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Social Security Co-ordination and Social Security Reforms

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7th MEETING OF THE REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

25 January 2011

Hotel Zurich, Istanbul
Turkey

DRAFT MEETING REPORT

Working language: English

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the draft agenda

The 7th Steering Committee meeting was organised on 25th January 2011 at Hotel Zurich in Istanbul, Turkey. At the opening of the meeting, Mr Halûk ~~ŞAHİN~~ **ŞAHİN** Steering Committee Member ~~from~~ **representing** Turkey, welcomed the participants to Istanbul and wished the Committee members a successful work.

Mr Sixto MOLINA, SSCSSR Programme Manager, also welcomed the participants. He informed those present that the representative of Albania to the Committee, Ms Diana BEQIRI, apologised for her last minute absence.

The Committee appointed Mr Darko DOČINSKI, Deputy Steering Committee Member in respect of “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” as the Chair of the meeting (following the Beneficiary Parties’ alphabetical order) and adopted the proposed draft agenda.

The draft (annotated) agenda of the meeting was adopted.

2. Statement by the Secretariat

(a) Report of the 6th meeting of the RSC

Mr S. MOLINA informed the Committee that the amendments proposed by the Representatives of the Beneficiary parties were included in the first draft meeting report. He indicated that some additional changes, mainly of grammatical nature but also some on the merits were proposed by the Turkish Representative and that the Committee, prior to the adoption of the Report, was requested to examine whether the last proposals for changes could be accepted.

All the changes proposed by Mr H. ŞAHİN being accepted, the Committee adopted its 6th Meeting Report.

(b) Evaluation report on the Regional Training Course in Belgrade

Mr S. MOLINA informed the Committee of the results of the Evaluation Report of the Regional Training Course on Social Security Co-ordination organised in Belgrade on 14th-15th September 2010. He indicated that, following the decision of the Committee adopted at its previous meeting, the so-called national training events were opened to the participation of members of the other Beneficiary Parties. Furthermore, the event was translated into the local language. He confirmed that according to the information contained in the evaluation forms received, participants were satisfied (or very satisfied) with the way the meeting was organised and with the subjects included in the training Course.

(c) Regional Training on Social Security Co-ordination: social protection for farmers

The Secretariat informed the Committee of the results of the Evaluation Report of the Regional Training on Social Security Co-ordination: social protection for farmers, organised in Skopje on 27th-28th September 2010. As was the case in the previous training, participants were either satisfied or very satisfied with both, the content and

organisation of the event. The event was translated also into the national language. It is to be noted that the event received wide media coverage: television, radio and newspapers.

(d) Follow-up on the Third Ministerial Conference in Budva

The Steering Committee Members discussed with the Secretariat the follow-up of the Third Ministerial Conference on Social Security Co-ordination and Social Security Reforms in South East Europe organised in Budva, Montenegro, on 12th October 2010.

Ms Šerifa GODINJAK, representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, stated that she was of the opinion that the Ministerial Declaration adopted in Budva by the Beneficiary Parties to the Programme should be largely distributed to all relevant Ministries and stakeholders at national level, added to the Ministries' website of the Beneficiary Parties to the Programme and widely distributed to all relevant national institutions. She indicated that this was already the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

She also requested whether a publication or booklet could be prepared containing the English version of the Ministerial Declaration, being the official version, and the translated versions of the Declaration into all the national languages.

Mr Darko DOČINSKI, representing "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", agreed with the proposal made by Ms Š. GODINJAK, notably in respect of the inclusion of the Ministerial Declaration in the websites of the relevant ministries. He also signalled that the Beneficiary Parties could foresee a regular reporting, for example on a yearly basis. This would allow first to keep the Declaration in mind when developing national policies and legislation, but also would be important for the reporting to be made in 2014, as agreed by the Ministers in the Budva Declaration.

Mr H. ŞAHİN asked the Secretariat whether they could provide a translation of the English version of the Declaration into the languages of the Beneficiary Parties to the Programme.

Several Committee members were of the opinion that, since the Declaration was already translated by their authorities prior to its adoption in Budva, it was not worth asking the Secretariat to have the Declaration translated. It was decided that all the Beneficiary Parties to the Programme should be sending to the Secretariat their translated versions.

