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COMMISSION PROPOSAL FOR MORE TRANSPARENT AND PREDICTABLE WORKING CONDITIONS: A MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Following the presentation of the European Commission proposal for a "Directive for more transparent and predictable working conditions across the EU" revising the Written Statement Directive, CEEP General Secretary Valeria Ronzitti commented:

"The European Commission proposal confirms what CEEP has been stating over the past few months: the written statement directive touches upon the core business and daily operation of employers and workers; the proposed revision should therefore be a task for social partners, who are the best placed to find solutions with and for their members.

It is our 'raison d'être' to solve issues occurring at the workplace. Therefore, we are very disappointed that the European Commission had

no choice but to move forward with its own proposal.

With a clear mandate from its whole membership firmly supporting social partners' negotiations, CEEP and public services' employers were open to negotiate with trade unions on all aspects of the second stage consultation.

Now that the proposal is on the table, our main lobby activity will consist in pushing Member States to empower national and local social partners to find the solutions we were not able to find at European level."

INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS: COMMISSION PRESENTS TOOLKIT TO HELP MEMBER STATES MAKE THE BEST USE OF EU FUNDS

The European Commission is publishing a toolkit to help national and regional authorities design strategies and projects to integrate migrants and identify available EU resources.

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The purpose of the toolkit is to help set up local integration strategies supported by EU resources used in synergy, still in the current 2014-2020 budget period.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos said: "Investing in integration policies today is key to making sure Europe stays a prosperous, cohesive, and inclusive society in the future. This will be our priority for the coming years. It is only through successful integration that we can make migration a real opportunity for all, for our citizens, for migrants and refugees, and for our societies overall."

Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen, added: "The optimal use of EU funds, like the European Social Fund, plays an important role in supporting the integration of people with a migrant background, while further continuing to invest in the EU's existing work force. In addition, we have set up a Skills Profile Tool that helps third-country nationals present their skills on the European labour market."

Commissioner for Regional policy Corina Crețu commented: "The EU's ambition is to turn the migration challenge into opportunities for our societies and economies. This toolkit is a brick in that wall; it will contribute to a successful integration of migrants at local level, supported by the EU and its resources."

The toolkit identifies five priorities for holistic and efficient long-term integration strategies: reception; education; employment; housing; and access to public services. It lists the most pressing challenges under these five priorities and suggests adequate support measures, each one of them matched with the right EU fund.

For example, in the field of education, different EU funds can be used jointly to make schools more inclusive and non-segregated: upgraded and accessible facilities can be financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The European Social Fund (ESF) and the AMIF can support special training for educators to help them tackle dropout, while the FEAD can provide material assistance to students in need.

Member States and regions have a wide range of EU funding instruments at their disposal that can support different types of projects in the field of integration – from providing language classes and healthcare upon arrival to helping migrants find a job, a home to live in and a place in society. This includes funding under the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds), the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) or the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD).

EUROPEAN SAFETY & HEALTH EXPERTS MEET WITH EU COMMISSIONER TO CONFRONT CHALLENGES FOR MICRO & SMALL ENTERPRISES

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) welcomed Commissioner Marianne Thyssen and other stakeholders to a seminar on how to ensure workers' safety and health in micro and small enterprises (MSEs). The seminar took place in Bilbao and coincided with the publication of two new reports that explore the latest findings of EU-OSHA's project on MSEs. The reports, as well as the seminar, focused on good practice examples from throughout the EU, identifying key success factors and challenges, and the important role of intermediaries when it comes to

improving occupational safety and health (OSH) in MSEs.

Protection of health and safety at work is one of the key principles of our European Pillar of Social Rights. It is imperative that employer and worker representatives, national authorities and OSH advisors work together to ensure that workers in micro and small enterprises can enjoy safe and healthy working conditions.

Many MSEs find managing OSH challenging, and workers are more likely to be at risk of safety or health issues in these enterprises than in other, larger enterprises. In fact, more than 80% of all occupational injuries in the EU occur in micro, small or medium-sized businesses — and the smaller the business, the higher the risk. The findings of the latest reports shed light on MSE-specific problems and concerns, OSH attitudes and behaviours, and the drivers of and barriers to the implementation of OSH measures in such enterprises. The good practice examples from MSEs, analysed in depth during the course of the project, provide experts with a view of what works, for whom and under what circumstances. Successful approaches to supporting OSH include those involving awareness-raising activities, training, the provision of practical tools, and economic incentives. The instrumental role played by intermediaries in supporting OSH in MSEs is also clear from the reports, and is a key topic of discussion at the seminar.

Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, emphasises that: 'Protection of health and safety at work is one of the key principles of our European Pillar of Social Rights, as well as social dialogue and involvement of workers. As part of this and as the good examples

demonstrate, it is imperative that employer representatives and worker representatives as well as national authorities and occupational safety and health advisors work together to support safety and health in micro and small enterprises and to ensure that workers in these enterprises can enjoy safe and healthy working conditions.'

Good practice examples

The value of cooperation among different stakeholders and the incorporation of OSH into the supply chain is particularly well illustrated by the British Olympic Park project. During the construction of the Olympic Park, all relevant stakeholders — including the national OSH regulator, the contractors and the unions — were consulted before the project began and at all stages throughout. Safety and health was a top priority and — through supply chain management — all subcontracted MSEs were required to adhere to strict OSH standards which led to an outstandingly low rate of accidents during construction. Motivating MSEs to take action and raising awareness of relevant tools and legislation are key to improving OSH. In Denmark, under a nationwide labour inspection initiative, inspectors systematically visit MSEs and provide OSH-related guidance and resources, with the aim of reaching and opening up dialogue with all MSEs.

EU-OSHA Director, Christa Sedlatschek, highlights another example of how the actions of intermediaries at the national level can help MSEs deal with OSH: 'In France, Online interactive Risk Assessment (OiRA) tools have been integrated into the preventive approach to OSH. Using the framework developed by EU-OSHA, the National Research and Safety Institute has tailored OiRA tools to the needs of two MSE-dominated

and vulnerable sectors — the road transport and restaurant sectors — enabling businesses to assess their own risks and implement measures to improve safety and health. What is particularly impressive about this example is how the concerted actions of several regional and national OSH institutes, professional organisations and other relevant sectoral partners have enabled the development and dissemination of these tools to MSEs.'

Although all of the examples provide evidence that effective tools and well-designed interventions can successfully support OSH in MSEs, many of the initiatives are voluntary and therefore will not reach MSEs that take a reactive approach to OSH and do not actively engage with OSH institutions.

So how can policies and programmes be shaped to meet the needs of the hardest-to-reach MSEs? The project's final analysis report, to be published later in the year, will discuss this in detail, by focusing on the transferability of good practices and exploring the role of policies and programmes in a regulatory and socio-economic context.

A GOOD DAY FOR SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURES IN EUROPE

On 23rd January 2018, the High-Level Task Force on Investing in Social Infrastructure in Europe, chaired by Romano Prodi and Christian Sautter, presented its final report. Established in February 2017 by the European Association of Long-Term Investors (ELTI), and including CEEP General Secretary Valeria Ronzitti, the High-Level Task Force's mission was to raise political attention to the crucial role of social infrastructure and related services, aiming to enhance public and private

investments in this sector. Investment in social infrastructure, both private and public, is far from reaching the level needed to cater for the EU's current population, nor is the investment always appropriate in view of changing needs and expectations over the coming decades.

To answer this infrastructure gap, the report identifies how to shift from the present scenario with a major social investment gap, towards a scenario we define as 'smart capacitating strategies', by focusing efforts on empowering people. In this context, the report illustrates how major bottlenecks could be removed by – among other things – improving technical assistance, financial and non-financial regulatory affairs and facilitating financing.

Proposals are articulated around three main ideas.

"Labelling" National and European institutions could grant labels to projects according to social efficiency criteria. These labels could facilitate identification and, in turn, the financing of these projects.

"Bundling" projects. As most projects are small-scale projects, requiring a limited amount of investment, bringing them together could reduce the fixed costs and favour their dissemination.

"Blending" financing. In the current state of the economy, financing for these projects cannot come from one single body. Mixing public and private financing and/or using social impact bonds, could facilitate the access of Social Infrastructure to financing, while maintaining their unique benefits for the community. Valeria Ronzitti, CEEP General Secretary and member of the High-Level Task Force, commented:

"For us, this report shows that very different actors, including bankers,

agreed and recommended a setup for a clear EU Social Infrastructure agenda to the Commission, Member States, and all relevant stakeholders. CEEP has been advocating for years that social infrastructures represent an investment in the future and not a

cost: this report backs this argument with clear figures and will support our call for creating a single EU fund within the next Multi-annual Financial Framework to support investments, with a dedicated window for social infrastructures. This will create an

even better social Europe, reconnecting citizens to the EU project: a “renaissance for social Europe”, to quote Christian Sauter, co-chair of the Task Force.”

