



Workability Europe Public Affairs e-bulletin

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Social Affairs p.2

Eradicating poverty: the 2010 European Year

EU boosts national efforts to fight poverty and social exclusion

European Day of People with Disabilities Conference

Employment p.3

Equal treatment for all agency workers

New EU report on private pensions

Commission improves work-life balance with longer and better maternity leave

Education vocational training & youth p.5

Adoption of Erasmus Mundus II

"Study in Europe" website launched

Health p.5

A strategic approach for the EU 2008-2013

Research p.6

Commission approves €90 million to personalised medicine programme

Other relevant EU Affairs p.7

EU institutions agree to communicate in partnership

Commission takes action to ensure implementation of EU laws

Freedom to provide services: infringement proceedings

Reimbursement of the cost of cross-border medical treatment: infringement proceedings

Website: Who gets EU cash?

EU funded programmes p.8ff.

Funding

Calendar of events

Social Affairs

Eradicating poverty: the 2010 European Year

On the eve of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, ministers from around the EU held a high-level meeting dedicated to fighting poverty and promoting social inclusion. 2010 will be the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion and this meeting on October 16th in Marseille, France, marks the kick-off for preparations across Europe. NGOs, local authorities and everyone working against exclusion are invited to participate in the campaign. The initiative will have a budget of at least €26 million, including €17 million of EU funding.

The European Year 2010 aims to:

- Recognise the rights and capacity of excluded people to play an active part in society;
- Underline the responsibility of everyone in society to tackle poverty;
- Promote social cohesion and disseminate successful practices;
- Reinforce the commitment of all major political players to take more effective actions.

Since the EU launched its open method of coordinating national policies to tackle poverty and social exclusion in 2000, all 27 Member States have now developed multi-annual national action plans. Before 2000, only three Member States had such strategies in place.

The EU's involvement encourages high standards based on commonly agreed objectives, while each country can implement policies adapted to the national context. And the European Social Fund (ESF) now represents around 10% of the EU budget and invests around €10 billion in people's skills every year across all Member States.

Today's ministerial meeting follows the 7th annual European Round Table on Poverty, organised jointly by the European Commission and the French EU Presidency on 15-16 October 2008. The meeting aims to mobilise different actors in the field and promote dialogue on social inclusion. This year's event focused on the recent Commission Recommendation to national governments on strategies for active inclusion (see also article below).

Internet:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=437&langId=en>,

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_279.pdf

EU boosts national efforts to fight poverty and social exclusion

On October 3rd the European Commission has put forward a set of common principles to help guide EU countries in their strategies to tackle poverty. The Recommendation is based around three key aspects: adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services. National governments will be encouraged to refer to these common principles and define policies for 'active inclusion' on this basis so as to step up the fight against exclusion from society and from the labour market.

Some 16% of Europeans are at risk of poverty - rising to 19% among children - while long-term unemployment remains at 3% and 15% of young people still leave school early. Despite evidence on the effectiveness of social transfers in reducing poverty (poverty would rise significantly without them from 16% to 26%), a significant percentage of those targeted by social assistance schemes do not actually benefit from them.

To make minimum income schemes more effective and to support national efforts to

fight poverty, the Commission is putting forward a Recommendation on 'active inclusion'. It aims to reintegrate into the labour market all those who can work while providing the necessary resources to live a dignified life to those who cannot.

The common principles set out by the Commission today represent a voluntary framework for Member States when designing their policies. They were, however, prepared through a wide-ranging consultation with Member States and with all relevant actors.

They will be formally discussed by national governments at the Employment and Social Affairs Council in December 2008 that will draw conclusions on follow-up actions.

Internet:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=612&langId=en>,

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=613&langId=en>

European Day of People with Disabilities Conference

To mark the European Day of People with Disabilities, the European Commission organises a policy conference in the first week of December each year, in close cooperation with the European Disability Forum (EDF).

This year's Conference will take place in Brussels on 1 and 2 December. The title of the Conference will be "Acting locally for a society for all". The Conference will focus on how EU action/legislation reaches the local level and will provide examples of disability mainstreaming.

For further information you may contact Ms Paulette Matkovic Ramirez at:

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Employment

Equal treatment for all agency workers

The European Commission welcomed on October 22nd the decision by the European Parliament to approve the proposal for a directive on Temporary Agency Work. The European Parliament voted to support the Council's common position - adopted in June 2008 - without amendments so it can now become law. Over three million temporary agency workers currently working across the EU will benefit from better protection of their working conditions.

