



**Committee of Ministers  
Comité des Ministres**

Strasbourg, 16 August 1995

**CMD008789**

Restricted  
CM(95)112



For consideration at the 544th meeting  
of the Ministers' Deputies  
(11-14 September 1995, A level, item 6.2)

**SIXTH CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN MINISTERS  
RESPONSIBLE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY**

**(Lisbon, 29-31 May 1995)**

**Report by the Secretary General**

(Secretariat memorandum prepared by  
the Directorate of Social and Economic Affairs)

1. The 6th Conference of European Ministers responsible for Social Security was held in Lisbon from 29 to 31 May 1995 at the invitation of the Portuguese Government.
2. It was attended by representatives of all States belonging to the Council of Europe at the meeting date (15 were represented by Ministers, 7 by Secretaries of State or Under-Secretaries of State, and the remainder by an Ambassador or senior officials).
3. The Parliamentary Assembly was represented by a delegation headed by the Vice-Chairman of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee.

4. The Commission of the European Communities, the International Labour Office (ILO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also attended the Conference.

5. Albania, Croatia, the Holy See, the Russian Federation, "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Ukraine and the United States of America were represented at the Conference as observers.

6. A full list of participants appears in Appendix I.

7. The Conference was preceded by a hearing with representatives of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations (UNICE), the content of which was reported to the Conference by its Chairperson. The Conference was followed by an informal meeting of Heads of Delegation with Mr Daniel Tarschys, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, who expressed pleasure at the quality of the discussions.

8. The Conference was opened by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, whose inaugural address emphasised the importance of the proceedings which were to follow and their implications for the shape of future Council of Europe activities in the social security field.

9. At the proposal of Mr GRINAN MARTINEZ, Minister of Labour and Social Security of Spain, Mr J. FALCÃO E CUNHA, Minister of Employment and Social Security of Portugal, was elected Chairperson of the Conference; Mrs G. DEBONO, Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry for Social Development of Malta, was elected to the Vice-Chair.

10. The general theme of the Conference was:

"Dependence and Social Security".

The Conference discussed this theme on the basis of two reports. The first, presented by Mr J. FALCÃO E CUNHA, was entitled "The situation of dependence in relation to the protection afforded by social security", and the second, presented by Ms G. DEBONO, was entitled "The special needs of dependent persons, costs and financing". Co-reports on each of the themes were presented by Mr D. MUSTĂŢEA, State Secretary of Romania and by Ms A. OSTERMAN, State Secretary of Slovenia.

11. The Ministers also heard a number of statements and speeches, particularly by the representatives of the Commission of the European Communities, the International Labour Office and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

12. The Final Communiqué as set out in Appendix II was adopted at the end of the Conference, and reflects the following concerns in particular:

- the importance attached by the participants to the topics discussed in a context of ageing of the population and economic difficulties;
- the need to provide dependent persons with social protection affording them assistance suited to their needs and preferences, with due respect for their dignity and autonomy;
- the aim of giving helpers adequate status and social protection.

13. In fact it clearly emerged that the problem of dependence was destined to become a social challenge in the years ahead, owing to social and demographic trends characterised specifically by steady increase in life expectancy at a time when the economic situation was generating new constraints for social protection systems. In this context, the Conference asked the European Social Security Committee of the Council of Europe to take account of the issue of dependence when preparing its future programmes of activities, and notably

- to intensify the exchange of national experience and promote European co-operation;
- to create public awareness of the question of dependence;
- to prepare, if necessary, a recommendation defining the framework for improvement in the quality of life of dependent persons and dealing with the persons who take care of them.

14. Emphasis was placed on problems relating to the role of helpers as the mainspring of an effective policy on dependence and as a job-creating factor; the Conference was indeed aware of the possible direct and indirect repercussions of dependent persons' social protection on the creation of new jobs.

15. The Conference further stressed the importance which it attached to support for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in their transition, to ensure that they would allow for social protection of dependent persons and make it part of the new social protection structures established during the overhaul of their economic and social systems.

16. At the end of the proceedings the Ministers accepted the Maltese Government's invitation to hold the Seventh Conference of European Ministers responsible for Social Security in Malta. The theme of the next Conference will be determined through consultation among those responsible for its preparation, in accordance with the priorities and concerns of the Council of Europe member states. The Maltese authorities proposed subsequently to the Conference that the preparation of the Seventh Conference be assigned to a committee of senior officials.

