



EPR Public Affairs e-bulletin

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European Platform for Rehabilitation, Avenue des Arts 8, c/o CCI, B-1210, Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 2 736 54 44, Fax: +32 2 736 8622, Website: www.epr.eu

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Social Affairs & Social Services

Launch of public consultation on the review of the European Disability Strategy

The European Commission launched the public consultation on the mid-term review of the European Disability Strategy (2010-2020). This Strategy provides a roadmap for the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which the European Union is a party. It has identified eight main areas for action at EU level: accessibility, participation, equality, employment, education and training, social protection, health external action.

This public consultation asks for your opinion on what has been achieved so far in each of these areas, your views on the challenges faced by all persons with disabilities, how the EU should address these challenges.

The questionnaire is available in all official languages of the EU and in an accessible word format at the link below. Deadline for submitting contribution is 18 March 2016.

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=699&langId=en&consultId=19&visib=0&furtherConsult=yes>

Social Agenda – Pensions, disabled people and refugees

A cultural revolution is required if the EU countries want to ensure adequate pensions for the generations to come. Social Agenda n°43 focuses on pensions at a time when the EU social partners are on the verge of launching negotiations on how to change the way age is managed at work. This issue of Social Agenda also addresses demographic change (how it can be an opportunity), the EU disability strategy (which is being reviewed) and the refugee issue (how EU funds can be used to help welcome and integrate them).

Download the report at the following link:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=737&langId=en&pubId=7876&furtherPubs=yes>

Ready for the Demographic Revolution? Measuring Active Ageing

Across the EU, the number of older people is increasing – particularly fast, when it comes to people over 80 – and the number of young and working-age people is decreasing. Many regard this as a problem, particularly if they see older people as a burden. This view is unjustifiably negative and, during the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, the Commission started supporting the development of a measure of active ageing, or the extent to which older people are not a burden on the rest of society.

Active ageing is not just about staying longer in employment and retiring later. It is also about social participation, providing care within the family and volunteering in the community; and it is about being in good health and being able to live independently. These three broad dimensions of active ageing – employment, social participation and independent living – are brought together in the Active Ageing Index (AAI). It has been calculated for women and men in every EU country, using a variety of data sources available. The AAI has been published every two years since 2012. Each AAI year draws

on data from two years earlier. For instance, the first index was computed in 2012 on (mostly) 2010 data.

Read more:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2430&furtherNews=yes>

The European Pillar of Social Rights

This initiative has been announced in President Juncker's State of the Union address in September 2015 and is foreseen in the Commission Work Programme for 2016. On 6 October 2015, the College of Commissioners held an orientation debate on the economic and social dimension of the Single Market, discussing also for the first time the concept of the Pillar of Social Rights.

Why a European Pillar of Social Rights?

President Juncker announced the establishment of a "European Pillar of Social Rights" ("socle européen des droits sociaux") in his State of the Union address in the European Parliament on 9 September 2015: "We have to step up the work for a fair and truly pan-European labour market. (...) As part of these efforts, I will want to develop a European pillar of social rights, which takes account of the changing realities of the world of work. And which can serve as a compass for the renewed convergence within the euro area. The European pillar of social rights should complement what we have already jointly achieved when it comes to the protection of workers in the EU. I will expect social partners to play a central role in this process. I believe we do well to start with this initiative within the euro area, while allowing other EU Member States to join in if they want to do so."

Read more: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-64_en.htm

Employment & Disability

Good practices under EaSI funded projects - 3rd Commission report – Learnabil-IT project led by EPR has been selected

The European Commission published its third monitoring report in which it gathers good practices of projects across Europe dealing with working conditions, employment, social affairs and inclusion. This monitoring is part of the EU's Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI). These good practice examples can form a basis for policy recommendations, which may be useful to the policy-maker designing or implementing policy interventions in this area. The [report](#) collected 19 examples of good practice, 9 in the area of employment, 7 in the field of social protection and inclusion and 3 from projects focusing on working conditions. The [first](#) and [second report](#) were published in 2014 and early 2015 respectively.

