



# Workability Europe Public Affairs e-bulletin

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## Social Affairs p.2

**The future of social security systems  
Closing Conference of the European  
Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008  
European Economic and Social  
Committee (EESC) on 'patients' rights  
in cross-border healthcare'**

## Employment p.3

**Free movement of workers  
New EU report on private pensions  
Commission launches a major  
Recovery Plan for growth and jobs**

## Education vocational training & youth p.5

**Tempus gives € 60 m to university  
cooperation projects  
Innovation in learning through ICT**

## Bordeaux Communiqué on vocational education and training

## Health p.7

**European focus on rare diseases**

## Research p.7

**European elderly: how are they? - Key  
Findings**

## Other relevant EU Affairs p.8

**Now Online: "Europeana", Europe's  
Digital Library**

## EU funded programmes p.8ff.

**Funding**

**Calendar of events**

## Social Affairs

### The future of social security systems

The increasing ageing population will affect social security systems. In this own-initiative report, MEPs express their preoccupation with maintaining the core of European social models. Encouraging higher employment rates are among the recommendations of the report.

The ageing population is expected to lead to increases in public spending, most of it for pensions, health care and long-term care, in most Member States by 2050 if current policies are pursued. It will also put serious pressure on the active work force, stated the report by Gabriele Stauner (EPP-ED, DE).

MEPs recall that the core of European social models is the principle of solidarity between generations and that it is primarily financed by work-related earnings.

The trend towards individualisation could also enable people, especially women and other vulnerable groups, to have more freedom of choices and be able to build up their own, additional pension rights, stresses the report.

New ways of taxation and/or other alternatives could be also be considered to improve the financial sustainability of social pending.

Higher employment rates are heavily dependent on the necessity to keep all groups active. That is why MEPs stress the need to fight discrimination on the labour market.

They also call on the Member States to create financial and social incentives in order to encourage employees voluntarily to continue to work even after reaching the statutory age limit.

Public pension systems strengthen social solidarity and are the responsibility of Member States and safeguarding these systems should be a political priority, MEPs say. They believe that a greater use of alternatives to state-funded pensions, such as supplementary schemes, could also be a viable alternative and that pension systems need to adapt to "patchwork biographies" becoming increasingly common.

It is important to preserve the values and principles underpinning all health care systems of the European Union, which comprise universal coverage, solidarity in financing, equity of access and the provision of high quality health care, MEPs insist. By improving the organisation and provision of services in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity, a potential exists for both better quality and financial efficiency of health services, they underline.

Internet:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress\\_page/047-42558-322-11-47-908-20081119IPR42557-17-11-2008-2008-false/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/047-42558-322-11-47-908-20081119IPR42557-17-11-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm)

### Closing Conference of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008

Over 600 participants from across Europe and beyond gathered on November 20<sup>th</sup> in Paris to evaluate the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 in a closing conference entitled "New Perspectives for Intercultural Dialogue in Europe". With hundreds of activities and projects highlighted, promoted and disseminated during this Year, the communication campaign has raised awareness throughout Europe of the importance and benefits of intercultural dialogue. Building on this experience, the aim of the conference is to look to the future of Europe from the point of view of cultural diversity.

The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue has mobilised stakeholders,

policy makers and grass-roots civil society organisations throughout Europe. So far this Year, there have been 524 national events and 406 projects, while 91 national 'ambassadors of intercultural dialogue' have been nominated by the Member States.

Internet: [www.dialogue2008.eu](http://www.dialogue2008.eu)

2009 has been designated as the European Year of Creativity and Innovation.

### **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on 'patients' rights in cross-border healthcare'**

Commissioner Vassilou welcomes the work of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on the Commission's proposal on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare.

Speaking at the EESC Social Section meeting on 4 November, Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou praised what she described as an "excellent" opinion and welcomed its recommendations for improving the proposed directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare, which the Commission would study very carefully. She also hoped that the European Parliament and Council would be inspired by the EESC's work in this area and, in particular, the recommendations on providing information and continuity of care in the patient's country.

