



Strasbourg, 19 July 2011

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**MUTUAL INFORMATION SYSTEM ON SOCIAL PROTECTION  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
(MISSCEO)**

**13th meeting**

Paris, 30 June – 1 July 2011  
Council of Europe, 55 avenue Kléber  
Room 2

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**MEETING REPORT**

## **I. OPENING OF THE MEETING**

1. The 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of MISSCEO was held at the Council of Europe office in Paris on 30 June and 1 July 2011. Ana GOMEZ HEREDERO, head of the MISSCEO secretariat, chaired the meeting and welcomed participants, in particular the new correspondents, namely: Ana STIJEPOVIC, from Montenegro, which was represented at the meeting for the first time; Gayane VASILYAN from Armenia; Vanda CRNJAC PAUKOVIĆ from Croatia; Alexander PREOBRAZHENSKIY from the Russian Federation and Atilla Ethem ZEYBEK from Turkey. The list of participants appears in Appendix I.

## **II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

2. MISSCEO adopted the meeting agenda, as set out in Appendix II.

## **III. INFORMATION FROM THE SECRETARIAT**

3. The secretariat reported on developments at the Council of Europe since the 12th meeting of the network (July 2010), in particular the decisions concerning the reform of the Organisation and other information that might be relevant to the MISSCEO network.

Ms GOMEZ HEREDERO was pleased to announce that the network had a new member: Montenegro.

Briefing participants on the structural reforms under way at the Council of Europe. she said that the overall objective of the reform begun by the Secretary General, Thorbjørn Jagland, in 2010 was to concentrate the Organisation's activities so that more resources were given to a smaller number of priority activities than at present. This particularly applied to intergovernmental activities. The programme was based on the existing 3-pillar operational structure: human rights, rule of law and democracy. It revolved around an activity cycle and results-based budget, both of them biennial. A new set-up for intergovernmental structures would be put in place from 2012.

According to the information available to date, in the social security sphere, the central body, the Committee of Experts on Social Security (CS-SS), currently a subordinate structure of the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS), would be merged with the Governmental Committee of the European Social Charter. The tasks currently assigned to the CS-SS regarding the supervision of the European Code of Social Security, would be performed as from 2012 by the Governmental Committee of the Social Charter. The MISSCEO network would continue its activities within a new department which, like social security, now formed part of the 1st pillar, human rights.

4. The secretariat informed participants that the 2010 MISSCEO data were available on the Council of Europe website <http://www.coe.int/MISSCEO>, in the form of both a database and comparative tables (pdf format). Database searches could be performed by topic or country. Also available on the site were the comparative tables and charts on social protection and the appendices on self-employed persons. MISSCEO Info was also available on the same website.

Ms GOMEZ HEREDERO referred to the PACE Recommendation 1963 (2011) on combating poverty, which highlighted the comparative analyses carried out by the MISSCEO network.

#### **IV. INFORMATION ON MISSOC AND ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

5. Claude EWEN, the MISSOC correspondent for Luxembourg, reported on developments in the MISSOC network. He provided some general information about the network, which had been set up in 1990 in connection with the co-ordination instruments of the European Union. MISSOC encompassed all the member countries of the European Union, the European Economic Area and Switzerland, i.e. 31 countries in all. Under the supervision of the European Commission, the network met twice a year in whichever country held the EU presidency and was supported by a large secretariat. Each member country was represented in the network by 2 correspondents. The MISSCEO network, on the other hand, consisted of non-EU states. Mr EWEN then turned his attention to the following matters:

- The comparative tables: the main output of both MISSOC and MISSCEO, which allowed social security specialists to compare legislation across the countries in the network;
- The country-specific descriptions which were descriptive, rather than comparative, and provided a snapshot of legislation in the field of social security;
- MISSOC Info which no longer covered developments in national legislation but rather looked at particular themes. The latest edition, for example, was about long-term care in Europe;
- MISSOC Analysis. This document was produced under the sole direction of the MISSOC secretariat and was important in relation to the 2020 Strategy;
- The MISSOC website;
- The MISSOC Newsletter, which was aimed at a wide readership and provided information about the network;
- The guidelines contained in the Correspondent guidelines, which gave instructions for completing the comparative tables and were updated at meetings. These guidelines were primarily a product of the MISSCEO network, which MISSOC had adopted. At the last meeting in Budapest in May 2011, the guidelines for table X "Unemployment" had been discussed but no decision had been taken.