The Learnabil-IT project led by EPR in partnership with its members (Astangu, CRM, VRC, Pluryn, URI, NLN) and two international partners (BDF and ENIL) promoted mutual learning and cooperation between labour market and vocational education and training providers in the ICT sector, has been selected among these practices.

Read more:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2364&furtherNews=yes>

2015 Employment and Social Developments review: Investing in people is key to economic growth

The Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE) 2015 review reveals further positive employment and social developments in the EU. However, despite recent improvements huge disparities still exist between Member States, in terms of economic growth, employment and other key social and labour market indicators. Many of these disparities are linked to an underutilisation of human capital on several fronts.

The [2015 ESDE report](#) looks at ways of tackling these disparities, focusing in particular on job creation, labour market efficiency, social protection modernisation and investment in people. The ESDE review reports on the latest employment and social trends, and reflects on upcoming challenges and possible policy responses. Based on the latest data and literature available, the review underpins the Commission's initiatives in the employment and social policy field, feeding into the European Semester, the Mobility Package, the Skills Package and the development of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Download the report:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7859&furtherPubs=yes>

Commission proposes one million euro from Globalisation Fund to support the glass sector in Belgium

The European Commission has proposed to provide Belgium with one million euro from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) to help 412 former glass workers to find new jobs, and to include 100 young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) in the actions planned. Belgium applied for support from the EGF following the dismissal of 412 workers in the glass manufacturing sector in the Belgian regions of Hainaut and Namur. These job losses were the result of serious disruptions in Union trade in glass products in recent years. The measures co-financed by the EGF would help the 412 workers and 100 NEETs, under the age of 25, in their efforts to find jobs by providing them with:

- guidance, training and upskilling,
- job-search support,
- support for collective projects and for business creation,
- job-search and training allowances.

The total estimated cost of the package is €1.8 million, of which the EGF would provide one million euro (60 %). The proposal now goes to the European Parliament and the EU's Council of Ministers for approval.

Source :

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2436&furtherNews=yes>

Different models of work and welfare in ageing Europe

Europe's population is getting older. As a consequence of this demographic trend and recent pension reforms that increased the statutory retirement age and curtailed early retirement options, the number of older workers aged 55 and above increased by more than 12 million between 2004 and 2014 in the EU28, bringing their total number to 38 million. Yet, older workers still represent just over one sixth of all workers. A fast rise in

employment rates of older workers and, implicitly, their effective retirement ages, will be crucial for ensuring adequate and sustainable pensions. A chapter in the recently published review *Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2015* examines the conditions of older workers across the EU and offers a comprehensive assessment of the situation of older people.

Overall, despite the increase in older workers' employment rates during the crisis, their chances on the labour market are still not good enough when compared to the rest of the population. The general increase in the retirement age triggered by recent pension reforms has not made employers more willing to hire older workers. One of the main challenges remains to make older workers more attractive to employers. The increasingly skilled older workforce is likely to be an asset in workplaces, but age-discrimination still needs to be tackled. Achieving longer careers requires a mix of different ingredients that would need to target both the older people themselves as well as the employers. Skilled and healthy older people are more likely to work, so preventing poor health and skills obsolescence is crucial, as are measures to help people juggle work and potential caring responsibilities. In addition, workplace adjustments and employers' attitudes matter in prolonging careers.

The chapter on older workers shows the huge untapped potential that older workers represent – and the challenge that many Member States still face when it comes to ensuring an adequate income in retirement.