The proposed directive aims to enable patients in every Member State to exercise their right to choose the best possible treatment and to clarify when and at what cost treatment abroad can be sought. The Directive will also establish a common framework for fostering the exchange and pooling of valuable information, experience, and the results of research in healthcare across the EU, which will improve the overall quality and safety of healthcare. The framework will

be particularly relevant to the treatment of rare diseases.

The Social Section drew the Commissioner's attention to the risk that implementing the proposed directive as it stood could increase health inequalities in the EU as well as undermine the financial sustainability or service capacity of health systems in some Member States. The proposed system of prior authorisation, definitions of hospital and non-hospital care and scheme to provide information to patients were also called into question.

The Social Section went on to debate and adopt the draft opinion by an overwhelming majority. The opinion of the Social Section will be discussed and voted on at the EESC plenary session to be held on 4 and 5 December 2008.

The opinion is available at [http://www.eesc.europa.eu/sections/soc/public\\_health.htm](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/sections/soc/public_health.htm).

## **Employment**

### **Free movement of workers**

A European Commission report published on November 11<sup>th</sup> shows that mobile workers from the countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 have had a positive impact on Member States' economies and have not led to serious disturbances on their labour markets. Workers from the EU-8 as well as Bulgaria and Romania have made a significant contribution to sustained economic growth, without significantly displacing local workers or driving down their wages. Both for the EU as a whole and for most individual countries, labour flows have been limited compared to the size of labour markets and to inflows from non-EU countries.

The report finds that mobile workers from Bulgaria, Romania and the EU-8 have made a significant contribution to sustained economic growth over recent years, by addressing labour market shortages, without making heavy demands on welfare states. At the same time, there is little evidence that workers from the new Member States have displaced local workers or driven down their wages in a serious way, even in those countries where the inflows have been greatest, although there have been some temporary adjustment problems in specific areas.

Member States' population statistics and labour force survey data show that the average population share of nationals of the countries that joined in 2004 (EU-10) living in the EU-15 rose from 0.2% in 2003 to 0.5% by the end of 2007. During the same period, the population share of Bulgarians and Romanians living in the EU-15 increased from 0.2% to 0.5%. The majority of mobile workers from the new Member States which joined in 2004 – mostly from Poland, Lithuania and Slovakia – went to Ireland and the UK, while Spain and Italy have been the main destination countries for Romanians. Yet, with the exception of Ireland, post-enlargement flows from the new to the old Member States have been significantly outnumbered by recent immigration of non-EU nationals. Evidence also suggests that many EU mobile workers go to another Member State on a temporary basis but do not intend to stay permanently.

In the wake of current economic developments it is likely that a possible decline in labour demand will reduce labour flows within the EU. Recent economic slowdowns in some countries have already led to a substantial reduction in new entries, in parallel to an increase in return migration. This is a sign that free labour mobility is self-regulatory by nature and provides a much needed flexibility in both directions: workers go to

where there is demand for labour and many leave again when employment conditions become less favourable.

Internet:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=508&langId=en>, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0048:FIN:EN:PDF>, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=466&langId=en>

### **Commission launches a major Recovery Plan for growth and jobs**

On November 26<sup>th</sup> the European Commission has presented a comprehensive plan to drive Europe's recovery from the current economic crisis. The Recovery Plan is based on two mutually reinforcing main elements. Firstly, short-term measures to boost demand, save jobs and help restore confidence. Secondly, "smart investment" to yield higher growth and sustainable prosperity in the longer-term. The Plan calls for a timely, targeted and temporary fiscal stimulus of around €200 billion or 1.5% of EU GDP, within both national budgets (around €170 billion, 1.2% of GDP) and EU and European Investment Bank budgets (around €30 billion, 0.3% of GDP). Every Member State is called upon to take major measures good for its own citizens and good for the rest of Europe. The Recovery Plan will reinforce and accelerate reforms already underway under the Lisbon Growth and Jobs Strategy. It includes extensive action at national and EU level to help households and industry and concentrate support on the most vulnerable. It puts forward concrete steps to promote entrepreneurship, research and innovation, including in the car and construction industries. The Recovery Plan aims to boost efforts to tackle climate change while creating much-needed jobs at the same time, through for example strategic investment in energy efficient buildings and technologies.