The Temporary Agency Workers directive will ensure:

- Equal treatment from day one for temporary agency workers compared to permanent workers in terms of basic working and employment conditions unless social partners agree otherwise.
- Equal access to collective facilities.
- Better access for agency workers to training both when working on an assignment, and in between assignments.

The Commission's original proposal dates back to 2002. At the Employment Council in June this year, Member States reached agreement on the longstanding issue of the Temporary Agency Work Directive, originally proposed by the Commission in March 2002.

Following the approval of the European Parliament, EU countries are now required to incorporate the provisions of the Directive in their national law. It will then come into effect within three years.

Internet:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/labour_law/index_en.htm,

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/646&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

New EU report on private pensions

A new study released by the European Commission on October 20th confirms the trend towards more private pension provision in the EU but highlights the need for inclusive coverage and adequate pension levels. The study identifies large variations in coverage and contribution levels between EU countries, reflecting the diversity of schemes in place. The analysis aims to help EU countries learn from different national experiences under the 'open method of coordination' – the EU's system of common objectives, reporting and exchange of best practice. The release of the study coincides with a major conference, taking place in Brussels today, on how to make European pensions adequate and sustainable.

Today's report confirms the trend towards an increased role for privately funded pension provision in EU countries and the importance of analysing its impact on future pension levels. Depending on their role within the overall system, low coverage in supplementary pensions (together with breaks in contributions) can become a cause of concern for future pension levels, in particular for those most at risk (women, the young, lower educated, low-paid).

On how many people are covered by the various schemes, the report finds that levels vary greatly depending on the particular Member State and the type of scheme: statutory funded, occupational or voluntary pension provision. For instance coverage of statutory funded schemes ranges between 25% (IT) and 100% (SE) with 50-70% levels typical. Coverage should approach 100% as schemes mature.

For occupational pension schemes, DK, NL and SE have 75% or more coverage, whilst a number have between 40% and 75% (BE, DE, IE, CY, UK) with most

(IT, AT, FR, ES, FI, LU, PT, PL) having coverage below 20%.

Voluntary provision generally has low coverage of just a few percent, though it is more significant in some Member States (45% in CZ, lower levels in DE, UK, IE). The above findings are set out in more detail in the Commission's study:

Internet:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/adequacy_sustainability_en.htm,
http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/pensions_en.htm, <http://www.ceps.eu/>

Commission improves work-life balance with longer and better maternity leave

Millions of women throughout Europe will be entitled to longer and better maternity leave under proposals unveiled today by the European Commission. A separate proposal would also improve the situation of self-employed women by providing equivalent access to maternity leave, on a voluntary basis.

The two initiatives form part of a package of measures to improve work-life balance for all Europeans – both women and men. They aim to update and improve existing EU legislation and will now be sent to the European Parliament and national governments for discussion. Meanwhile, the European social partners have launched negotiations to improve other forms of family leave, such as parental leave.

Internet:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=606&langId=en>,
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=607&langId=en>,
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=608&langId=en>,
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/home.jsp?langId=en>

Education, vocational training & youth

Adoption of Erasmus Mundus II

The European Commission welcomed the vote in the European Parliament in favour of establishing the second phase of Erasmus Mundus (2009-2013) programme.

Erasmus Mundus is a European co-operation and mobility programme in the field of higher education which promotes the European Union as a worldwide centre of excellence in learning. By the end of its first phase (2004-2008), more than 6,000 students from outside Europe will have received an Erasmus Mundus scholarship to obtain a degree in Europe, and more than 1,000 teaching staff from third countries will have been given a scholarship to actively contribute to Master's courses in teaching or research activities.

Erasmus Mundus II builds on the current Erasmus Mundus programme by:

- extending the coverage to include doctoral level studies. Currently, the Erasmus Mundus scheme is aimed at Master's level only.
- giving higher grants to European students so they are ensured fair treatment vis-à-vis third-country students.

integrating the so-called "Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window" (EM ECW) under the "Erasmus Mundus" umbrella in order to offer a more homogeneous and visible image of European higher education to the world. The aim of this action is to promote understanding and mutual enrichment between the European Union and third countries in the field of higher education by promoting the exchange of persons, knowledge and

skills at higher education level, and particularly 'Erasmus'-style mobility (a study period abroad which forms part of a degree at home).