Read more:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2454&furtherNews=yes>

Education & Vocational Training

Childcare for all: making early childhood education and care more accessible and inclusive

Access to early childhood education and childcare (ECEC) is important for promoting equal opportunities of children as well as for facilitating work-family balance of parents and especially labour market participation of mothers of small children. EU countries vary a great deal in terms of how childcare is provided and how accessible services are. Access to childcare services can be made difficult by several barriers such as cost, opening hours or poor quality. The latest wave of the European Quality of Life Survey provides information about the obstacles for Europeans to use these services. Eurofound has identified inclusive practices in childcare that have been successful in including children in a vulnerable situation in mainstream childcare services. This includes training childcare staff or support to them provided by specialists, additional funding schemes, and establishing inclusive education plans.

The examples of good practice show that it is particularly important to build partnerships between childcare centres and social services or also NGOs, as this improves the outreach to children in a vulnerable situation. Involving local authorities is also perceived as essential in implementing the changes, as ECEC services cannot implement changes on their own and need financial and political backing. This also allows for continuous feedback and interaction between policy and practice.

Read more:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2420&furtherNews=yes>

Youth Guarantee in practice: opening doors to a great IT career

With support from the Youth Guarantee scheme, many young people in Europe have managed to find a job or follow a course which gives their career a boost. This is André's story, from Portugal. Through the Youth Guarantee, André secured a paid traineeship as a computer technician with a company he knew and admired. He was offered a job with the company after just eight months – before he had even finished the traineeship! He has been working for his new employer for almost two years on a contract that runs until July 2016.

Three months before he started the traineeship he had registered with the scheme and took part in a follow-up meeting with his local employment office to talk about his goals and ambitions. André had studied computing and was keen to pursue a career in this growing economic sector. Now, André is engaged in the area he likes best – Information Technology – and feels fulfilled. André came across the Youth Guarantee on the Internet when his contract of an unfulfilling job was ending. He found out more about the scheme by contacting the Institute that manages the Youth Guarantee in Portugal (Institute for Employment and Professional Training - IEFP).

Read more:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2446&furtherNews=yes>

Research & Development

Joined-up care for patients with several illnesses

Unfortunately, dealing with one chronic disease doesn't mean that you can't develop another. More than 50 million people in Europe are living with more than one such condition, and this number is expected to grow. EU-funded researchers are looking into ways to provide them with more integrated support and redesign healthcare systems accordingly. On the whole, patients with a combination of chronic conditions — diabetes and high blood pressure, for example — report poorer quality of life than people with a single illness, and their health status is worse. The added risk to their life and wellbeing derives not just from the diseases themselves, but also from the fact that they are combined. One reason is that people with such so-called co-morbidities or multi-morbidities can struggle to obtain coherent care.

Possible problems include a lack of collaboration among their doctors, conflicting advice and potentially interfering treatments, with compliance suffering as a result. The cost of care can also be an obstacle, as can the sheer complexity of keeping up with multiple consultations and appointments, which can be a time-consuming logistical challenge. Difficulties such as these can limit the effectiveness of otherwise excellent treatment. They arise, in part, from the fact that healthcare systems are not traditionally designed with such cases in mind. An EU-funded project named Selfie has set out to tackle the issue. “Multi-morbidity will become the number one threat to population health and economic sustainability of health care systems,” the researchers note.

The team is therefore identifying ways to provide more patient-centred and integrated care, and to back these approaches with adequate payment systems. Launched in September 2015, Selfie will engage with a wide range of stakeholders over a period of four years to deliver guidance, tools and strategies for healthcare authorities and policy-

makers.

Read more:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/infocentre/article_en.cfm?id=/research/headlines/news/article_16_01_19_en.html?infocentre&item=All&artid=37856&caller=AllHeadlines

Other relevant EU Affairs

Launch of public consultation on the European Social Fund during the 2007-2013 programming period

The European Commission has launched a public consultation in the context of ex-post evaluation of the European Social Fund (ESF) during the 2007-2013 programming period. The consultation seeks feedback from the direct stakeholders of the ESF during the 2007-2013 programming period in the 28 EU member states as well as of the wider public. It complements the analysis and findings of a series of thematic studies commissioned by the DG EMPL in the framework of the ESF ex-post evaluation. The results of this consultation will be analysed and summarised in a synopsis report and will be reflected in the Staff Working Document presenting the results of the evaluation. The public consultation is open until **27 April 2016**.

