which is being envisaged for 2013-4.

EHES is an activity of the Health Programme of the European Union. It is coordinated by the EHES Reference Centre, which is established jointly by the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) of Finland, Statistics Norway (SSB) and Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS) of Italy with support from the European Commission, DG Health and Consumers.