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NOTE

from: The Presidency
to: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part I)/Council (EPSCO)
Subject: Presidency background paper
- EU 2020 Strategy

With a view to the meeting of the EPSCO Council on 8 March 2010, delegations will find attached a Presidency's background paper setting out its reflections as a follow up to the informal meeting of the Ministers of Employment and Social Security in Barcelona, on 28 and 29 January 2010.

Presidency background paper

**FOLLOW-UP TO THE INFORMAL MEETING OF
MINISTERS OF EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY**

(Barcelona, 28 and 29 January 2010)

On 28 and 29 January 28 2010, an informal meeting of Ministers of Employment and Social Security was held in Barcelona to address the role of the employment, social protection and equality policies within the upcoming EU 2020 Strategy.

At this meeting, the Presidency was asked to produce a document gathering the various reflections as possible input into the forthcoming discussions on the EU 2020 strategy.

In this context, the Presidency considers it useful to highlight those issues on which a broad common understanding seemed to exist, with a view to analysing them in greater depth at the EPSCO Council on 8 March:

THE PRESIDENCY'S REFLECTIONS

1. The financial crisis has led to an economic downturn, which entails a serious deterioration of the labour markets, including a substantial rise in unemployment rates and a significant negative social impact. To overcome the crisis, measures have to be taken in a consistent manner on all three fronts -- financial, economic and social. The crisis will not be over until the labour markets have recovered and net employment is created once more. Therefore, economic incentives, active employment policies and stabilising social protection systems are all needed.

2. The EU 2020 Strategy should include specific objectives and actions that are clearly identifiable and quantifiable.
 - a. The objectives and actions on which the EU 2020 Strategy will be based should be periodically assessed.
 - b. The objectives and actions should allow for the necessary adaptation to each country's specific situation.
3. The EU 2020 Strategy should have a double purpose: in the short term, it should focus on how to overcome the crisis, and in the medium term, it should define the EU's economic and social model, which is needed in order to face the challenges of globalisation.
4. The strong focus on employment and social cohesion that formed part of the Lisbon Strategy should be retained in the EU 2020 Strategy. To this end, effective dialogue between the Ministers of Economy and the Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs is required with a view to drawing up coherent and realistic objectives and to setting up actions for the benefit of European citizens.
5. Social dialogue should constitute a key element of the governance of the EU 2020 Strategy.
6. The EU 2020 Strategy should promote investment in new skills and their adjustment to the labour market needs. Improved skills constitute an element to boost the employability of European citizens, as well as one of the major drivers for growth and a guarantee for stable and quality jobs.
7. The EPSCO Council has a key role to play in ensuring that issues concerning the social dimension of Europe can be duly conveyed to the European Council. The current line of action based on the role of the EPSCO Council as an effective channel for proposals and initiatives should therefore be enhanced.

8. Both gender mainstreaming and gender-specific issues should be prominently reflected in the EU 2020 Strategy and in future employment and social policies. It is essential to pursue a determined policy in support of youth employment and the employment of other groups that also have difficulties entering and remaining in the labour market, thus running a higher risk of social exclusion. It is also necessary to boost social integration and inclusive markets by fighting against discrimination and strengthening the social services of general interest.
9. The EU 2020 Strategy should be committed to an adequate and balanced use of flexicurity, whereby policies to improve the adaptability of labour markets are complemented by social security measures and welfare services.
10. The open method of social coordination should be strengthened so that it further contributes to policy development in this field through its various mechanisms and its proven flexibility.
11. The EU 2020 Strategy should also have an external dimension. Globalisation forces us to look outside the EU to understand the challenges we face at home and to find solutions to them. Therefore, another objective of the Employment Strategy should be to improve our response to the external dimension of employment, social protection and social inclusion in international fora such as the United Nations and, especially, in the ILO, with particular regard to the Agenda on Decent Work, the Social Protection Floor, and the Global Jobs Pact.

Finally, it is important to point out that the EU 2020 Strategy should constitute a reference for the definition of the European position at the meeting of the G-20 Ministers of Employment.