Mr H. ŞAHİN requested the Secretariat to send an official request via e-mail asking the Steering Committee members to forward their translated versions to the Secretariat.

As a conclusion, the Committee asked the Secretariat to look into ways to have the publication ready before the end of the Programme and to report back to the Committee of any progress made at its next meeting.

(e) Evaluation Report on the Regional Training Course in Ankara

The Secretariat informed the Committee of the results of the Evaluation Report of the Regional Training on Supplementary (Occupational) Social Security Schemes organised in Ankara on 18th-19th October 2010. As was the case in the previous trainings referred to in paragraph (b) and (c), participants were either satisfied or very satisfied with both the content and organisation of the event. The event was translated

also into the national language. It is to be noted that 70 Turkish participants from different institutions attended the event. Some Beneficiary Parties did not send participants to this particular event.

(f) Evaluation Report on the Regional Training Course in Zagreb

The Secretariat informed the Committee of the results of the Evaluation Report of the Regional Training Course on Social Security Co-ordination organised in Zagreb on 15th-16th November 2010. As was the case in the previous trainings referred to in paragraph (b), (c) and (e), participants were either satisfied or very satisfied with both, the content and organisation of the event. The event was translated also into the national language.

The Secretariat recalled that, as was the case in the other trainings organised, the evaluation reports will be made available in the official website of the Programme.

(g) Legal Analysis

The Secretariat informed the Committee that six out of eight legal analysis were completed and that the translation of all these analysis (except the Albanian legal analysis) would be available very soon. Both the English and translated versions of the legal analyses are at present being published in the website of the Programme.

As far as the Serbian analysis is concerned, Mr S. MOLINA indicated that although the Secretariat received from the Serbian authorities the subject of the legal analysis of their choice, it has been impossible so far to identify an available expert, either independent or from an international organisation/institution working in that particular area.

Mr S. MOLINA also informed that, in view of the difficulties found, the Serbian authorities proposed to the Secretariat a new subject to be covered by the legal analysis. The Secretariat is at present trying to identify a suitable expert/consultant to draft the Serbian analysis.

Mr Nenad RAKIĆ, representative of Serbia to the Committee, confirmed to the Secretariat that his authorities, through him, have discussed this issue and that they have effectively proposed a new subject to be covered by the legal analysis. He hoped that the Secretariat could find an available expert/consultant to draft the analysis.

As far as the analysis to be prepared for Kosovo, no information was available at this stage.

(h) Sets of Studies

The Secretariat informed the Committee that the study on Old Age, drafted by Mr Prof. Grega STRBAN was ready and available at the website of the Programme. As to the second study, concerning disability pension, the Secretariat informed that unfortunately, and although a contract was drafted and signed with Mr Prof. Francis KESSLER, the contract was not respected by the consultant and that following the breach of the contract, the Secretariat has terminated the contract.

The Secretariat informed that, taking into account the fact that a regional event on Disability pension's schemes would be organised in June, the proposal would be to have an expert invited to this event who would be responsible for drafting a regional strategic paper/study based on the information furnished by the participants during that event.

The Secretariat indicated that one experts/consultants would be invited from each Beneficiary Party, together with additional participants and other international experts. A representative of the CoE Disability Division will also be invited.

The Secretariat stressed that the Committee would be informed by e-mail of any development on this particular field.

3. Organisation of regional training events

Mr Sixto MOLINA presented the list of events that need to be organised, following the extended Action Plan, until 31st August 2011. He indicated that the venues and dates of the meetings have been chosen taking into account the availability of experts and hotels. He also indicated that, as much as possible, a balanced geographical distribution of the events has been taken into account.

He informed that as far as the events to be organised in Zagreb and Ankara, no major problems have been found and that they will be organised according to the original plan.

As to the event on "transfer of know-how on accession negotiations", being an important event, and noting that experts are not available end of March, as foreseen in the Action Plan, the Secretariat requested whether this event could be organised in June, replacing the event scheduled in Sarajevo concerning "administrative courts". The location, Montenegro, would however be respected.