APPENDIX I

**6th CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN MINISTERS  
RESPONSIBLE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY  
Lisbon, 29-31 May 1995**

**6e CONFERENCE DES MINISTRES EUROPEENS  
RESPONSABLES DE LA SECURITE SOCIALE  
Lisbonne, 29-31 mai 1995**

List of participants/  
Liste des participants

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M. Josep SEGURA SOLA	Conseiller, Directeur Gestions Techniques de la Caixa Andorrana de Seguretat Social

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Mr Helmut SIEDL	Head of International Social Insurance Division, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Ms Eva DANIHEL	Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

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Mme Elise WILLAME	Directeur d'Administration de la Direction générale des Etudes financières et statistiques, Ministère de la Prévoyance Sociale
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APPENDIX II

**FINAL COMMUNIQUE**

**A. Introduction**

1. At the invitation of the Portuguese Government, the 6th Conference of European Ministers responsible for Social Security took place in Lisbon from 29 to 31 May 1995, with Mr J. FALCÃO E CUNHA, Minister of Employment and Social Security of Portugal as Chairperson.

2. The Conference elected Ms G. DEBONO, Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry for Social Development of Malta, as Vice-Chairperson.

3. The Conference was attended by the Ministers, or their representatives, of member States of the Council of Europe<sup>1</sup>, a delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, as well as from the Commission of the European Communities, observers from Albania, Croatia, Holy See, Russian Federation, "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Ukraine and the United States of America. The International Labour Office (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Ibero-American Social Security Organisation (IASSO) also attended the Conference as observers.

4. The general theme of the Conference was:

"Dependence and Social Security".

The Conference discussed this theme on the basis of two reports. The first, presented by Mr J. FALCÃO E CUNHA, was entitled "The situation of dependence in relation to the protection afforded by social security", and the second, presented by Ms G. DEBONO, was entitled "The special needs of dependent persons, costs and financing". Co-reports on each of the themes were presented by Mr D. MUSTĂŢEA, State Secretary of Romania and by Ms A. OSTERMAN, State Secretary of Slovenia.

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<sup>1</sup> Participating States: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom.

5. The Conference was preceded by a hearing of representatives of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE).

6. The Ministers also heard a number of statements and speeches, particularly by the representatives of the Commission of the European Communities, the International Labour Office and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

## **B. Recent work undertaken at international level**

7. The Conference recalled

- the work done by the Council of Europe concerning dependence, and
- the work done by other international bodies, concerning, inter alia, the equalisation of opportunities for dependent persons (see document on "Work undertaken at international level on dependence", reference MSS-6 (95) 4)

and emphasised the importance of continuing the activities of the Council of Europe and other international bodies in the field of dependence.

## **C. Concerns of the Conference**

8. The Conference is conscious of:

9. the needs of dependent persons, by which is meant persons who by reason of loss of physical, psychological or intellectual autonomy require significant help to meet needs in connection with the usual day-to-day activities,

10. current demographic trends, particularly the ageing of the population which is characterised specifically by the increase in life expectancy and the growth in the numbers and percentage of the very elderly, trends which have led to an increase in dependence and attendant costs,

11. the impact of the current economic and social situation in the European countries on their systems of social protection, as well as the impact, in the near future, of economic, social and demographic changes,
12. the influence of the major changes in central and eastern European countries and of their consequences for their systems of social protection and of social security in particular,
13. the role of a coherent social policy in establishing a stable social climate and ensuring genuine social cohesion in Europe,
14. the increasing influence of dependence in Europe, both socially and financially, social protection being a means of preventing dependence and protecting the dependent,
15. the direct and indirect positive effects on job creation of social protection for dependent persons,
16. the need to examine how the various European countries deal with dependence,
17. the fact that some States already provide comprehensive protection in favour of dependent persons.