Internet:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc72_en.htm

"Study in Europe" website launched

The European Commission has launched a new web portal called "Study in Europe" to promote the attractiveness of European Higher Education to students from other parts of the world. The portal, at www.study-in-europe.org, is part of a wide-ranging campaign to increase the number of students from outside Europe who study in the EU. "Study in Europe" provides clear and up-to-date information about the range of courses on offer in European higher education institutions, admission procedures, costs, scholarships and the higher education environment in Europe.

Potential students will find help to decide which country they should go to, which university they should choose, what they may need before they leave home and what will happen when they arrive at their chosen campus. "Study in Europe" covers thirty-two European countries, their universities and what it takes to live and study in them.

Health

A strategic approach for the EU 2008-2013

In adopting an own-initiative report entitled Together for health: A strategic approach for the EU 2008-2013, MEPs say that disease prevention efforts and vaccination campaigns, where effective products exist, should be stepped up significantly.

Parliament therefore urges the Commission to draw up an ambitious plan for preventive actions for the entire five-year period. The report was adopted with 554 votes in favour, 23 against and 21 abstentions.

The House agrees that spending on health, particularly on prevention and early diagnosis of diseases, is not only a cost but also an investment that could be evaluated in terms of Healthy Life Years (HLYs) as a Lisbon Structural Indicator.

The report stresses the importance of carrying out well-organised, comprehensive and effective screening programmes to facilitate the early detection and immediate treatment of disease, thereby reducing the associated mortality and morbidity.

MEPs stress that the concept of 'healthy lifestyle' (i.e. a healthy diet, the absence of drug abuse and sufficient physical activity) needs to be complemented by a psychosocial dimension (i.e. a balanced approach to work and family life). The European Parliament argues that a healthy lifestyle includes good mental and physical health and that these are also important factors in maintaining a competitive economy.

Parliament demands effective measures to combat antibiotic resistance including measures to make antibiotics prescription only, guidelines to decrease the prescription of antibiotics to limit it to cases in which the use of an antibiotic is indeed necessary, efforts to improve marker tests in order to encourage a more cautious use of antibiotics, and, where appropriate, hygiene codes. The report calls for special attention to be paid to the methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) bacteria. MEPs point out that the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) should

monitor and evaluate the application of the guidelines and codes.

The report draws the attention of the Commission and Member States to the need to support research and promote the prevention, early diagnosis and suitable treatment of chronic diseases in order to ensure sufferers' welfare and quality of life.

Internet:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/066-39073-282-10-41-911-20081009IPR39072-08-10-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

Research

Commission approves €90 million to personalised medicine programme "ADNA" (France)

In accordance with the EC Treaty rules on state aid, the European Commission has approved aid worth €90 million to be granted by France to the R&D programme "ADNA" covering the development of personalised medicine for infectious diseases, cancer and genetic diseases. The proposed aid should bring significant and positive benefits in terms of knowledge dissemination and the improvement of health, while having a limited effect on competition. This type of programme is not generated spontaneously by the market because of the high risks involved. A large proportion of the results will be made available to any interested parties, and most beneficiaries of the aid have only small shares of the relevant markets. The Commission has therefore concluded that the aid is compatible with the EU's Research, Development and Innovation Framework.

Internet:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/1562&format=HTML&age d=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Other EU-Affairs

EU institutions agree to communicate in partnership

On October 22nd in the European Parliament a political declaration was signed which aims at encouraging cooperation among the EU institutions and member states on communication about Europe. The declaration, entitled "Communicating Europe in Partnership", was signed by Alejo Vidal-Quadras, Vice-President of the European Parliament, the French Minister of State Jean-Pierre Jouyet, on behalf of the Council of the EU and Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the European Commission.

Against the backdrop of a generally low level of knowledge of European citizens about the European Union, this declaration underlines that EU-institutions and Member States attach the utmost importance to communicating effectively with their citizens about Europe.

With this political declaration the institutions and the Member States have decided to develop synergies in order to address the communication challenge together. They have agreed on a pragmatic partnership approach based on the annual selection of joint communication priorities and practical cooperation between the communication departments of Member States and Institutions.

Internet:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/index_en.htm

Commission takes action to ensure that 10 Member States implement EU laws

The European Commission has decided to launch infringement proceedings against 10 Member States for failure to implement certain Internal Market Directives into national law. The

Commission will refer Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom to the Court over non-implementation of a Directive on recognition of professional qualifications. The Commission will also refer Belgium, the Czech Republic, Greece, Poland and Portugal to the Court over non-implementation of a Directive on reinsurance.

