



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 9 June 2011

11341/11

SOC 508

NOTE

from: The Presidency
to: COUNCIL (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs)
Subject: Presidency Conferences
- Information from the Presidency
(Any other business item)

Delegations will find attached a Presidency note in preparation of the EPSCO Council meeting on 17 June.

During the Hungarian Presidency several conferences have been organised. A summary of the most relevant events, which have also attracted the largest audience, is set out in this document following a chronological order by ministries.

The theme of the annual meeting was “Employment, Work and Jobs: the reality for People Experiencing Poverty and Social Exclusion”. Set in the context of deepening crisis which is making jobs scarcer, social benefits harder to come by and a deteriorating quality of life for many people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, the question, for many present, was whether the new instruments put in place through the Europe 2020 Strategy would really make a difference to their lives and the lives of their children.

Key Messages of people experiencing poverty were:

- The need for quality jobs: If employment is to be a way out of poverty then public authorities and social partners must ensure that the trend towards ‘working poor’ is reversed and that quality jobs with living wages, decent social protection systems and that respect work and private responsibilities are created. Poor quality jobs for poor people is not an answer.
- The absence of jobs: The delegates confirmed that people who live in poverty want to work but the reality is that there are more people wanting work than there are jobs available. The crisis has made this situation even worse. Faced with this reality it is not an option for a lot of people to take up jobs as a result of increased conditionality to receive social welfare. In the absence of jobs people need access to income sufficient to live in dignity.
- Support to access employment: Even in case of difficulties to find employment, tailored support should be provided for people living in poverty or the long term unemployed to help them access to decent employment. Investing in early childhood development, schooling, including not abandoning people who drop out of school early and opportunities for people in poverty to access life long learning are essential investments to increase chances to access employment.
- Tackle discrimination: Specific attention was given to the problem of discrimination and exclusion for groups including: disabled people, migrants, ex prisoners, long term unemployed and Roma. The implementation of anti-discrimination legislation as well as positive actions should be taken to overcome the barriers caused by discrimination. The particular difficulties faced by women, who often have the major caring responsibilities, and often work in sectors with precarious and poor quality jobs needs special attention.
- Implement the commitments: Delegates said that they have heard many fine proposals to fight poverty at these and other meetings, such as: the target to reduce poverty, the active inclusion recommendation on adequate minimum income, access to essential services and support to access employment, the commitment for strategies to address homelessness or child poverty. The delegates gave a clear message that real action is needed to follow up and implement the commitments. They reiterated that people experiencing poverty are ready to engage at all levels in the implementation of the necessary actions.
- Tackle the causes of poverty and not only the symptoms: The delegates reaffirmed that the current economic and social systems have an effect on the occurrence and levels of poverty and there was a clear call on the political institutions to respond by combating the causes of poverty and not only the symptoms.

As regards the future, there was a call that the annual meeting should have a structural place in the “European Platform against Poverty” and that this should be underpinned by meetings held at national and regional levels as part of the strategy to fight poverty.

The 10th Meeting was co-organised by the Hungarian Presidency, the European Commission and the European Anti Poverty Network. Delegations of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion came from 26 countries and observers were present from a further 4 countries. Some 60 guests: representatives of European, national and international public authorities, representatives of social partners, academics and NGOs engaged in exchange with the delegations at the meeting.
