

European CONFERENCE 2008

Brussels, 20-21 November 2008

**European Citizenship, free movement and social protection
– recent developments in the EU and perspectives towards 2020**

Welcome address Franz Terwey

**Check against delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me also welcome you very warmly on behalf of the *European Social Insurance Platform* (ESIP) to this European Conference which is jointly organised under the auspices of the French presidency of the European Union together with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the French Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Sécurité Sociale (EN3S).

This is the fifth time that the ESIP organises a European conference of this kind, and we are very happy to see that so many representatives from the EU Institutions, from the Member States and from the national social protection systems have accepted our invitation.

The objective of the conference is to examine the interactions and interdependences between three fundamental concepts of the European Union: free movement of persons, European Citizenship and the concept of maintaining national social protection schemes in line with the principle of subsidiarity.

European Citizenship – first laid down in the Maastricht Treaty of 1993 and later integrated in the Charter of Fundamental Rights accompanying the Lisbon Treaty of 2007 – gives free movement a new edge as it facilitates the cross-border access to social benefits which are not covered by Community Regulation 1408/71 (883/04). In effect, it widens the principle of solidarity in our societies from a national to an international level and consequently affects the future development of the Welfare States in Europe.

The challenges arising from this relatively new phenomenon will be analysed by a number of senior experts from the European institutions, the social partners and the ESIP member

organisations as well as from academia. Their findings and advice will help us identify instruments for European solidarity and to shape the outline of a European Social Pact in the perspective of 2020.

I would like to thank the French government for having put this conference under the auspices of their ongoing presidency of the European Union. This is a great honour for us. Many thanks also go to EESC for giving us the opportunity to benefit from this wonderful venue here, and we are particularly grateful to Mr Mario Sepi, the new President of the Committee, and his colleagues for their kind and constructive help in the preparation of this event. Likewise, our thanks go to the President of the EN3S and his colleagues for the constructive support they have given us in the preparation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, since its creation in 1996 the ESIP has grown in its membership as well as in competence and strength. Now, in November 2008, we bring together some 40 national social security organisations from 16 EU Member States. And, we are proud to be able to inform you that as of 1 January 2009 the ESIP will acquire the legal status of a so-called *association internationale sans but lucratif* (AISBL) under Belgian law. We believe this will improve our functioning and further enhance our credibility in the field.

Our continued development seems to confirm that we are moving in the right direction, and I am confident that despite our diverse backgrounds, structures and traditions, we will continue to be a vibrant, dynamic European stakeholder and a constructive partner in the important discussions on social security that will be carried out in the years to come.

So it only remains for me to express my thanks once again to our speakers. I am sure they will provide us with some good advice and a solid basis for our work today and in the future.

I wish our Conference every success.
