



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY & HEALTH

Sectoral Committee
Weekly Update
12.03.10

Contents



1. European Council

- Employment & Social Policy Council
- Microfinance facility



2. Commission

- Gender Equality
- Skills needs in economy
- Health-EU Newsletter



3. Eurofound

- Gender pay gap





Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

... Council

The 3000th session of the Council of the European Union EMPLOYMENT and SOCIAL POLICY

Main results of the Council

- ◆ The Council, holding its 3000th regular and formal meeting on 8 March, agreed on a directive aiming to protect healthcare workers against injuries and infections caused by needles and other sharp instruments.
- ◆ It held an exchange of views on the preparation of the Spring European Council, based on the Commission's 'Europe 2020' communication, a presidency background paper and contributions by the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee.
- ◆ The Council also held an exchange of views on the preparation of the Tripartite Social Summit which will take place on the eve of the Spring European Council.
- ◆ The Council adopted the 2009/2010 joint reports on employment, as well as on social protection and social inclusion for 2010. Ministers were informed by the Commission of its report on equality between women and men for 2010.
- ◆ Furthermore, the Council adopted conclusions on the eradication of violence against women in the European Union and held an exchange of views on this topic, several ministers remarking on the appropriateness of this step on the occasion of International Women's Day.
- ◆ Over lunch, ministers held a discussion on youth employment policies.

Without debate, the Council adopted the following acts:

- a decision establishing a €100 million European microfinance facility for employment and social inclusion and another decision on the financing of the new facility; (see article below)
- a directive extending workers' rights to parental leave from three to four months for each parent;
- the Council's first-reading position on a draft directive aimed at improving the social protection of self-employed workers and of "assisting spouses".

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Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

IN DETAIL:

Injuries to healthcare workers

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/113210.pdf

Parental leave

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/113206.pdf

Self employed workers

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/113208.pdf

On the Eradication of Violence Against Women in the European Union

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/113226.pdf

Full Council Conclusions:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/113230.pdf

EU to provide micro-loans to unemployed and small entrepreneurs

The European Microfinance Facility (a new facility to provide loans to people who have lost their jobs and want to start or further develop their own small business), will have a starting budget of €100 million which could leverage more than €500 million in cooperation with international financial institutions such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group. The initiative is part of the EU's response to the crisis and is especially targeted at people who cannot normally obtain credit because of the economic crisis and the current lack of credit supply.

Those helped under the initiative will also be able to benefit from mentoring, training and coaching as well as assistance in preparing a business plan, in close cooperation with the existing European Social Fund.

The facility could result in around 45,000 loans over a period of up to eight years. In addition, the possibility for these same people to benefit from interest rate rebates through the European Social Fund will make it easier for them to start their new business.

Micro-credit in this Facility means loans under €25,000. It is tailored to micro-enterprises, employing fewer than 10 people (91% of all European businesses), and unemployed or inactive people who want to go into self-employment but do not have access to traditional banking services. 99% of start-ups in Europe are micro or small enterprises and one third of these are launched by people who are unemployed.

Microfinance facility

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/113204.pdf

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Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

... Commission

Gender Equality

COM (2010) 78 - COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION: A Strengthened Commitment to Equality between Women and Men. A Women's Charter Declaration by the European Commission on the occasion of the 2010 International Women's Day in commemoration of the 15th anniversary of the adoption of a Declaration and Platform for Action at the Beijing UN World Conference on Women and of the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

http://ec.europa.eu/prelex/detail_dossier_real.cfm?CL=en&DosId=199072

The Charter presents a series of commitments based on agreed principles of equality between women and men. It aims to promote:

- equality in the labour market and equal economic independence for women and men, namely through the Europe 2020 strategy;
- equal pay for equal work and work of equal value by working with Member States to reduce significantly the gender pay gap over the next five years;
- equality in decision-making through EU incentive measures;
- dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence through a comprehensive policy framework;
- gender equality beyond the EU by pursuing the issue in external relations and with international organisations.

The Charter responds in particular to the European Parliament's request to step up action to tackle violence.

The Charter will be followed by a new strategy for gender equality to be adopted by the Commission in mid-2010. The strategy will provide a coordinated framework for action across all EU policies.

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Transversal Analysis on the Evolution of Skills Needs in 19 Economic Sectors

In order to enhance strategic human resource management, and thereby improve European competitiveness in the global economy, the European Commission has pointed to the importance of developing better methods and tools to anticipate trends and changes in the European labour market. On this background, the Commission has carried out in depth studies of the 19 economic sectors in Europe, accounting for two thirds of European employment.

The main aim of the sector studies was to map and analyse the evolution of innovation, skills and jobs within each of the selected sectors, taking into account the sector's global, national and regional contexts, in order to anticipate possible changes in jobs and skills needs until 2020. The sector studies reveal the increasing polarization of the demand for skills and competencies.

All economic sectors report a need for continuous upskilling of the labour force among others driven by internationalisation, specialisation, rising climate concerns, ICT and new technological possibilities. To deepen the challenges for Europe even further, most sectors also forecast a shrinking supply of labour available due to the ageing of the European labour force.

Companies need to:

- enhance innovation and R&D,
- invest strongly in human capital and engage in social dialogue.

Governments need to:

- improve the framework conditions for investments in innovation, R&D as well as human capital,
- promote diversity policies aimed at keeping the elderly engaged, attract female workers and managers and integrate immigrant workers and expatriates.
- Increase the flexibility of the educational system, apply inter- and multidisciplinary approaches and place a greater emphasis on teaching cultural and social skills. The education and training sector needs to open up itself for more cooperation with its stakeholders in order to promote sector specific skills at an early stage, increase the use of apprenticeship and mentoring programmes, engage in EU standardisation and certification of education and skills and to develop joint education and training programmes especially for SME's.

Full Report and Executive Summary on:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=731&furtherNews=yes>

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Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

Health-EU Newsletter Issue 46

Environment and Health in Europe

http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/newsletter/46/newsletter_en.htm

... Eurofound

EU governments and social partners and the gender pay gap

In the last five years, the pay gap between men and women has narrowed in a great number of EU Member States, but the unadjusted gender pay gap remains high at 17.6% (Eurostat 2007) for the EU as a whole. A new report from Eurofound's European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO) shows that social partners and governments are undertaking concrete actions to modify and improve fairness in access, promotion, work organisation and to support work and life balance, either through isolated or joined initiatives. There are, however, big differences between countries.

Governments and social partners in the European Union are currently actively engaged in campaigns to create an understanding of wage unbalance and its main causes. Trade unions address gender pay differentials using a combination of awareness raising campaigns, initiatives to monitor the gap at the workplace or industry level and reflections about gender equality within trade unions. Employers' organisations tend to devote less attention to the issue of gender inequality, often considering external factors such as education, occupational segregation and family responsibilities as the major causes of the issue. Governments, on the other hand, are not specifically addressing the gender pay gap but the gender equality in general, using national action plans, direct or indirect legislation, dedicated bodies, or specific wage policies.

Tackling gender inequalities in the labour market has often been approached through dissemination of good practice examples. In many countries, awards and competitions have initiated, in order to identify companies and workplaces that succeeded in achieving gender equality in employment and that can be considered as positive examples with regard to gender equality issues. The report outlines a number of such initiatives in great detail.

Report:

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/gender/internationalwomensday2010.htm>

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