



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY & HEALTH

Sectoral Committee

Weekly Update

25.06.10

Contents



1. Council

- Informal Meeting of Housing Ministers
- Social protection of self-employed workers

2. Commission

- Monthly Labour Market Monitor

3. Eurobarometer

- Survey on the social impact of the crisis



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

... Council

Informal meeting of EU housing ministers

The EU's housing ministers met this week in Spain and agreed on the promotion of housing renovation and refurbishment policies in order to achieve greater economic recovery, generate jobs and improve energy efficiency and social integration.

These aims were included in a final document, which proposes to the European Commission that housing should make a contribution to energy efficiency.

Spain's minister Beatriz Corredor said that the ideas about the rehabilitation of buildings fit perfectly within the Europe 2020 strategy, which is promoting a new sustainable and environmentally-friendly economy that sees innovation, knowledge and better use of resources as the foundations for sustainable development.

The minister added that building rehabilitation is a powerful generator of jobs, since it creates jobs at a much greater rate than new construction or civil works. It also generates activity in auxiliary industries and construction materials and boosts productivity and competitiveness in the sector.

Report on building rehabilitation in the EU

Corredor also underscored Spain's contribution over this half-year period in the area of urban development, which involved producing a questionnaire focusing on the renovation and energy efficiency of buildings, which was distributed to Member States at the start of the Spanish Presidency.

The report with the findings of the questionnaire shows that there is broad agreement between the EU-27 in terms of the aspects they include within the concept of rehabilitation of housing, buildings and urban areas.

In addition, between 60% and 90% of the countries of the EU have similar content in their regulations on building rehabilitation, 90% have specific regulations on energy efficiency, 80% include requirements regarding accessibility and 50% contain an integrated approach to urban rehabilitation.

Another significant conclusion of the report shows that most of the countries surveyed recognise that rehabilitation generates employment, above all in terms of professional and specialist labour.



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Social protection of self-employed workers and assisting spouses

The Council formally adopted the directive which strengthens the social protection of self-employed workers and of "assisting spouses", thereby aiming to strengthen the principle of equal treatment between men and women who want to establish or extend a self-employed activity. The adoption of the directive follows an agreement with the European Parliament at second reading. It was approved during the meeting of the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council.

The new Directive, for the first time entitles self-employed women and assisting female spouses of self-employed workers to maternity benefits and creates autonomous social protection rights for assisting spouses of self-employed workers.

More specifically, the text includes the following key provisions:

- self-employed women, female assisting spouses and life partners of self-employed workers such as farmers' wives are granted a maternity allowance enabling them to interrupt their occupational activity for at least 14 weeks. Life partners must be recognised under national law in order to fall under the scope of the Directive.
- assisting spouses and life partners of self-employed workers are entitled to autonomous social protection rights if the self-employed workers benefit from a system for social protection. Under the current rules in most member states, these persons are covered by the social protection scheme of their self-employed spouse.
- member states may decide whether the above are granted on a mandatory basis or upon request.
- if the duration of maternity leave for employees is modified in the EU, the Commission should submit a report within six years after the entry into force of the Directive and assess whether modifications should also apply to self-employed workers and female assisting spouses.

Member states have two years to transpose the new Directive into national law. Where justified by particular difficulties they may have an additional period of two years.

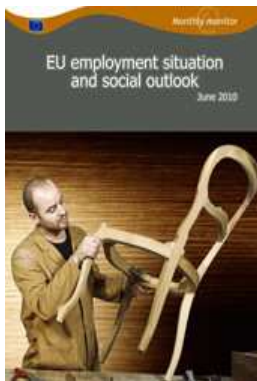


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... Commission

Labour Market Monitor - June 2010

Latest data confirm that the labour market in the EU is stabilising, following several months of only relatively moderate deterioration.



The economy started to recover from deep recession around a year ago, but it may take some time yet before the fragile pick-up in economic activity and confidence triggers an upswing in the labour market.

Rises in the unemployment rate had eased in most Member States by April, and recently, only Estonia recorded a steep rise in the first quarter of this year, while in twelve countries the rate stabilised or declined. The labour market for young people in the EU has shown even more consistent signs of stabilisation, as youth unemployment has actually declined since September.

In the latest issue of the Labour Market Monitor, the focus is on the labour market situations in Austria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Malta, the Netherlands, Slovakia and Slovenia.

This month's edition also focuses on recent developments in the furniture sector.

Monthly Monitoring Report – June 2010

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=831&furtherNews=yes>

... Eurobarometer

Survey on the social impact of the crisis

A new Eurobarometer survey on the social impacts of the crisis was recently presented by the Commission. The survey was carried out in May 2010 as an initiative for the European Year against poverty and social exclusion and comes after the decision taken by EU leaders during the European Council on 17 June to lift 20 million Europeans out of poverty and social exclusion over the next decade.



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

The key results of the survey show that one in six Europeans have a constant struggle to pay household bills and three quarters of the respondents believe that poverty has increased in their country over the past year.

The main concern in the people's perception of poverty is the crisis and the resultant austerity measures. Greece stands out with 85% of respondents who think poverty has increased in their country. 83% of the French, 82% of Bulgarians, 77% of Romanians and 75% of Italians also share this view about their own country.

While in some countries, people expect further difficulties in their household financial situation, perceptions did improve in others.

The household financial situation

A significant share of EU citizens report that their household is in financial trouble. One in six Europeans reported that they had no money to pay ordinary bills, buy food or other daily consumer items, on at least one occasion in the past year and 20% had difficulties in keeping up with household bills and credit commitments at the time of the survey's fieldwork. For 15% it is a constant struggle, while 3% had fallen behind with some bills and credit commitments and 2% were having real financial problems and had fallen behind with many such payments.

On Healthcare

Around 30% of Europeans reported that it had become more difficult to bear the costs of healthcare, childcare or long-term care for themselves or their relatives in the past six months: 11% felt it had become "much more difficult" and 18% thought it had become "somewhat more difficult".

On Jobs

As in March 2010, 18% of respondents who are in employment are not very confident that they would be able to keep their current job in the next 12 months and 49% think it would be fairly unlikely or not at all likely that they would be able to find a new position within six months, should they be laid off.

On future pension entitlements

In terms of future income, 73% of EU citizens either explicitly anticipate lower pension benefits or think they will have to postpone their retirement or save more money for old age. Meanwhile, 20% are very worried that their income in old age would be insufficient for them to live a decent life, and 34% are fairly worried by such outlook. In 17 Member States, a majority of respondents are very worried or fairly worried that their income in old age will not be adequate to enable them to live in dignity.

Eurobarometer survey report

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_289_en.pdf