

# ESIP European Conference 2007

"Financing Social Security - a European perspective"

**The European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP) held its 4th European Conference entitled "Financing Social Security - a European perspective" on 29 November 2007, in Luxemburg under the Presidency of the Association Luxembourgeoise des Organismes de Sécurité Sociale (ALOSS).**

The Conference took a serious look at the very real challenges currently facing Europe as regards the long-term financing of its social security systems, in particular with a view to pensions but also to healthcare and long-term care. The challenges arising from the **Lisbon strategy** and the recent trends in the development of the "**social reality**" across Europe create a need for appropriate policy responses in all social security sectors. In addition, **globalisation, demographic and societal changes, transnational migration** as well as flexibility and security ("**flexicurity**") in our social systems are all factors to be considered in the planning and organisation of social security finances. Against this background the Conference went on to analysis various national reactions to these challenges with the aim of identifying sustainable solutions for financing social security while maintaining the overarching principles of the **European Social Model** - equity, solidarity, universal access.

Opening, Mr Mars Di Bartolomeo, Luxemburg Minister for Health and Social Security, spoke out strongly in support of Europe's national social protection systems inviting the audience to say "yes" to reforms and adjustments within those systems but "no" to putting in question and dismantling the systems to bring social protection in line with Internal Market demands. He stressed the need to demonstrate the added value of solidarity based social protection and regretted the lack of studies and data evaluating the overall positive impact of social security. Presenting the available data, Mr Georg Fischer of the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, was able to show a common trend across the 27 Member States towards financing social security by increased contributions from the State budget and lower social contributions raised from salaries. Professor Alain Euzéby, Professor at the Institute of French Political Studies in Grenoble, then presented numerous arguments in favour of solidarity based social protection, claiming that social financing is a pillar of the European Social Model and that having a high level of social protection does not conflict with a high level of economic performance but rather supports it.

From the point of view of the social partners, it appears there is a common view that social protection is necessary to ensure social cohesion. However, according to Mr Pierre Bley, Secretary General of the Luxemburg Employer's Association (UEL), lower social contributions were necessary to reduce the costs of work. Clearly different opinions were expressed on the level of responsibility accorded to the individual (savings plans and private insurance). In addition, Ms Gabrielle Clotuche, Senior Advisor to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), reiterated the need for European-level action to establish rules on certain aspects of social protection in light of citizens' mobility and the realities of the single market.

Finally the Conference took a look at the particular challenges facing three Member States - Poland, the UK and France, represented by ESIP's member organisations, and the practical solutions they had brought to their national pension systems. Such exchanges of practice and experience are fostered by ESIP and its members - it is one of the added values of our European Platform.

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Proceedings of the Conference will be published in the *Bulletin Luxembourgeois des Questions Sociales* (BLQS). Presentations from the Conference can be found on the ESIP website at: <http://www.esip.org/publications.php?id=126>

### **About the *European Social Insurance Platform* (ESIP)**

The *European Social Insurance Platform* (ESIP) represents thirty-four social insurance organisations from fourteen Member States and Switzerland, active in the field of health insurance, pensions, family benefits, occupational safety and accident insurance and unemployment insurance. The aims of ESIP and its members are to preserve high-profile social security for Europe; to reinforce solidarity-based social insurance systems and to maintain European social protection quality. ESIP builds strategic alliances for developing common positions to influence the European decision-making process and is a consultation forum for the European institutions and other multinational bodies active in the field of social security.

For more information please visit the ESIP website at: [www.esip.org](http://www.esip.org)