**D. Objectives to be achieved in the field of dependence**

18. The Ministers deem it appropriate to promote the following objectives:
19. to provide dependent persons with social protection by appropriate means, making it possible in particular to:
  - preserve the dignity of dependent persons particularly by maintaining and fostering their autonomy,
  - promote the quality of life and equal opportunities of dependent persons,
20. to organise or to adapt social protection systems, where necessary, so that they can meet the specific needs of dependent persons and provide them, within the framework of their own responsibilities, with as much choice as possible concerning their mode of life and type of care supplied,
21. to give social security/social assistance a more active role concerning dependence at national and European level, in order to encourage and permit the elaboration and testing of new techniques concerning coverage, quality of care and of living conditions of dependent persons,

22. to promote exchange of information between Council of Europe member States so that they can share their experience and new approaches to dependence with the aim of optimising care and its financing.

**E. Strategies to pursue and action to be taken**

23. For achievement of these objectives, shared by European countries, the Ministers consider it might be necessary, inter alia:

24. to develop specialised services and institutions, according to the needs and preferences of dependent persons,

25. to emphasize home care by ensuring that the infrastructure needed for this purpose is set up or maintained, i.e. the appropriate professional services, which must also be coordinated with the care provided by non-professional carers,

26. more particularly, to introduce and develop domestic nursing care, provide assistance with everyday life such as home help, appropriate means of transport and other forms of assistance,

27. to optimise the number of institutions able to accommodate dependent persons when home help is not possible, as well as care facilities and the quality of services within existing institutions, which could lead to job creation,

28. to pay particular attention to the training of professionals caring for dependent persons so that this training is adapted both to the needs of the dependent and the specific situations of the various categories concerned (e.g. geriatric training for doctors, nursing staff and other professional carers),

29. to give greater importance to the role of non-professionals (particularly family members) taking care of dependent persons, for example by providing them with suitable training,

30. to improve the situation of these helpers, many of whom have no clear status:

- by ensuring that they benefit from an adequate social protection and
- by granting them temporary respite by providing specific temporary care for that purpose,

31. to ensure optimum coordination of the work of the various parties caring for dependent persons,

32. to promote measures for the prevention of dependence and rehabilitation of dependent persons,

33. to promote the dissemination of information to the dependent, concerning the help and services available to them,

34. to promote public awareness of dependent persons' needs and to encourage and support solidarity and voluntary help,

35. to implement, as far as possible, systematic evaluation of care quality both in the home and in institutions,

36. to evaluate systematically needs of dependent persons and the different measures taken at national and local levels, and more particularly, to evaluate the direct assistance given to dependent persons (cash benefits and benefits in kind) as well as indirect assistance (tax relief, exemption from certain social security contributions) and publicly financed and more specific kinds of assistance (expenditure financed by compulsory levies or the role of national or local solidarity),

37. to use these evaluations to try to ensure that assistance for dependent persons is better targeted in order to obtain optimum redeployment of the available resources (financial and in kind),

38. as far as action to be taken by the Council of Europe is concerned, the Conference recommends that the European Social Security Committee of the Council of Europe be instructed to take account of the issue of dependence founded on the general principles and approaches laid down throughout this final communiqué, when preparing its programmes of activities and notably:

- to intensify the exchange of national experience and research on dependence in close co-operation with the Committees and Commissions of the Council of Europe and in particular with the Steering Committee on Social Policy, to enhance the development of social protection and by stepping up contacts between the representatives of Council of Europe member States, the academic and scientific world, researchers and generally all the bodies concerned at national and international level,

- to promote European cooperation, especially on the collection and dissemination of information,

- to support the countries of central and eastern Europe in their transition, so that they allow for social protection of dependent persons and make it a part of the new social protection structures established during the overhaul of their economic and social systems,

- to develop and promote effective measures to create public awareness of the question of dependence, particularly for the purpose of encouraging and supporting efforts at solidarity,



- to evaluate the situation of people taking care of dependent persons, taking into account the proposals made in the Recommendation No R (91) 2 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on social security for workers without professional status (helpers, persons at home with family responsibilities and voluntary workers),
- to prepare, if necessary, a recommendation which defines the framework for the improvement of the quality of life of dependent persons as well as the status of the persons who take care of them while also taking into account the above mentioned evaluation.

At the end of their deliberations, the Ministers thanked the Portuguese authorities for the excellent organisation of the Conference and their warm hospitality. They accepted with gratitude an invitation from the Maltese Government to hold their Seventh Conference of European Ministers responsible for Social Security in 1998. The theme of the Conference will be determined subject to consultation among those responsible for its preparation and in accordance with priorities and concerns of the member States of the Council of Europe.