

PRESSNOTE



Social Protection Reform Project
中国-欧盟社会保护改革项目

"Training in Spain" from 19 June to 3 July

The European Union-China Social Protection Reform Project has organised a training activity in Spain dealing with population ageing and pension reform

- Spain is one of the 7 partners in the EU consortium that is participating in the project
- The three lines of action cover strengthening institutions, financial management of social security funds and the legal and social policy framework

June 2016. The Spanish Ministry of Employment and Social Security is currently running a training activity for twenty-two institutional representatives from China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) with the aim of contributing to the projected reform of its social protection system along the lines of the systems already in place in the European Union.

The purpose of the cooperation programme with the EU is to help design a system of social protection for China capable of guaranteeing the maximum level of equality and social inclusion. The plan's three lines of action are: strengthen the institutional capacity to develop social protection policies focused on pensions; enhance the ability of public institutions to carry out financial management and supervise social security funds; and bolster the legal framework and social assistance policies, above all for older people.

The other six European countries forming part of the consortium together with Spain are: Belgium, France, Italy, Poland, the Czech Republic and Romania, which will manage a total of 8 million euros between them (7 million contributed by the EU and 1 million by China). The planned duration of the project is 48 months, with a permanent office in Beijing staffed by European experts and local personnel to maintain coordination.

The working sessions take place from 20 June to 2 July in Madrid and Valladolid. The sessions were opened by the acting State Secretary for Social Security, Tomás Burgos, the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Spain, Luy Fan, and the head of the NDRC delegation, Ha Zengyou. Taking part in the programme will be officials from central government and the regional government of Castile-Leon specialising in the management and administration of the Spanish Social Security and social protection systems.

Among the Social Security institutions involved in the project are the National Institute for Social Security, the General Treasury of the Social Security, the Social Marine Institute, and the Directorate General for Planning of the Social Security System. Also taking part will be the Labour and Social Security Inspectorate and representatives of the Ministry of Employment before the European Commission. Speakers will include representatives from the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality and the Ministry of Finance and Public Administrations, as well as international experts from the OECD, the European Commission and other members of the European Union such as Italy, France and Germany.

"It may appear that Spain and the People's Republic of China have very different social protection systems, but despite the differences, we share certain aspects," explained the State Secretary Tomás Burgos at the opening ceremony.

"Specifically, we share the concern for responding to the needs of our citizens with respect to their protection. And we also share the challenges posed by the future and the need to find a response to them. They include the demographic challenge and the sustainability of our systems of protection," he explained.

For Luy Fan, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Spain, the basic conditions in the two countries differ substantially. "We have a population of 1.3 billion and with a great imbalances, marked by rural poverty. Sharing experiences can help us make progress," he said.

Ha Zengyou highlighted that the ageing population "is a difficult and urgent problem" on which we have to "find formulas for collaboration in order to arrive at solutions".

A very extensive programme

Over the fifteen days, a number of different aspects will be studied that cover the impact of ageing on social security and the social protection of older people, as well as the need to deal with the demographic challenge and sustainability.

The first week will be held in Madrid and the second in Valladolid, with the subjects being dealt with from a theoretical and practical point of view.

Specifically, the agenda includes presentations on the Spanish Social Security system, social services and dependency, as well as the programmes for reducing poverty in Europe. Other issues to be tackled will be: demographic change; best practices in the reforms of the pension systems within the European Union, and the Spanish experience in particular; indexation models and sustainability factors; the role of the social partners; coordination of the European social security systems; and the different schemes included within the Spanish Social Security system.

This Training in Spain symposium forms part of the European Union-China Social Protection Reform Project. The project aims to boost equality and social inclusion in the economic development of Chinese society, as well as promoting cooperation and dialogue between the European Union and the People's Republic of China in this area.

Madrid, June 21st 2016