6. In reply to the Georgian Correspondent who wished to know why there were two networks when the aims and objectives were the same, the following explanation was given:

Although the purpose of the comparative tables was the same, the two networks were run by two different international organisations, each with its own objectives. This was reflected in the networks' other activities, such as the MISSOC introduction on EU co-ordination or the analyses performed by the MISSOC secretariat, which were concerned with the 2020 Strategy, or the MISSCEO introductions which were designed to provide information about human rights, such as the emphasis given to social security in countries' constitutions or judicial protection.

Ms Gomez said that the September 2011 issue of the MISSOC Newsletter would focus on the Council of Europe, and that she had been asked to write an article on the subject. It was a good opportunity to raise the profile of the MISSCEO network.

## **V. GENERAL COMMENTS ON COMPARABILITY**

7. Paul SCHOUKENS, consultant, thanked participants for submitting the tables ahead of the MISSCEO meeting and drew attention to the following points:

- As had already been mentioned in 2010 with regard to the section entitled “Applicable statutory basis”, some countries indicated the basic texts whereas others gave a long list of laws and implementing regulations. Some countries mentioned only last year’s legislation whereas others cited the same laws year after year. Correspondents were advised to provide the information needed to understand the system but without mentioning all the implementing regulations or giving a full history.
- On the subject of personal scope of application, the length of the replies varied widely. Some countries gave long lists of the persons covered. The idea was to list only the main population categories covered, leaving it to the correspondent to decide what best reflected the reality of the system. For example, if the majority of the population were covered, one could say “Practically the whole population and in particular the following categories...”;
- Correspondents were asked not to use the phrase “no information available”. Instead they should indicate that there was no specific cover, for example;
- The sections on rehabilitation were rather problematic and the descriptions were often very long. Correspondents were asked to give merely a broad outline here;
- Some countries included plans for future reform. Correspondents were advised to keep this information for the document on developments used to prepare MISSCEO Info and, when completing the tables, to focus purely on the legislation in force on 1 January of the relevant year;
- It was important not to move from the current system of tables, featuring only the key concepts, towards something more descriptive;
- Another issue in 2010 had been the quality of the language, on account of the fact that the information came from various sources. Correspondents were asked to check that the information received was comprehensible;

The table on long-term care was still creating problems because it reflected the fact that most countries did not have specific insurance in this area but rather provisions in the legislation on pensions, health care, etc.

8. Following discussions on this subject, it was concluded that the comparative tables were merely an introduction to the legislation. For more detailed information, users would have to visit other websites or contact the relevant agencies direct. It was important to remember, too, that the tables were intended not only for national specialists but also for social security specialists in other countries.

## **VI. COMPARATIVE EXERCISE**

Table III “Sickness”

Table X “Unemployment”

9. The aim of this exercise was to encourage MISSCEO correspondents to look at the tables from a reader’s perspective, rather than that of an author. As decided at the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of MISSCEO (Strasbourg, 8 and 9 July 2010), participants had been asked this year to read Tables III “Sickness” and X “Unemployment” ahead of the meeting.

10. At the meeting, the correspondents split into four groups of countries (Albania, Armenia, Georgia and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”; Azerbaijan and Turkey; Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro; Ukraine, Russian Federation and Moldova) to consider the tables.

11. Particular attention was given to table X “Unemployment”. At its previous meeting in May 2011, the MISSOC network had examined the guidelines for completing this table, taking the guidelines contained in the MISSCEO Correspondent’s Manual. The aim of the revision and clarification was to arrive at a clear and common understanding of the guidelines among the national correspondents, and to improve the quality and comparability of the information. The idea was not to alter the structure of the table. It had also been decided that the revised guidelines would only be implemented for the January 2012 update. At the MISSOC meeting, MISSCEO had been asked for its opinion on this table.

12. With regard to table III “Sickness”, the groups concluded that the tables were comparable and that the information was suitably concise. One of the groups noted, however, that in some cases, in the “Basic principles” section, certain items of information on financing listed in the Correspondent’s Manual had not been included. A number of discrepancies were noted in relation to the sections on temporary incapacity, the amount and extent of the benefits.

