OVERVIEW

In the context of the current gradual economic recovery, the over-indebtedness of households in the EU is tending to decrease somewhat. Nevertheless, the levels remain relatively high, especially in peripheral economies of the euro area, which might result in some persistent impediments to future economic growth. In addition, beyond the typical economic impact, persistent financial difficulties are also likely to have social consequences, notably by heightening social stratification. Regulators, lenders and consumers need therefore to continue to commit themselves to the task of overcoming the problem of over-indebtedness. This would require the adoption of converging definitions across the EU28 and innovative tools to prevent or tackle over-indebtedness, as well as further emphasis on a “shared responsibility” to explain and curb the phenomenon.

Against this background, CEPS will organise on Tuesday 26 January 2016 a conference on "Over-indebtedness of European households: myths and realities", with three main objectives:
- to understand the main drivers behind over-indebtedness,
- to highlight the main effects on borrowers and lenders, and
- to analyse innovative tools to tackle and/or prevent over-indebtedness.

AGENDA

10:30 Registration

11:00 Opening remarks by Karel Lannoo, Chairman, CEO of CEPS

11:10 Keynote Address
Philippe Lamberts, MEP, European Parliament

11:40 Session 1. Main drivers behind household over-indebtedness
- How to define over-indebtedness? What are the limits of this concept?
- What are the main drivers behind over-indebtedness (macroeconomic context, lending practices, borrowers’ habits, life changing events and/or inappropriate regulations)?
- Does the level of over-indebtedness inevitably depend on the macroeconomic cycle?

Keynote speech:
Béatrice Raoult-Texier, Head of Division, Banque de France

Panel Discussion
European Commission, DG SANCO (speaker to be confirmed)
Martin Schmalzried, Policy Officer, Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE)
Eva Sierminska, Research Fellow, Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Institute (LISER)
Gergely Mikola, Group Director of Corporate Affairs, International Personal Finance Plc

Moderator:

13:15 Lunch break
14:15 **Session 2. The effects of household over-indebtedness on borrowers and lenders**
- How do situations of over-indebtedness impact on the access of over-indebted to financial services as a whole?
- What is the relationship between deteriorating health and financial difficulties: cause or effect?
- What is the impact of arrears on banks (financial costs and loss of consumer confidence in banks) and the overall financial stability?

Hans Dubois, Research Officer, Living Conditions and Quality of Life (LCQL), Eurofound
Richard Ahlström, Head of the Department of Health and Welfare Studies, University of Malmö
Conor Mark O'Toole, Senior Economist, Financial Stability Division, Central Bank of Ireland

Moderator: Olivier Jérusalmy, Chairman of the EFIN European Financial Inclusion Network

15:30 **Session 3. Innovative tools to curb household over-indebtedness**
- Can early detection schemes contribute to alleviate the risk of non-reimbursement?
- Can financial education reflecting changing circumstances solve part of the problem?
- Can financial counselling help mitigate over-indebtedness?
- Can the application of behavioural insights to policies help curb over-indebtedness?
- How future European/domestic regulations should be designed?
- Concrete examples of innovative tools

Hans Dubois, Research Officer, Living Conditions and Quality of Life (LCQL), Eurofound
Michael Giese, Head of Product Management, Schufa Holding AG
Udo Reifner, Director of the Institut für Finanzdienstleistungen e.V.
Jan Siebols, Project manager Vroeg er op af, City of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Gundars Ostrovskis, Senior Economist, European Commission, DG FISMA

Moderator:

16:45 **Concluding remarks by Karel Lannoo**, Chairman, CEO of CEPS

16:50 **End of meeting**