The Commission is proposing to simplify criteria for European Social Fund

Support, re-programme spending and step up advance payments from early 2009, so that Member States have earlier access to up to €1.8 billion in order to reinforce active labour market policies, refocus support on the most vulnerable, step up action to boost skills and where necessary opt for full Community financing of projects during this period.

Up to €4.5 million of cohesion funding will also be brought forward, alongside other measures to accelerate the implementation of major investment projects and this too will contribute to protecting and creating jobs.

To create demand for labour the Plan invites Member States to consider reducing employers' social charges on lower incomes and calls on the Council to adopt, before the 2009 Spring European Council, the proposed Directive to make permanent reduced VAT rates for labour-intensive services.

The Commission is asking Heads of State and Government at the European Council on 11-12 December to endorse the Recovery Plan and show their determination to act together in a closely coordinated way. This can allow Europe to lead the way globally in decisive action to support the real economy, just as its leadership over financial markets led to agreement at the G20 Summit in Washington on 15 November.

For further details see <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/735&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

Education, vocational training & youth

## Tempus gives € 60 m to university cooperation projects

The European Commission has given its approval to 63 university co-operation and 13 other high quality projects under the new phase of the Tempus programme, selected from 530 applications. All 28 Tempus partner countries are involved, with a total budget of € 60 million. 600 universities from the partner countries and 300 from the EU will participate in these projects.

The Tempus programme supports the modernisation of higher education and creates an area of co-operation in countries outside the EU. Established in 1990 after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the scheme now covers 28 countries in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, North Africa and the Middle East.

In concrete terms, the projects selected by the European Commission for funding under Tempus IV cover a broad range of disciplines, from sustainable development and chemical engineering to intellectual property law, biomedical engineering and social work. Through a strict procedure and a consultation process with the national authorities, the Commission has ensured that the selected projects are both of high quality and in line with national educational priorities.

Internet: <http://ec.europa.eu/tempus>

## Innovation in learning through ICT

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are not yet sufficiently present in Europe's education systems, and reforms must be introduced to adapt them to the technological changes sweeping through our societies. This is the main conclusion of a report adopted by the European Commission.

The report, entitled "The use of ICT to support innovation and lifelong learning for all - A report on progress", describes

how the use of e-learning has developed in Europe since 2000. It assesses the impact of ICT on school and higher education, while taking other education sectors into account. It then draws conclusions for the next stage of using information technology in education and training, and identifies the challenges posed by the need for improving the quality and efficiency in Europe's education systems, and in particular for pedagogical, technological and organisational innovation.

The basic findings of the paper are:

The impact of ICT on education and training is visible, but not as great as it could be. The extent to which businesses and public services have been transformed through ICT is not yet reflected in educational systems;

Embedding ICT in education and training systems requires changes across the pedagogical, technological and organisational settings;

The potential for ICT to help develop a 'learning continuum' between formal, informal and workplace learning is clear and has to be built upon.

Internet: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc/sec2629.pdf>, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:394:0010:0018:EN:PDF>

### **Bordeaux Communiqué on vocational education and training**

The Ministers of vocational education and training (VET) of the EU Member States, the EFTA/EEA and candidate countries, the European Commission and the European Social Partners adopted the Bordeaux Communiqué to strengthen cooperation in vocational education and training.

The main instrument for European cooperation in vocational education and training is the Copenhagen process. This

process was initiated in 2002, when the education Ministers of 31 European countries, the European social partners and the European Commission adopted the Copenhagen Declaration on enhanced cooperation in European vocational education and training. The Copenhagen process calls for a review of progress every two years. This has taken place in Maastricht in 2004 and in Helsinki in 2006 and now in 2008 under the French Presidency in Bordeaux.

Taking stock of the progress achieved and defining priorities for 2008-2010, the Bordeaux Communiqué introduces the new objective of strengthening the links between VET and the labour market. This ties in with the "New skills for new jobs" initiative on anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs. A Commission Communication with the same title is due in December 2008.

Among the most ambitious objectives for VET in the coming years, will be the adoption and implementation of the European Credit System for VET (ECVET) and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQARF). In April 2008, the Commission adopted these two proposals for recommendations by the European Parliament and by the Council. Negotiations are proceeding between these institutions as scheduled, and the formal adoption is expected early 2009.

