



Parliament of Denmark
European Affairs Committee

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Invitation to cluster meeting on "Free Movement & National Welfare Systems"

13 September 2013

Ref. 13-000949-1

Contact
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Dear Colleague,

Among the ideas discussed at the meeting for Chairs of European Affairs Committees in Copenhagen 11 March 2013 - and included in the Catalogue of Ideas distributed after the meeting - was the setting up of thematic meetings between clusters of national parliaments that have a shared interest in a specific issue.

As previously announced the Danish Parliament would like to organise such a first informal thematic meeting on the issue of "Free Movement & National Welfare Systems". The idea for this meeting has been supported by a number of you, and thus I hope to see members of your Parliament in Copenhagen 21 October 2013 from 10 am to 4 pm.

I propose to hold the meeting as a workshop, where an exchange of views, experiences and ideas can take place. I hope that as many Parliaments as possible will contribute to the discussions by presenting in brief the substance of the debate on this topic in their country. To introduce the topic and inspire our discussions I have put together a small programme of speakers.

I have invited Mr. Morin from the European Commission DG Employment to introduce the European perspective. To enlighten us further I have invited Professor Ferrera from the State University of Milan and Professor Martinsen from University of Copenhagen who are both experts in European welfare models and the challenges they are facing as a result of free movement.

With this letter, please find attached a preliminary programme for the meeting and the previously distributed *outline for discussion*.

Please let my secretariat know - as soon as possible - who will participate from your parliament.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eva Kjer Hansen', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Eva Kjer Hansen
Chairman of the European Affairs Committee
Danish Parliament

Outline for discussion

Workshop on free movement and national welfare systems

Purpose

National parliaments – being closest to the citizens - are crucial in ensuring democratic legitimacy of the European Union. Therefore the national parliaments in Europe have a special obligation to listen to people's concerns and to bring them forward. To dispel myths that may arise. And to put forward ideas and solutions. Providing an informal arena for a group of interested national parliamentarians to discuss difficult dilemmas is one way of fulfilling this obligation. This is why chairs of European Affairs Committees at the meeting in Copenhagen 11 March proposed to launch "clusters of interests" – where parliaments which share interest in a particular issue can meet and discuss this.

Dilemma

Free movement of EU citizens is one of the fundamental achievements of the European Union. Giving European citizens the possibility to live and work across the EU is not only a way to enrich people's lives, it is also economic sound to let the workforce follow job opportunities across borders and let students follow educational opportunities. However, national welfare systems claim to be challenged when met with abuse or unforeseen financial consequences of the free movement regime. Some even talk of a phenomenon called "benefits tourism" or "welfare shopping".

Is this challenge real or perceived? How can evidence be gathered in order to grasp the extent of the claimed challenge? How can we avoid undermining the concept of EU citizenship when addressing the issue of "welfare shopping"? How can social benefits schemes and national welfare systems better adapt to the realities of an area of free movement? Is there a need to adapt rules and regulation at the European level to take account of different welfare systems? Or is it a price worth paying for the greater good of free movement? How can we strike a balance between eliminating all barriers to free movement and preserving national welfare systems?

Proposal

To organise a workshop – a cluster of interest - that gives national parliamentarians with special interest and knowledge in this field the opportunity to debate these crucial and controversial issues.

Format

Informal workshop open to 1-2 parliamentarians from each chamber in the national parliaments of the EU.

Timing and venue

One day session in Autumn 2013. The Danish Parliament is prepared to host the event.

Out come

A paper with political views and ideas for solutions to be discussed in the participating parliaments and as appropriate to be sent to the European Commission for inspiration within the framework of the Political Dialogue.



CLUSTER MEETING ON FREE MOVEMENT & NATIONAL WELFARE SYSTEMS

Programme (Preliminary)

Venue: The Danish Parliament, Christiansborg Palace

Room: Landstingssalen

13. september 2013

Ref.: 13-000949-2

Iben Schacke

- 10.00** Welcome and introduction by Ms KJER HANSEN, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament
- 10.15** Intervention by Mr MORIN, Head of Unit for Free Movement of workers & Coordination of Social Security Schemes, European Commission, DG Employment
- 10.30** Intervention by Professor Mr FERRERA from the State University of Milan and Professor Ms MARTINSEN from University of Copenhagen
- 11.00** Q&A session with the speakers
- 12.00** Lunch
- 13.30** Workshops: Presentation of different national cases & exchange of experience
- 15.00** Plenary session - Summary of discussions
- 15.30** Reception