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SAATE

Lähettiläjä: Sihteeristö
Vastanottaja: Valmistelukunta

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– Remarks regarding the “Social Europe”

Valmistelukunnan jäsenen sijainen Roberts Zile on toimittanut valmistelukunnan pääsihteerille liitteenä olevan esityksen.

Contribution from Mr Roberts Zile, alternate member of the Convention
Remarks regarding the “Social Europe”

1. Basic values

Common social values have already been set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Taking into account that the Charter of Fundamental Rights could be included in the future’s Constitutional Treaty and thus become legally binding, the article 2 of the Constitutional Treaty should set out the values of the Union in clear and concise manner. Therefore, in addition to values provided in the preliminary draft treaty, the values of equal opportunity, high level of social protection, health protection, solidarity among Member States and gender equality should be respected.

2. Social objectives

The future Constitutional Treaty should include general objectives such as promoting sustainable development, economical and social cohesion, social integration and gender equality. Additionally, I would like to propose to include in the Treaty a reference to the following objectives: protection and promotion of health, social inclusion and competitiveness.

3. The competences

The present delimitation of the competences between the Union and Member States in social field do not need to be modified. The management of social protection systems should remain in national competence.

Considering that the labour markets in the Member States are based on different traditions, an increased harmonization would not be desirable. What we can do on the European level instead is to assist the Member States in building sustainable welfare systems. We should avoid setting detailed EU-wide objectives, which would be inappropriate given the diversity of social systems in Member States.

4. The open method of coordination

The open method of coordination as a mutual feedback process of planning, examination, comparison and adjustment of the social policies of Member States is a useful tool ensuring an effective achievement of the common objectives. The open method of coordination has to ensure that procedures allow the Member States to have considerable flexibility in determining their specific goals. A reference to the open method of coordination could be included into the Constitutional Treaty.

Strengthened and streamlined process of the social and employment benchmarking would enable Europe to set common goals, while retaining the national flexibility to tackle them. We should

avoid setting EU wide “measurable objectives” which are inappropriate to the diversity of social systems in Member States.

5. The relationship between economic policy coordination and social policy coordination

There should be a strong link between economic and social co-ordination. Social and employment objectives can be introduced into the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines. This will allow to use economic potential of the Union for achieving high level of employment and social protection. It will also allow to implement the principle of solidarity by ensuring that people throughout the Union enjoy the same level of the social protection.

6. The procedures

The social policy areas that currently require unanimity cover politically sensitive issues of the Member States. Therefore we should be cautious regarding a wider application of the qualified majority voting into these policy areas. The funding and organisation of the social security systems should be decided by the Member States in order to take decision in the light of their own priorities.

7. The social partners

Social dialogue should be promoted between the different social partners at EU, national, regional and local levels. The social dialogue has an important role attaining the objectives of the Lisbon strategy. A general reference to the cooperation of social partners in the Constitutional Treaty would be desirable, providing the rights to freely choose appropriate configuration and substance of the cooperation.