

Question for written answer E-004610/2011
to the Commission
Rule 117
Dirk Sterckx (ALDE)

Subject: Social security: towards an integrated approach in the various subfields?

The organisation of social security is a responsibility of the Member States. The European Union is responsible for coordination among the various national systems and can, if necessary, facilitate and promote national reforms by means of the open method of coordination, using exchanges of best practices.

In various Member States, the subfields of social security comprise several pillars. We may take as an example their pension systems. In addition to statutory pension schemes (the first pillar), in many Member States a role is also assigned to employers' contributions (the second pillar) and individual pension savings (the third pillar), but in reality the dividing lines between the various pillars are becoming increasingly blurred. Particularly at times of budgetary austerity, we have observed shifts among the various pillars.

In other fields in which social security plays a role, too – such as health care, care of older persons, unemployment insurance and in some cases also accident insurance, including occupational accident insurance – there is a trend towards a 'multi-pillar system'. The security afforded by the public sector is often supplemented with additional provision (including additional financing) by employers and the individual in order to ensure adequate protection.

In its Green Paper on the future of pensions, the Commission advocated an integrated, holistic approach to the pension problem. Only with such an approach can policy-makers at European and national level take the right policy decisions in an informed manner.

1. Does the Commission have an overview of the various multi-pillar systems in the Member States in the subfields of social security? If so, is it publicly available? If not, does the Commission intend to compile such an overview?
2. Will the Commission, by analogy with the pensions sector, also promote a holistic approach in the other subfields of social security? If so, will the Commission take specific initiatives to this end?