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Commission



Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2013

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion would like to thank Eurostat and Eurofound for their close collaboration and support in preparing the review.

Comments from other services of the European Commission are gratefully acknowledged.

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Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014

ISBN 978-92-79-33878-6 (print)

ISBN 978-92-79-35281-2 (web)

ISSN 1977-270X (print)

ISSN 2315-2540 (web)

doi:10.2767/6072 (print)

doi:10.2767/59315 (web)

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Printed in Belgium

PRINTED ON ELEMENTAL CHLORINE-FREE BLEACHED PAPER (ECF)

Foreword

Through more than five years of economic crisis, the European Social Model has been challenged and re-defined in many ways. The 2011 and 2012 editions of the Employment and Social Developments in Europe review analysed this process from many angles and have proven useful in helping policy-makers understand the scale and nature of the problems Europe faces.

ESDE 2013 further develops the European Commission's analysis of the difficult and increasingly diverse labour market and social conditions in Europe, examining also to what extent employment and social policies have helped to counteract the growing challenges and what policy responses need to intensify or change. It shows, for instance, how allocation between different types of social spending could be improved, as debated already in the context of the 2013 Social Investment Package. It analyses where future jobs are likely to come from and how they might look like given longer-term structural trends shaping the economy. It seeks to identify the right policy mixes for narrowing gender gaps in labour markets, fighting poverty in working age and limiting its negative social consequences, and also for reducing the incidence of undeclared work. It contributes to the 'beyond GDP' debate by analysing various proposed metrics of prosperity and social progress, trying in particular to capture the impact of growing income inequalities on the socio-economic reality. Finally, ESDE 2013 offers further analytical backing to the recently launched policy debate on strengthening the social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union by examining the causes of growing economic and social disparities in the euro area and ways in which they can be tackled in order to improve the economic and social performance of Europe as a whole.

However hopeful we may be that the economic crisis in Europe has finally reached its bottom, the fact is that employment and social conditions will not improve without sufficiently strong public policies, further integration in the euro zone and greater solidarity within and between societies. Ensuring a job-rich rather than jobless recovery, minimising the long-term scarring effects of the crisis on people's skills and preventing entrenched poverty is possible, but will not happen simply as a result of a mild and uneven economic upturn. All economic activity and public policy as well as the architecture of the EMU need to be organised in a way to achieve social objectives. The fact that the Europe 2020 targets on employment and poverty reduction are very distant after many years of recession cannot be an excuse for the EU and its Member States to do less; it is a reason to do more.

I hope that ESDE 2013 will prove to be not only a solid analytical contribution for employment and social policy-makers, but also a stimulus for all political leaders to take greater responsibility in their respective fields for improving today's deeply worrying employment and social situation.



László Andor
*Commissioner for Employment,
Social Affairs and Inclusion*

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