

To address minimum income? Yes, but at national level!

Statement of the President of The Employers' Group on the adoption of EESC Opinion SOC/482

Employers in Europe are extremely mindful of the 2013 Annual Growth Report and results of the recent Joint Employment Report; Employers take the debate about Europe's job-less growth, extremely high unemployment, increasing risk of the poverty and social exclusion very seriously. The EESC Employers' Group is strongly committed to help Europe to restore growth and foster the social dimension of the EU. This was the main message emerging from its extraordinary meeting in Berlin on 29th November 2013.

A lack of structural reforms, complemented by the negative social and economic impact of the crisis, led to the economic slowdown, which resulted in loss of jobs, increase poverty and exclusion in Europe. This is the reason why the Employers' Group finds the debate on the minimum income relevant and supports the European Commission's call on Member States to develop active inclusion strategies embracing sufficient and adequate income.

A vast majority of EU Member States have developed already minimum income schemes, based on national practices and economic performance. There are significant differences between the national approaches and definitions. In the light of the subsidiarity principle, the best level at which to tackle minimum income and to avoid poverty is the national level.

For this reason the Employers strongly oppose any EU Framework Directive on the European minimum income and recommend to use the already tested and still relevant European coordinating structures as a platform for an effective cooperation among the Member States, peer reviews and mutual learning.

The EESC Employers' Group also cannot agree with any proposal calling for new European funding to finance a European minimum income system. It is necessary to use already existing financial sources in a more efficient and targeted way. Nowadays Europe needs all available financial resources to invest in growth, competitiveness and creating jobs.

The Employers' Group calls for alternative ways to reduce poverty and social inclusion. The best approach is to offer people in Europe a more promising perspective and decent life by means of giving them a job. This means to re-start growth, to make Europe more attractive for global investors, to create favourable framework conditions for European companies to start-up, grow, expand and create more jobs and to equip people with the relevant skills throughout their whole working cycle.

For all these reasons, the EESC's Employers' Group did not support the own initiative opinion SOC/482 on European minimum income which was presented to the plenary session on 10th December 2013.

Jacek P Krawczyk

President of the EESC Employers' Group