When implemented, ECVET will support and promote transnational mobility and access to lifelong and borderless learning in VET, by facilitating transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes achieved by individuals. ECVET will be compatible with the existing European credit system (ECTS) used in the Higher education sector.

EQARF is designed to support Member States in promoting and monitoring quality improvement in VET at different levels. It provides a common basis for

further development of quality principles, reference criteria and indicators.

Internet: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc60\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc60_en.htm),  
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/>,  
<http://www.etf.europa.eu/>, <http://www.eua.be/>

## Health

### European focus on rare diseases

The European Commission adopted on November 11<sup>th</sup> a Communication and a proposal for a Council Recommendation on rare diseases setting out an overall Community strategy to support Member States in diagnosing, treating and caring for the 36 million EU citizens with rare diseases. The limited number of patients affected and the fragmentation of knowledge about them across the European Union, makes rare diseases a prime example of where working at European level is necessary and beneficial.

Rare diseases are conditions that affect fewer than 5 in every 10,000 people. There are between 5,000 and 8,000 such conditions. These conditions are predominantly genetic in origin, but also include rare cancers, auto-immune diseases and congenital malformations.

The Communication sets out a Community strategy for action in three main areas:

improving recognition and visibility of rare diseases;

supporting national plans for rare diseases in the Member States; and,

Strengthening cooperation and coordination for rare diseases at European level.

Internet: [http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_threats/non\\_com/rare\\_diseases\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_threats/non_com/rare_diseases_en.htm),  
[http://ue2008.fr/PFUE/lang/en/accueil/PFUE-11\\_2008/PFUE-](http://ue2008.fr/PFUE/lang/en/accueil/PFUE-11_2008/PFUE-)

[18.11.2008/strategies\\_et\\_plans\\_nationaux\\_pour\\_les\\_maladies\\_rares\\_en\\_europe](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_threats/non_com/rare_diseases_en.htm)

## Research

### European elderly: how are they? - Key Findings

The second detailed results of a European survey of health, ageing and retirement in Europe (SHARE) are being presented today in Brussels. The EU's Research Framework Programme awarded 5,8M€ over three years to the SHARE research project which collected data on life circumstances of around 35 000 European aged 50 and over in 15 countries, ranging from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean. Among the surprising results: Women live longer especially in South of Europe; but men are less sick, especially in the North; people in most Northern Europe eat less or the demise of the family is a myth. The main purpose of the survey was to provide accessible and reliable data to researchers and policy makers in the field of public health, economics and social sciences. Europe has the highest proportion of older citizens of any continent worldwide and the average age of Europeans will continue to increase.

Internet: <http://www.share-project.org/>,  
<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/1837&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=de>,  
<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/730&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

## Other EU-Affairs

**Now Online: "Europeana", Europe's Digital Library**

Europeana, Europe's multimedia online library is open to the public now. At [www.europeana.eu](http://www.europeana.eu), Internet users around the world can now access more than two million books, maps, recordings, photographs, archival documents, paintings and films from national libraries and cultural institutions of the EU's 27 Member States. Europeana opens up new ways of exploring Europe's heritage: anyone interested in literature, art, science, politics, history, architecture, music or cinema will have free and fast access to Europe's greatest collections and masterpieces in a single virtual library through a web portal available in all EU languages. But this is just the beginning. In 2010, Europeana will give access to millions of items representing Europe's rich cultural diversity and will have interactive zones such as communities for special interests. Between 2009 and 2011, some €2 million per year of EU funding will be dedicated to this. The Commission also plans to involve the private sector in the further expansion of Europe's digital library. In September 2007, the European Parliament supported, in a resolution voted by an overwhelming majority, the creation of a European digital library.

Over 1,000 cultural organisations from across Europe have provided material for Europeana. Europe's museums, including the Louvre in Paris and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, have supplied digitised paintings and objects from their collections. State archives have made important national documents available, and France's Institut National de l'Audiovisuel supplied 80,000 broadcasts recording the 20th century, right back to early footage shot on the battlefields of France in 1914. National libraries all over Europe have contributed printed and manuscript material, including digitised copies of the great books that brought new ideas into the world.

