Scoreboard on implementing the Social Agenda

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The social policy agenda is the EU's roadmap for modernising and improving the European social model by investing in people and building an active welfare state. Both Parliament and Council underlined the importance of an annual scoreboard to keep track of the achievements and to verify the commitments and the contributions from different actors in executing this agenda. The report describes the employment and social situation in Europe. Employment growth in 2000 was the strongest one in the past decade, and nearly 3 million new jobs were created. It brought the employment rate upto 63.2% - 1% more than in 1999 - but still nearly 4% below the Stockholm intermediate target and 7% below the Lisbon objective for 2010. According to current estimates, employment should grow by 1.1% and the employment rate should reach 64% in 2001. High-tech and knowledge-intensive sectors drove recent job creation. This benefitted not only highly skilled workers, but also low and medium-skilled people employed in these sectors. More than 1.6 million of the new jobs were taken by women, whose employment rate grew from 52.8% in 1999 to 54% in 2000, and is estimated to have reached 54.7% in 2001. There remain, however, structural weaknesses in employment: -low employment rate of older workers: an estimated 38.3% in 2001 compared to the Stockholm target of 50% in 2010. -significant gender gaps: 18% in terms of the employment rate, and 14% in terms of pay; -high levels of employment: some 8% of the labour force, of which 3.6% long term and over 16% for young people; -regional differences in employment and unemployment remain very high; Of particular concern is the still high proportion of people living on low incomes. About 18% of the population, or more than 60 million people, are at risk of poverty, living below a threshold defined as 60% of the median equivalised income. If it were not for social transfers - excluding pensions - 26% of the EU population would be living in poverty, as compared to the current 18%. Rather than presenting a detailed description for measures initiated by the Commission, this document presents an overview of measures and achievements, pointing out the role of different actors. New measures make up a significant part of the scoreboard. The report concludes that overall, the agenda is well on track in terms of transposing commitments into concrete actions. All new issues the Commission announced explicitly to launch before end 2001 have been addressed. The implementation of the Social Policy Agenda is a clear example of new and improved governance, showing in practice how public authorities at European, national regional and local level together with Social Partners and civil society effectively work together to bring about reform. This is closely linked to the use of the appropriate combination of policy instruments. Labour markets are being reformed through the European Employment Strategy. This is supported by the European Social Fund, in particular through investment in people. The Council and the European Parliament have been pursuing negotiations on a number of legislative proposals in fields including health and safety at the workplace, the involvement of workers and equal treatment between men and women. The open method of coordination is delivering concrete measures to fight poverty and socialexclusion. Reform of social security systems, in particular pensions, is being addressed with a view to meeting both social and financial objectives in a sustainable way. Negotiations by the social partners will lead to modernising flexibility and security with regard to modernisation of work organisation, particularly teleworking. Action programmes on anti-discrimination, equal opportunities and social inclusion do not only facilitate the exchange of experience and good practice, but are also instrumental in involving all stakeholders including NGO's at EU level in these fields. Encouraging voluntary activities by businesses to support sustainable development has been addressed in the green paper on Corporate Social Responsibility. As to the future, there are a number of initiatives for 2002. The main goal is to continue carrying out the structural reform envisaged at Lisbon and outlined in the Social Policy Agenda within the different processes and polices. The report outlines the key initiatives to be expected in the areas of employment, the working environment, social inclusion, modernising social protection, gender equality and enlargement.