

OECD Roundtable, 18.03.2009 – Summary of the intervention of
A. Carparelli – European Commission

1. The need for more, better and timelier data is particularly felt at the level of supranational institutions, where the emphasis is on *commonly agreed and comparable* data. Here the constraints in terms of quality, coverage and timeliness are of course much higher than at national level. Example: the poverty indicators included in the Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2009, just released, are based on data referring to 2007 and sometimes to 2006, when unemployment was at an historical low!
2. In general, and without knowing them, the European Commission has followed all the recommendations listed in B. Nolan paper: we have explored the possibility to make better use of existing data (especially Labour Force surveys) and endeavoured to read employment data from a "social" perspective; we have planned to launch a special Eurobarometer to gauge public opinion perceptions of the social impact of the crisis and we are considering launching "flash" Eurobarometer on a quarterly basis; we have envisaged to make a greater use of simulation models (mainly EUROMOD, but may be not only) not only to estimate the impact of the economic downturn on poverty but also to estimate the pressure on social protection systems and the costs of policy responses; more importantly, we have launched an *ad hoc* exercise within the Social Protection, Committee and its Indicator Subgroup, asking Member States to answer a quite detailed questionnaire. Almost all Member States have replied, providing a wealth of information and insights on the social impact of the crisis, on the monitoring mechanisms that are being used, and on the responses that have been given.
3. The replies from Member States have been analysed by the Commission and summarised in a document that is now publicly available on the SPC website http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/spc_opinions_en.htm. Four lessons can be drawn from this exercise and the ensuing discussion in SPC:
 - A large majority of countries consider that available data and information is not sufficient to properly assess the social impact of the crisis;
 - Several MS see the need to broaden the scope of data and information collection and to make a more integrated use of existing sources, with a greater attention to administrative data;
 - Member States see in this exercise of sharing information and joint monitoring a considerable potential for mutual learning, and have expressed their willingness to deepen the reflection on the main social challenges that Member States are facing in the context of the crisis;

- The exercise reinforces the role of Open Method of Coordination as a method of voluntary coordination and to promote "evidence based policy responses", in a situation where all Member States feel that there are no easy solutions at hand;
4. An aspect that would deserve greater attention, given the expected magnitude of the present crisis, is the need to look beyond economic data, be it on employment or on income. Loosing a job has wide-ranging implications in terms of human capital, health, family dynamics, social relations, etc. All these aspects point to losses that need to be taken in due account when considering the "cost of non social policies".