In 2009-2010 around € 69 million will be available for research on digital libraries

through the EU's research programme. In the same period the information society part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme will allocate around € 50 million to improve access to Europe's cultural and scientific heritage.

Internet: <http://www.europeana.eu>,  
[http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/activities/digital\\_libraries/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/digital_libraries/index_en.htm)

## EU funded programmes

- 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme: several open calls in the field of health, ICT, also on 'People' 14/01/2009
- Citizens for Europe: Calendar 2008-2013; Call for proposals - Structural support for European public policy research organisations and for civil society organisations at European level - 2009: 17/11/2008
- YOUTH IN ACTION: Guidelines 2008
- Lifelong Learning Programme 2009 (for Erasmus, Grundtvig, Comenius, Jean Monnet Programme, Leonardo da Vinci): deadlines ranging from 28/11/2008 to 9/4/2009.

## Calendar of upcoming events

Date	Title	Venue	Contact
1-2/12/2008	European Day of People with Disabilities (EDPD) Conference	Brussels (Belgium)	EUROKEYS : Tel. +32 (0) 2 777 99 79 Fax: +32 (0)2 770 36 01 E-mail: <a href="mailto:eddp@eurokeys.com">eddp@eurokeys.com</a>
3/12/2008	Journée d'études sur le handicap "Les droits des personnes handicapées mentales et psychiques ...entre directives publiques et expériences positives »	Dudelange (Luxembourg)	APEMH E-mail : <a href="mailto:ufep@ufep.lu">ufep@ufep.lu</a>
3/12/2008	Euro-Access – Final conference of the project Euro-Access on accessibility of public transports in Europe	Brussels	Website project and conference registration : <a href="http://www.euro-access.org/workshop.php">http://www.euro-access.org/workshop.php</a>
9/12/2008	European conference on Enhancing the Quality of Social Care Services across Europe.	Dublin (Ireland)	Conference hosted by Health Information and Quality Authority in Ireland and the Council of Europe. For registration and information : <a href="mailto:conference@higa.ie">conference@higa.ie</a>
11/12/2008	EPR Public Affairs Event: commemorate the European Platform for Rehabilitation's 15th Anniversary, launch the EPR Charter on Modernisation of disability-related Health and Social Services and to showcase the latest achievements in the European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS) system.	Théâtre du Vaudeville, in Brussels	Jan Spooren, European Platform for Rehabilitation – EPR, <a href="http://www.epr.eu">www.epr.eu</a>
8/12/2008	Structural Funds 2007 - 2013: a real step forward for social Europe?"	EESC	Ann Vervaecke, EDF : <a href="mailto:ann.vervaecke@edf-feph.org">ann.vervaecke@edf-feph.org</a>
1-12/12/2008	European Conference "Continuing the Diversity Journey - Business Practices, Perspectives a. Benefits"	Brussels	Contact : <a href="mailto:rosiev@focus-consultancy.co.uk">rosiev@focus-consultancy.co.uk</a>
<b>2009</b>			
5-7/3/2009	1st International Conference on "Bridging knowledge in long term care and support" - Crossing Boundaries between Ageing and Disability	Barcelona (Spain)	Conference website : <a href="http://www.suportserveis.es/cgi-bin/veucongresEng.asp?id=193">http://www.suportserveis.es/cgi-bin/veucongresEng.asp?id=193</a>
7/04/2009	Seminar Taking use of Social Clauses in Public Procurement organised by Service Development Group and VATES Foundation.	Helsinki (Finland)	Contact: Marianne Kaunismäki <a href="mailto:marianne.kaunismaki@vates.fi">marianne.kaunismaki@vates.fi</a>

27-29/5/2009	9th European Union of Supported Employment Conference	Prague (Czech Republic)	<a href="http://www.euseconference2009.org">www.euseconference2009.org</a> and <a href="http://www.euse.org">www.euse.org</a>
19-22/8/2009	10 <sup>th</sup> World Congress on Down Syndrome	Dublin (Ireland)	<a href="http://www.wdsc2009.com">www.wdsc2009.com</a>