



15 February 2013

FOUNDATION FORUM 2013 “SOCIAL AND EMPLOYMENT POLICIES FOR A FAIR AND COMPETITIVE EUROPE”

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Improving fundamentals

- Improving Europe's international competitiveness and economic performance is a precondition for maintaining high level of social aspirations characterising the European Social Model.
- Achieving a sustainable economic recovery would require Member States to reduce excessive debts, restructure their economies - not least with a view to strengthening the manufacturing base, develop infrastructure and pursue structural labour market reforms.
- Crisis is a test for the maturity of the social dialogue. Social partners should be ready to take responsibility in these difficult times and contribute to a design and implementation of necessary labour market reforms.
- While many economic and social challenges are common (unemployment especially among youth, lack of growth, low productivity, ageing, etc), the origins and the scale of the problems differ among Member States. “One-size fits all” programmes and policies should be thus avoided.
- At the same time, mutual learning between Member States should be encouraged and coordination of policies strengthened. For example, youth unemployment could be reduced through the development of effective dual learning systems across the EU. There is no blueprint, but the basic approach to foster cooperation between enterprises, education providers and social partners, notably in the design of education curricula has in many countries proven its merits to ensure easier transitions from school to work.

Addressing social and economic problems in the short term

- “Youth guarantee” can help alleviate the dramatic situation of the increasing number of young people who are not in employment, education nor training. Each national government however should be able to appraise the need, scope and objectives of a possible guarantee scheme and in doing so should ensure the principles of quality, relevance and efficiency in actions that are undertaken.
- Short-time work schemes have proved successful in a number of countries in containing the unemployment growth during the recession. However, such schemes are appropriate for addressing cyclical downturns only, and should not prevent necessary structural changes from happening in the economy.
- SMEs have been the driving force of growth and job creation in the EU. In this light, in order to achieve a job-rich recovery it is crucial to improve access to finance for SMEs which is currently one of the greatest barriers to their development.