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*Committee on Employment and Social Affairs*

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## **NOTICE TO MEMBERS 4/2007**

**Subject: Delegation to the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (EUROFOUND) – Dublin (Ireland), 5-6 March 2007**

Members will find attached a note on the delegation to Dublin.

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL  
FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

## Summary report

On 5-6 March 2007, a delegation of three MEPs, Mr Csaba Óry (PPE-DE), Mr Joel Hasse Ferreira (PSE) and Mr Sepp Kusstatscher (Verts/ALE), visited EUROFOUND (Dublin- Ireland) on behalf of the EP's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

### **Monday, 5 March 2007**

Mr Jorma Karppinen, Director of the Foundation, welcomed the MEPs' delegation and gave them a tour of Eurofound facilities.

The Director briefly introduced the mission, objectives and activities of the Agency, which was established in 1975. He explained that Eurofound provides information, advice and expertise on four core areas (employment and working conditions, work-life balance, industrial relations and partnership and social cohesion) for European key actors (stakeholders, professional users and general public) on the basis of comparative information, research and analysis. The Foundation mainly has six monitoring tools: EIRO (the European Industrial Relations Observatory), EWCO (the European Working Conditions Observatory), the European Quality of Life Survey, EMCC (the European Monitoring Centre of Change), ERM (the European Restructuring Monitor) and the European Industrial Relations Dictionary.

The Eurofound's added value – stressed Mr. Karppinen- is to provide the most reliable information and knowledge, thanks to a network of experts throughout Europe who conduct research on its behalf including assessing the current national situations, the preparation of case studies and national reports and the conducting of surveys.

Mr Willy Buschak, Deputy Director, gave an overview of the Foundation's governance structure. Its Governing Board – explained the Deputy Director - comprises representatives of the social partners and national governments of all Member States, as well as of the European Commission.

Assessing the main development challenges for the Foundation, Mr Karppinen opened the discussion with the MEPs on how to reinforce Eurofound's core activities, strengthen its monitoring role and develop a forward-looking perspective across all areas for which the Agency is responsible for. "We want to have the highest impact on decision makers and public debate in Europe"- stated the Director. To this end, he presented 5 strategic goals for its Foundation:

1. Expand impact on policy making, influence real decision makers
2. Increase visibility and improve image
3. Identify, develop and understand information user target groups
4. Improve Research and output quality
5. Secure Competitive Advantage.

MEPs recommended that Eurofound should further develop contacts with national

parliaments as a way to increasing the Agency's visibility.

**Tuesday, 6 March 2007**

The second half-day of the visit was devoted to the presentation and discussion of the rolling programme of the Foundation.

Ms Barbara Gerstenberger presented the European Restructuring Monitoring (ERM), an online information database on restructuring activities and part of the EMCC portal, hosted by the Foundation. A network of correspondents covering the 27 EU Member States supplies regular information based on monitoring announcements in national media and through other sources such as company information, trade union websites or direct contacts with companies. The database records all restructuring announcements leading to the creation or loss of at least 100 jobs. ERM also monitors restructuring cases involving sites of at least 250 employees, where 10% of jobs are lost due to restructuring. For the future and amongst other things, Eurofound has foreseen to assess the factors which bring companies to decide on where to locate business activities. This research will be case study-based and will be published in 2008.

Mr Rob Anderson introduced to the MEPs the second European Quality Survey which will be carried out in 2007. The Foundation launched a first pan-European Quality of life survey in 28 countries in May 2003. "This was the first step in a major initiative to monitor and report on living conditions and quality of life in Europe"- stated Mr Anderson.

Ms Agnès Parent-Thirion spoke about the 4<sup>th</sup> European Working Condition survey which covers 31 European countries and where 2968 workers were interviewed. Overall, the findings highlighted the fact that most European workers are satisfied with their working conditions and are happy with their work-life balance. The survey results also showed that while women have increased their participation in the workforce, they still lag behind men: more women are moving into managerial roles but a gender gap still exists, with women still more likely than men to be found in the lower income groups.

M David Foden presented both EIRO, a monitoring instrument offering news and analysis on European industrial relations, and the Company Survey on working time and working-life balance.

Later on, Ms Elisabeth Lagerlöf highlighted the Eurofound strategy on information and communication for 2007.

During the presentations, the MEPs raised several questions demonstrating their high interest in Eurofound activities and providing for a rich exchange of views. They also expressed their will to be informed on a regular basis about the new projects and outcome of the studies carried out by Eurofound.