

Insurance Europe's contribution to the Green Paper "Restructuring and anticipation of change: what lessons from recent experience?"

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Insurance Europe, the European insurance and reinsurance federation, would like to make the following comments on the questions raised by the European Commission in its Green Paper "Restructuring and anticipation of change: what lessons from recent experience?" of 17 January 2012.

- *Are the policy measures and practices outlined in the Green Paper in relation to the crisis, with special reference to short-time working schemes, appropriate?*

Insurance Europe believes that the measures and practices outlined in the Green Paper are an appropriate approach to deal with a crisis, and stresses that measures to reduce working time are particularly effective.

- *Finally, what can member states, the Commission or the social partners do to exchange, disseminate and encourage wider application of the best practices in this domain?*

Insurance Europe would like to highlight that the social partners discuss and exchange best practices in many ways at regional, national and European level. The member states and the European Commission could support them further by providing the necessary financial and organisational support to manage and carry out projects for the exchange and dissemination of experiences and practices.

As an example, the social partners involved in the Insurance Sectoral Social Dialogue (ISSDC) at European level have adopted a joint statement on addressing the demographic challenge in the European insurance sector in 2010. As a follow-up to this statement, they are now collecting good practices implemented in the sector across Europe, and, with the financial support of the EU institutions, they will disseminate these examples of effective initiatives in 2012 through the publication of a booklet and the organisation of a conference and a follow-up seminar.

- *What types of framework conditions are most appropriate in order to enable successful industrial adjustment?*

Companies need framework conditions which allow both the flexibility and the fast implementation of measures necessary to adapt unexpected events and developments. Therefore administrative barriers and extensive information duties should be reduced, if not removed. Mobile, dynamic and open labour markets are needed to enable successful industrial adjustment.

- *Is the anticipative approach feasible with regard to management of change and restructuring?*

It is essential to distinguish between short-term measures and long-term strategic planning. Companies have an obvious interest to remain competitive and therefore they already perform long-term-strategic planning for long-term challenges. With respect to fast-changing economic circumstances, companies need framework conditions enabling for rapid and flexible reactions.

- *How can the existing orientations and guidelines on restructuring be improved in the light of the lessons learned from the crisis and the new economic and social challenges? How can the lessons from the crisis be disseminated and implemented?*

Insurance Europe considers that the exchange of orientations and guidelines is most effective when it takes place within the branch and at local level. As mentioned above, the social partners exchange best practices in many ways and in different arenas at regional, national and European level.

- *What could strategic long-term and innovative approaches to the management of change, including employment and skills issues, be encouraged? How can synergy be improved between companies, local authorities and other local actors?*

As mentioned above companies need flexible framework conditions. Synergy between companies and local authorities can be improved in an effective manner by reducing bureaucracy.

- *How can effective practices for anticipating employment and skills needs within companies be further encouraged? How can training be developed as a permanent feature of human resources management?*

Companies need qualified and skilled employees. Insurance and reinsurance undertakings are aware of the demography challenge their sector is facing. They have taken a proactive approach towards this challenge by introducing many innovative and effective tools and measures in the field, for instance, of qualifications and lifelong learning. A sample of these successful initiatives will be published in 2012 in a booklet, which will be disseminated across Europe in the insurance sector and even beyond.

Lifelong-learning is one of the keys for employability. Companies do offer a wide range of opportunities for lifelong-learning. However, to be successful, these measures imply that, as mentioned in the ISSDC joint statement of 2010, *"for their part, employees have to be willing to become part of the lifelong learning process and ultimately to take responsibility for their own employability."*

- *What role social dialogue could play in better disseminating and encouraging best practices for the anticipation and management of restructuring?*

Insurance Europe believes that the role of the social partners should be strengthened. Regardless of the level, social partners are the main actors to help overcome restructuring processes. They have the expertise needed and their practical solutions and agreements are widely recognised and accepted by employers and employees. This being said, the company's management takes the responsibilities and risks for the decisions and, therefore, it should remain the final decision-taker, and employees' representatives should keep a solely consultative role.

- *What are the views of stakeholders (in particular national authorities and social partners' organisations) on whether some aspects of the employment protection systems need to be reviewed in the light of the intended transition towards anticipation and proactive protection of employment?*

Insurance Europe welcomes the flexicurity approach which, we understand, means more flexibility to reach security by a higher level of employment. Flexicurity provides employment protection on the one hand by allowing employers – through flexible work arrangement – to keep employees employed, and on the other hand by keeping the mobility high, allowing resources to be shifted where needed. In that respect, the job-to-job mobility of employees should be strengthened by reducing employment-obstacles such as heavy dismissals protection.

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