13. With regard to table X “Unemployment”, the correspondents considered a number of questions. The replies may be summarised as follows:

- Should we add a new category for youth unemployment, give that there is already a section for older unemployed persons?

Some participants felt it would be helpful to have information about youth unemployment. Most of the countries, however, had training schemes rather than specific benefits for the young unemployed. Some countries had specific arrangements for reducing the social security contributions of people under the age of 30.

- How is partial unemployment defined in your country? Is it properly reflected in the MISSCEO Correspondent’s Manual?

Although approaches differed, in most countries there was no definition of partial unemployment.

- Should the question about sanctions (in the sections on total unemployment and partial unemployment) be widened to include cases where a person refuses an offer of suitable employment?

The majority of participants thought that refusing an offer of suitable employment should be included in the section on sanctions. In the opinion of some, moreover, this section should deal only with the administrative sanctions (refusal of suitable employment, etc.) typically associated with this benefit. There was, moreover, no mention of criminal sanctions in the rest of the tables. It was worth noting that one country, Azerbaijan, had already referred to the possibility of sanctions if a person refused an offer of suitable employment. Another option mentioned was to include refusal of suitable employment under “conditions” in the sections on “total employment” and “partial employment”.

- Are there any other questions in this Table that would need to be reviewed?

In the section entitled “Benefits – Determining factors for the amount of benefits”, some participants wondered what these factors were and asked for clarification on this point. At the meeting, the following factors were cited by way of example: length of time worked, family composition and previous earnings.

Some correspondents wondered whether in the section entitled “Applicable statutory basis”, the date of the legislation should be given. The name or number of the statute should be specified so that it could be identified, but without going into too much detail, making the table difficult to read. Some correspondents mentioned minor problems with terminology, which meant that systems which were in fact very similar were sometimes barely recognisable.

One correspondent wondered whether the average wage in the country should not be shown alongside the amount of benefit. He referred here to a decision that had been approved by MISSCEO at its 9<sup>th</sup> meeting in 2009:

“Countries often used terms such as “minimum wage” and “minimum pension”. It would be very useful if, between brackets, the actual amounts were added in the national currency”.

To conclude, any correspondents who so wished were invited to add these data when next updating the tables.

14. Once again, this exercise was deemed to have been extremely beneficial.

## **VII. INTRODUCTIONS TO THE TABLES SUMMARISING THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEMS**

15. Further to the decision taken at the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of MISSCEO in 2010, the correspondents had prepared a written introduction to their social protection systems. The secretariat noted that practically all the countries had prepared these introductions, which were of a high calibre overall.

16. During the meeting, participants split into groups to examine and discuss group members’ introductions.

17. Paul SCHOUKENS felt there was much to be said for these introductions, saying that they allowed countries to describe their systems more loosely, and also covered certain aspects that did not appear in the tables. He made the following comments:

- Some countries referred to articles in the Constitution that dealt with social rights or social security, but did not say what the legal force of these articles was, a vital piece of information in his view;
- If countries wished to cite the text of the article or articles in the Convention, they were advised to do so in a footnote;
- He advised against mentioning future plans in the introductions;
- The structure of the introduction prepared by Croatia was a model of clarity and he urged the other countries to follow this example as far as possible.

18. The various groups drew attention to the following aspects:

- The basic terminology (social protection, social security and social assistance) should be used to define the same concepts;
- There was no mention of judicial protection in some of the introductions;
- There was no need to include information on trends in a particular system of social protection;

- The information on the financing of systems was in some cases confused and needed clarifying;
- In some cases, the administrative set-up took up a large part of the introduction, although that might be unavoidable depending on the structure of the country.

19. To conclude, although the introductions provided an opportunity to emphasise one particular aspect, the following information should nevertheless be included:

- How was the system structured?
- Was there any reference in the Constitution to social rights and the right to social security? In federal states, it could be that the Constitution also established the division of powers and responsibilities. If the Constitution contained no reference to the said rights, this fact should be mentioned as well;
- If there were some reference to these rights, what legal force did they have? Were the provisions in question essentially a statement of principles or were they used by, for example, the Supreme Court or the Constitutional Court?
- What kind of judicial protection was available for these rights?

20. It was decided that the comments on the introductions would be sent to the correspondents after the meeting and that the final version of these introductions should reach the secretariat by 30 September 2011 at the latest.