The Directive consolidates in a single piece of legislation fifteen directives, including twelve sectoral directives covering the professions of doctor, nurse responsible for general care, dental practitioner, veterinary surgeon, midwife, pharmacist and architect, and three directives which introduced a general system of recognition of professional qualifications and covered most other regulated professions. The Directive simplifies the structure of the system of recognition of qualifications and improves the way it operates. It thus aims to facilitate mobility within the internal market for qualified people moving to another Member State either to provide a service or to settle there permanently.

Freedom to provide services: infringement proceedings

The European Commission has taken action to put an end to restrictions on freedom to provide services in five Member States. The Commission will refer Italy to the European Court of Justice over its regulations on compulsory maximum fees for lawyers' services. The Commission will send reasoned opinions to the United Kingdom concerning its regulations on trademarks and to Austria concerning its regulations on insolvency. The Commission will also send supplementary reasoned opinions to Belgium concerning the rights of European temporary employment agencies and to Germany concerning employee training in the Federal State

of North Rhine-Westphalia. A reasoned opinion is the second stage of the infringement procedure laid down in Article 226 of the EC Treaty. If there is no satisfactory reply within two months, the Commission may refer the matter to the European Court of Justice.

Internet:

http://ec.europa.eu/community_law/index_en.htm,

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/1518&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&quiLanguage=en>

Reimbursement of the cost of cross-border medical treatment: infringement proceedings

The European Commission has decided to bring actions before the European Court of Justice against Portugal and France and to send reasoned opinions to Spain and Luxembourg with regard to cases where the cost of medical treatment received in another Member State has not been reimbursed. The Court of Justice has on several occasions expressed its opinion on the reimbursement of medical expenses incurred in another Member State and recognised patients' rights not granted in these countries.

Up-to-date information on the infringement proceedings involving Member States can be found at the following address:

http://ec.europa.eu/community_law/index_en.htm,

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/1517&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&quiLanguage=en> ..

Website: Who gets EU cash?

The launch of the "Financial Transparency system" website and search engine will allow, for the first time ever, free access to details of who receives EU funds managed directly by the Commission and its executive agencies. Based on accounting data, it

provides a consolidated view of the previous financial year and contains approximately 28.000 entries on Commission-run programmes in policy areas like research, education and culture, energy and transport and certain aspects of aid to third countries.

This new search engine will allow users to analyse and compare information on beneficiaries and policy areas more easily. It is one of the building blocks in the Commission's wider European Transparency Initiative (ETI).

Internet:

http://ec.europa.eu/grants/search/index_en.htm,

http://ec.europa.eu/grants/search/beneficiaries_en.htm,

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/funding/index_en.htm,

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/kallas/transparency_en.htm

EU funded programmes

- 7th 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
10-14/11/2008	Course "Juticiability of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights : Theory and Practice"	Turku/Abu (Finland)	Deadline : 15 September 2008 http://www.abo.fi/institut/imr/courses.htm
13/11/2008	CESIG: European Seminar Services of General Interest (SGI) Challenges of the European elections of June 2009	Brussels	To contact: celsig@celsig.org
20-21/11/2008	European conference "European citizenship, free movement and social protection"	Brussels	European Social Insurance Platform: http://www.esip.org/index.php?q=node/246
24-25/11/2008	Second European Demography Forum: Better societies for families and older people	Brussels	https://secure.destree.be/ei/getdemo.ei?id=177&s=1T40OMY0C
28-29/11/2008	International Conference: 25 years Independent Living in Sweden – Assessment of the achievements of our international civil rights movement in Sweden, Europe and other parts of the world ...	Stockholm (S)	Registration with Nicoletta Zoannos : nicoletta.zoannos@independentliving.org , www.independentliving.org/25years2008/
30/11 – 2/12/2008	eInclusion Ministerial Conference – eInclusion Awards	Vienna (AU)	http://www.e-inclusionawards.eu
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: eddp@eurokeys.com
9/12/2008	European conference on Enhancing the Quality of Social Care Services across Europe.	Dublin (Ireland)	C Conference hosted by Health Information and Quality Authority in Ireland and the Council of Europe. For registration and information : conference@higa.ie
11-12/12/2008	European Conference "Continuing the Diversity Journey - Business Practices, Perspectives and Benefits"	Brussels	Contact : rosiev@focus-consultancy.co.uk