The consultation questionnaire is available at the following link:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2455&furtherNews=yes>

Winter 2016 Economic Forecast: Weathering new challenges

Commissioner Pierre Moscovici presented the Winter 2016 Economic Forecast showing a consumption-driven trend of moderate growth in spite of global challenges. The European economy is now entering its fourth year of recovery and growth continues at a moderate rate, driven mainly by consumption. At the same time, much of the world economy is grappling with major challenges and risks to European growth are therefore increasing.

The Commission's winter forecast shows that the overall growth outlook has changed little since the autumn but that the risk that growth could turn out worse than forecast has risen, mainly as a result of external factors. In the euro area, growth is projected to increase to 1.7% this year from 1.6% last year, and to climb to 1.9% in 2017. EU economic growth is forecast to remain stable at 1.9% this year and rise to 2.0% next year. Certain factors supporting growth are now expected to be stronger and last longer than previously assumed. They include low oil prices, favourable financing conditions and the euro's low exchange rate. At the same time, risks to the economy are becoming more pronounced and new challenges are surfacing: slower growth in China and other emerging market economies, weak global trade as well as geopolitical and policy-related uncertainty.

Read more: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-214_en.htm

State of Play: Measures to Address the Refugee Crisis

The European Agenda on Migration adopted by the Commission in May 2015 set out the need for a comprehensive approach to migration management. Since then, a number of measures have been introduced – including the adoption of two emergency schemes to relocate 160,000 people in clear need of international protection from the Member States most affected to other EU Member States, and the endorsement of the Commission Action Plan on Return. On 23 September, the European Commission presented a set of priority actions to implement the European Agenda on Migration to be taken within the next six months. This included both short term actions to stabilise the current situation as well as longer term measures to establish a robust system that will bear the test of time.

The list of priority actions set out the key measures immediately required in terms of: (i) operational measures; (ii) budgetary support and (iii) implementation of EU law. The list was endorsed by the informal meeting of Heads of State and Government of 23 September 2015 and again on 15 October 2015. These measures now need to be swiftly and effectively implemented at all levels.

Read more: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-6134_en.htm

What does the Netherlands want to achieve during its EU Presidency?

As EU Presidency holder, the Netherlands' guiding principles are a Union that focuses on the essentials, a Union that focuses on growth and jobs through innovation, and a Union that connects with civil society. The Netherlands will be focusing on four priority areas:

- Migration & international security
- Europe as an innovator & job creator
- Sound finances and a robust eurozone
- Forward-looking climate & energy policy

The Netherlands wants the European Union to focus on what matters to Europe's citizens and businesses. The priorities are prosperity, freedom and security. It does not want the EU to deal with issues that the member states can organise perfectly well themselves. Examples include health care, education, pensions and taxation. Innovation, growth and jobs come first. To that end, Europe needs smarter rules – simplified rules that apply to all member states. That will reduce bureaucracy and costs for citizens, companies and public authorities alike. It is important for citizens and civil society organisations to feel connected to Europe, and they will if they see the EU achieving results that matter. And if they can follow how the EU works. In Europe we stand stronger together. There is more that unites us than divides us. That applies to trade, the environment, the climate, energy and, not least, our peace, security and prosperity. The Dutch tradition of consultation and cooperation can accomplish a lot in Europe.

Read more: <http://english.eu2016.nl/eu-presidency/input-and-priorities>

EU funded programmes

- Erasmus+ [new calls 2016](#) and [Programme Guide](#)
- DG EMPL – PROGRESS / EaSI [calls](#)
- Horizon 2020 – various [new calls](#)

Calendar of upcoming events

Date	Title	Venue	Contact
21/03/2016	Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth	Brussels	tbc
20-21/05/2016	European Youth Event - 2016	Strasbourg (France)	http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventId=1075&furtherEvents=yes