21. The introductions could be published separately in a more attractive, easy-to-distribute format, in order to give greater prominence to MISSCEO.

## **VIII. EVOLUTION OF NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS**

22. The correspondents outlined the main developments in their national social protection systems that had occurred in 2010 and the first half of 2011.

23. Ms CRNJAC PAUKOVIĆ reported on pension reform in Croatia, under which the retirement age was gradually being raised. Following a ruling by the Constitutional Court, the retirement age (65 years) would have to be the same for men and women from 2030.

24. Nenad RAKIC reported on the changes made to the mandatory pension scheme in Serbia at the end of 2010, which involved parametric reform measures. Among the most recent changes were an increase in cover and a rise in the number of people receiving pensions.

25. Vugar SALMANOV from Azerbaijan said that his country had ratified the ILO Convention on maternity protection and mentioned the self-help scheme launched in pilot regions to support small businesses.

26. Aleksandra SLAVKOSKA from “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” reported on the 10-year strategy for alleviating poverty and social exclusion and on various legislative changes, including those that eliminate the different age requirements for acquiring the right to family pension for widow/widower. She also provided some information on the new health care legislation which allowed for privatization of the specialized and consultative health care.

27. Mirha OSIJAN from Bosnia and Herzegovina told participants about the draft law on social protection which provided families with a basic level of protection, and also about the draft law on protection of the family and children.

28. Mr ZEYBEK briefed participants on the health care and unemployment branches of social security. A system of green cards had been introduced in Turkey, entitling unemployed citizens to medical treatment. He also pointed out that all citizens under the age of 18 years had the right to health care.

29. A number of national reports describing these developments had been sent to the secretariat. With a view to preparing the MISSCEO Info, it was agreed that any correspondents who had not yet done so would send their contributions to the secretariat by 30 September 2011.

## **IX. PREPARATION OF THE 2011 EDITION**

30. The second version of the MISSCEO tables had already been submitted by most of the correspondents. Any correspondents who had not yet done so were asked to submit this version by 30 September 2011.

31. The information in English would be made available online and sent for translation into French in October 2011. The French version should be available by the end of the year.

## **X. PLANNING OF THE 2012 EDITION**

32. The secretariat set out the schedule for preparing the 2012 edition:

- The secretariat would ask for the national contributions in January 2012.
- MISSCEO correspondents would have until 1 April 2012 to update their national contributions.
- Comments on the national contributions would be ready by 2 May 2012.
- The 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of MISSCEO would be held on 5 and 6 July 2012.
- MISSCEO correspondents would revise their national contributions, in the light of the discussions held at the meeting and the content co-ordinator's comments, by 30 September 2012.
- The final version of national contributions will be ready after supervision by the Secretariat by 31 October 2012.
- The 2012 MISSCEO data (English version) would be transferred by the secretariat to the Council of Europe database at the beginning of November 2012.
- The MISSCEO 2012 data would be translated into French in November 2012.
- The French version of the 2012 MISSCEO data would be transferred to the database in December 2012/January 2013.

## **XI. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**



33. None.

**XII. DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

34. The 14th meeting of MISSCEO would be held in Zagreb on 5 and 6 July 2012, at the invitation of the Croatian authorities.

## APPENDIX I

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

#### **ALBANIA / ALBANIE**

**Ms Diana BEQIRI**

**E**

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities  
Rruga e Kavajes nr 53, Tirana, ALBANIA

#### **ARMENIA / ARMÉNIE**

**Ms Gayane VASILYAN**

**E**

Chief Specialist, Strategic Programmes and Monitoring Department  
Ministry of Labour and Social Issues  
Government House 3, Yerevan 0010

#### **AZERBAIJAN / AZERBAÏDJAN**

**Mr Vugar SALMANOV**

**E**

Chief  
Division of social services policy  
Department of social security policy  
Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population  
85, Salatin Asgarova str., Baku AZ 1009

#### **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA / BOSNIE-HERZÉGOVINE**

**Ms Mirha OSIJAN**

**E**

Senior Expert Associate for Monitoring of Health Sector and Planning  
Department for Health  
Ministry of Civil Affairs  
Trg BiH 1  
Sarajevo 71000  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

