



28.10.2011

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

(18/2011)

Subject: Informal meeting between EMPL Coordinators and the Social Platform held on 11 October 2011

Summary note on the meeting

In the framework of their regular bi-annual meetings, EMPL Coordinators met with representatives of the Social Platform for an informal exchange of views on topics of common interest on 11 October 2011, from 10:00 to 12:00. The meeting was chaired by Mr Thomas Mann, Vice-Chairman of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee.

Following the agreed draft agenda, the meeting focussed on progress towards the implementation of the social objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, on the translation of EU social objectives into the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020, as well as on the social dimension of the Single Market.

1. Europe 2020: implementation of the social objectives of the strategy

Mr Conny Reuter, President of the Social Platform, introduced the exchange of views by highlighting the importance of the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy as agreed in 2010, while observing that the EU and Member States have failed to commit to its social objectives to the same extent with stronger economic policy coordination and ensuring sustainability of public finances.

To illustrate this conclusion, Ms Sian Jones, policy coordinator at the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), presented the EAPN's analysis of the 2011 country-specific recommendations and National Reform Programmes (NRP) carried out with a view to the first

Convention of the 'European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion' to take place in Krakow on 17 and 18 October. According to EAPN's findings, the approach taken by the Member States in response to the crisis, characterised by the dominance of macroeconomic concerns, is undermining the Europe 2020 commitment to inclusive growth and poverty reduction. The austerity measures introduced are only deepening the severe social impacts of the crisis. They are affecting social protection systems and public services, in particular, as well as levels and accessibility of minimum income. As a result, inequalities and poverty are far from being reduced and are more likely to increase. Moreover, the EU headline target on poverty and social inclusion, in EAPN's opinion, lacks credibility, which is due to its complexity and different construction compared to other headline targets. EAPN also expressed disappointment over the failure of many Member States to set national poverty targets, as well as the failure to engage civil society in the NRP process.

Representatives of the Social Platform therefore called on EMPL Members to support, in particular, the efforts to restore balance between macroeconomic, employment and social policies and to mainstream inclusive growth in Europe 2020 and NRPs, to formulate a credible common poverty target, to invest in quality employment and to promote governance with effective stakeholders' involvement at all levels.

During the exchange of views, EMPL Members addressed, in particular, the following questions: how to make the Europe 2020 objectives in respect of poverty reduction operational, including within the Roma Strategy; how to increase job creation, especially in SMEs; how to provide more investment in education, training and public services in times of budget constraints and make sure that EU financial instruments, in particular the ESF and the EGF, contribute to these objectives; how to encourage EU institutions and Member States to pay better attention to the social impact of the action taken in response to the economic crisis, to deliver on the Europe 2020 poverty reduction objectives and promote social cohesion.

2. Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 and the European Social Fund

With regard to the MFF 2014-2020, Mr Pierre Baussand, Director of the Social Platform, focused on the proposal for the new European Social Fund (ESF) and expressed satisfaction of the Social NGOs, in particular with the Commission's proposal to make "promoting social inclusion and combating poverty" one of the four ESF thematic priorities, with at least 20% of the ESF resources to be allocated to in each Member State. He also welcomed the proposal to allocate 25% of all cohesion policy resources to the ESF, as well as the emphasis put by the Commission to involving the civil society organisations in the implementation of ESF programmes and to making the fund more accessible to small organisations working at the local level. Furthermore, the Director spoke strongly against macroeconomic conditionalities, which could introduce a "double punishment" of the people, but also stressed the need to mainstream the social objectives in other EU funds, providing examples of how can this be done through education and training, transport or rural policies.

EMPL Rapporteur on the ESF Mrs Morin-Chartier and other Members pointed to the general context which will have to be addressed by the future EU financial instruments, including the ESF, such as different skill needs compared to those in the past, higher levels of qualifications needed in all segments, negative demographic trends and the resulting shrinking of the labour force, etc. Members addressed also some core elements of the Commission legislative package, including macroeconomic conditionalities from the ESF perspective, proposals

regarding the future "food for deprived people instrument", as well as new elements introduced in the EGF, such as the proposed extension of its scope to farmers.

3. Social Dimension of the Single Market

Presenting the Social Platform's proposals with regard to the implementation of the Single Market Act and the modernisation of the EU public procurement policy, Mr Michel Marcedié, Member of the Social Platform's Management Committee and Chair of the Services of General Interest Working Group, focused on the need to better define social economy and social entrepreneurship, while making a clear distinction in relation to Corporate Social Responsibility, to improve access to micro-credit and enhance financial inclusion, to assess the impact of the internal market rules on the provision of services of general interest and social services and to establish a quality framework for these services.

In addition, in respect of the EU public procurement rules, the Social Platform called for the recognition of the specific features of social services during the revision of the Public Procurement Directive and for a better use of public procurement to achieve social and sustainable development goals.

Both EMPL Members and representatives of the Social Platform expressed high appreciation of the fruitful exchange of views held and agreed to continue informal discussions on the topics of common interest at their next meeting, to be organised during the first semester of 2012.