The Secretariat suggested to the Committee to prepare a list containing the main reforms adopted, bilateral agreements signed, etc as a final conclusion of the main developments in social security made during the last three years.

The Committee agreed with this change, notably because, at this stage, it was not sure whether the organisation of the regional event on administrative courts would have any added value. They were of the opinion that it would be difficult to have administrative judges involved in that training and that taking into account that a very limited number of judges could be invited, the impact of such training would be very low. The Committee agreed to discuss at its next meeting whether this event should be organised or replaced by a regional event on a topic to be decided by the Committee.

Taking into account the financial restrictions and the costs of simultaneous translations, the Committee discussed whether the event on transfer of know-how should be translated into all national languages. Some were of the opinion that this event should be translated into all the languages while others considered that civil servants dealing with this topic need anyhow to master the English language. Hence, the translation of the event would have no impact whatsoever.

The Secretariat, in view of the limited resources available for translation, proposed to have this issue examined with the translation department of the CoE and to inform the Committee of how much the translation of this event would cost before a final decision is taken.

The Secretariat pointed out that it would be difficult to translate all the training remaining events and that the Committee will need to decide what are the priority events and what are the languages to be covered.

As to the Study Tour, the Secretariat informed the Committee that participants will be taken to Strasbourg, Brussels and Amsterdam. The Secretariat also informed that 6 Magna Cum Laude will be invited together with three participants per Beneficiary Party. The Secretariat asked the Committee whether one of the participants per Beneficiary Party would be the Steering Committee Member. As far as this latter issue is concerned, Mr S. ŞAHİN H. ŞAHİN indicated that it might not be necessary for Steering Committee Members to take part in this event. He also added that the money saved via the cancellation of the study trip of SC members might be re-allocated to contribute to the cost of simultaneous translations of the other events hence, the financial constraints that faces the Programme might be relieved to some extent. Other Representatives were of the opinion that this event would allow them a good opportunity to meet EC officials.

As a conclusion, it was decided that three places will be granted to each Beneficiary Party to the Programme and that each Party should be free to decide the composition of its delegation.

In respect to the event to be organised in Mavrovo, the Secretariat informed the Committee that it would not be a new summer school but a different sort of training event. There will be no exam at the end of the training and it would be a shorter event, of a maximum of four days. Several Committee Members indicated that it was difficult to find candidates for a new such event. In this respect, the Secretariat informed that being a different type of event, former candidates to summer schools could be selected for this training.

The Committee also discussed with the Secretariat the number of participants to be invited to each event. In particular, the Committee asked the Secretariat to draft an e-mail to officially ask for experts as well as participants to the event on “Transfer of Know-How on Accession Negotiations Process”.

Mr. H. ŞAHİN asked the Secretariat whether there would be any possibility to organize an event on “Gender Equality in Social Security” as requested by the Turkish Social Security Organisation. Regarding this proposal, favoured by the Committee in general Mr. S. MOLINA responded that taking into consideration the tight schedule it would not be possible to organize a separate event, but the topic would be handled within one of the coming relevant events.

Last, the Committee asked the Secretariat whether an additional SC meeting could be organised to examine developments made before the end of the Programme. The Secretariat confirmed that it was possible to organise such an event and the Committee agreed to have it organised on 5th April 2011 in Dubrovnik, Croatia.

4. Other Business

(a) New EC monitoring procedure

The Secretariat informed the Committee that a new monitoring procedure would be launched soon.

(b) Information on new IPA Programmes

The Secretariat informed the Committee that at present the EC is examining the new IPA Programmes for 2013-2015. In this respect, a new Programme on Social Inclusion, vulnerable groups and minorities might be launched in the Balkan Region. The Secretariat will be informing the Committee of any development in this particular field.

Communication from the Representative of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”:
Mr Darko DOČINSKI stated that following the Ministerial Conference, a bilateral agreement on social security has been signed between “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Montenegro.

5. Date of the next meeting.

The Committee decided its next meeting to be organised in Dubrovnik on 5th April 2011 and its last meeting on 5th July 2011 in Skopje