#### **CROATIA / CROATIE**

**Ms Vanda CRNJAC PAUKOVIĆ**

**E**

Croatian Pension Insurance Institute  
Mihanovićeve 3, 10 000 Zagreb  
CROATIA

## **GEORGIA / GÉORGIE**

### **Mr Amiran DATESHIDZE**

**E**

Head of Social Issues and Program Division  
Department of Social Protection  
Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs  
144, Tsereteli ave, Tbilisi 0160, Georgia

## **MOLDOVA**

### **Ms Lilia CURAJOS**

**F**

Head of external relations Department  
Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child  
V. Alecsandri Str. 1, 2009 Kishinev,  
Republic of Moldova

## **MONTENEGRO**

### **Ms Ana STIJEPOVIC**

**E**

Senior adviser  
Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare  
Rimski Trg 46, Podgorica, 81000  
Montenegro

## **RUSSIAN FEDERATION / FÉDÉRATION DE RUSSIE**

### **Mr Alexander PREOBRAZHENSKIY**

**E**

Consultant  
International Cooperation Department  
Ministry of Health and Social Development, RF

## **SERBIA / SERBIE**

### **Mr Nenad RAKIC**

**E**

Department for Assurance in cases of Retirement and Invalidity  
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy  
22-26 Nemanjina Street, Belgrade

## **"THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA" / "L'EX-RÉPUBLIQUE YUGOSLAVE DE MACÉDOINE"**

### **Ms Aleksandra SLAVKOSKA**

**E**

Unit for Integration and Coordination of IPA  
Department for European Integration  
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

Dame Gruev, 14, 1000 Skopje

**TURKEY / TURQUIE**

**Mr Atilla Ethem ZEYBEK**

**E**

Assistant Expert

General Directorate of External Affairs and Services for Workers Abroad

Ministry of Labour and Social Security

Inonu Bulvari n°42, 06520 Emek, Ankara

TURKEY

**Mr Kutluhan YÜCEL**

**F**

Deputy Expert for Turkish Workers Abroad

General Direction of External Affairs and Services for Turkish Workers Abroad

Ministry of Labour and Social Security

Inonu Bulvari n°42, 06520 Emek, Ankara

**UKRAINE**

**Ms Iulia IAKUBOVSKA**

**F**

International Cooperation and EU Integration Unit

International Relations Department

Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION / COMMISSION EUROPEENNE**

**Mr Michiel BERREVOETS** (*apologised/excusé*)

**E**

Seconded National Expert

Policy Officer

Active Ageing, Pensions, Healthcare, Social Services

European Commission

Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Rue Joseph II, 1000 Brussels, BELGIUM

**CONSULTANTS**

**M. Claude EWEN**

**F**

Premier Inspecteur de la Sécurité Sociale

Direction du service international

Ministère de la Sécurité sociale

BP 1308, L-1013 Luxembourg

**Mr Paul SCHOUKENS**

**E**

Consultancy Europe and Social Security (CESS) bvba

Brouwersstraat, 33

B-3000 Leuven

Belgium

<b>SECRETARIAT</b>
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**COUNCIL OF EUROPE / CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**

F - 67075 Strasbourg Cedex

Tel : + 33 (0)3 88 41 20 00 - Fax : +33 (0) 88 41 27 81/82/83 - <http://www.coe.int>

**Directorate General III - Social Cohesion - Social Policy Department**

**Direction générale III - Cohésion sociale - Service des Politiques sociales**

**Ms Ana GOMEZ HEREDERO**

Administrator / Administratrice

Social Cohesion Policy and Standards Division

Division des Politiques et Normes de la Cohésion sociale

Tel: + 33 (0)3 88 41 21 94

Fax: + 33 (0)3 88 41 27 18

E-mail: [ana.gomez@coe.int](mailto:ana.gomez@coe.int)

**Ms Angèle BLAES**

Assistant / Assistante

Social Cohesion Policy and Standards Division

Division des Politiques et Normes de la Cohésion sociale

Tel : +33 3 90 21 52 34

Fax : +33 3 88 41 27 18

E-mail : [angele.blaes@coe.int](mailto:angele.blaes@coe.int)

**INTERPRETERS / INTERPRÈTES**

**Ms Claudine PIERSON**

**Ms Punam PURI-LEGER**

**Mr Robert WOLFENSTEIN**

## APPENDIX II

### AGENDA

- I. OPENING OF THE MEETING
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