Free movement of workers: action plan

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OBJECTIVE: presentation of an action plan for the reinforcement of free movement of workers in the Union. SUBSTANCE: Bearing in mind the main conclusions of the report drawn up by the High Level Panel on free movement of persons in the Union (COS0544) and in particular the fact that the free movement of workers is still hampered by a range of practical obstacles, the communication gives a series of practical responses with a view to improving this fundamental right enshrined in Article 48 of the Treaty of Rome. The measures proposed are based around five main principles: 1) improvement and adaptation of the existing rules: the current provisions date from 1968 and the many proposals for modifications have not always been adopted by the Council. The Commission intends to present new proposals updating the existing provisions with regard to: - right of residence, in order to extend it to jobseekers and certain types of workers (short term contracts), - equal treatment between workers of a Member State and national workers with regard to social and tax advantages, - equal treatment for members of the worker's family so that they have the same social rights as nationals, - frontier workers, so that they have the same social and tax rights as national workers, - coordination of social security, so as to extend to legally resident third country nationals the system currently applicable to Community nationals, - supplementary pensions, in order to supplement the current system which does not cover statutory pensions (CNS97265). Provision is made for other modifications relating to family reunion and education and training; 2) improvement of the transparency of the labour market: by the year 2000 better cooperation must be established between the Public Employment Services (PES) in order to provide jobseekers, wherever their place of residence, with information on job vacancies and training courses and to be aware of the situation in other Member States (placing of PES job vacancies on the Internet, information services for frontier workers); 3) development of cooperation: measures will be taken to improve cooperation between the authorities responsible for the free movement of workers and to facilitate the resolution of conflicts. Specific contact points will be created for migrant workers to help them solve urgent problems. Lastly, the social partners will be encouraged to draw up practical measures to implement the right to free movement; 4) improvement of the visibility of the right to free movement: this right must be made more widely known among the actors in the labour market through specific measures such as seminars, publication of a newsletter concerning free movement, etc.; 5) development of innovative projects under the European Social Fund: measures must be developed to facilitate the mobility of labour. A call for projects will be launched in 1998, under Article 6 of the ESF regulation.