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COVER NOTE

from: General Secretariat of the Council
to: Delegations
Subject: Work programme of the Social Protection Committee for 2013

Delegations will find attached the Social Protection Committee's work programme for 2013, as adopted by the Committee in accordance with its Rules of Procedure.



The Social Protection Committee

SPC work programme for 2013

Introduction

The Social Protection Committee's mandate is set in article 160 of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union (TFEU). The Committee will continue pursuing its mandate through the priorities set for 2013. Building on the solid experience acquired over the last two years working within the framework of the European semester and given the emphasis placed by the EPSCO Council on social protection issues within the European semester, the work of the SPC in 2013 will concentrate on the latter.

Further, the SPC will continue deepening its thematic work on social protection by fully exploiting the opportunities of the open method of coordination with a view to enhance coordination and mutual learning.

In 2012, the Committee succeeded in finalising important thematic reports for the attention of the Council and the Commission:

- It approved a third report on the social consequences of the crisis. Subsequently the Council endorsed key messages;
- It prepared a report on child poverty and child wellbeing for the European Commission which serves as a basis for the Commission recommendation. The Council adopted key messages as part of the Council conclusions on the same subject;
- It approved the Pension Adequacy Report. Subsequently, the Council endorsed key messages on pension adequacy.

To further develop the Committee's knowledge and expertise on social protection issues at EU level, the 2013 work programme will achieve a balance between the work within the European semester and the thematic work on social protection issues.

The work programme for 2013 therefore has three main priorities:

Priority I : European semester

The Committee will step up - in line with the wishes of the EPSCO Council - its involvement in the European semester so that the achievements of social protection reforms are properly reflected in the Council recommendations on the National Reform Programmes. The work programme will give priority to the SPC input in the European semester with reinforced surveillance in line with the synthesis report of the Presidency to General Affairs Council in November 2012 (Council document 15674/12),

The SPC inputs under priority I include:

- 1) Contribution to Council conclusions /or an opinion/ on the Annual Growth Survey and accompanying documents offering an analysis on social protection issues potentially appearing in the AGS and its accompanying documents;
- 2) Annual report on the social dimension of the European Union;
- 3) Country surveillance on Council recommendations and thematic in-depth reviews on the trends to watch established by the Social Protection Performance Monitor
- 4) Opinion to Council on the Commission proposal for Council recommendations on National Reform Programmes. This will be followed by an evaluation of the 2013 process for the attention of Council.

Priority II : Reaction to EU initiatives and implementation of previous decisions

The SPC inputs under this priority include:

1. The Committee, in agreement with the Presidency, may prepare a contribution to Council regarding the Commission social investment package planned for 2013.
2. The Committee will pursue the project on the financing of social security schemes and effectiveness of social protection spending, particularly after the publication of the Social Investment Package of the Commission.

3. Following the European Council conclusions from 14 December 2012 on completing the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and in co-operation with the Employment Committee, the SPC will carefully reflect and report to Council on the social dimension of the EMU in the short, medium and long-term, including social dialogue. As a first step, the Committee will map out key ingredients and prerequisites of the social dimension of the EMU¹.

Priority III : Implementation of mandates received from Council

Finally, the Committee will continue implementing mandates it received from Council:

- 1) To present its views to Council on actions recommended within the Europe 2020 policy cycle (Council conclusions, 1st December 2011) and to further strengthen multilateral surveillance, on the basis of the National Reform Programmes and the open method of coordination (Council conclusions, 17th February 2012) ;
- 2) To undertake work on the financing of the social protection systems, inviting other relevant Committees to take part in this important work (see point 9 of Council conclusions 17th February 2012
- 3) To regularly monitor pension adequacy (Council conclusions, 21st June 2012);
- 4) To continue the work on improving agreed EU indicators as regards, in particular, child deprivation, child well-being, affordable and quality childcare for all income groups, children's health, as well as the situation of the most vulnerable children and improve work with other Committees in this area(Council conclusions, 4th October 2012) and further deepen its cooperation and joint work with the relevant EU Committees and High-Level Groups;
- 5) As part of the OMC, to collect, analyse and exchange information on new, efficient and effective methods to deliver social services (Council conclusions, 21st June 2012)

¹ Within the provisions of the current Treaty

The 2013 SPC work programme will be based on two pillars:

1. Structural activities;
2. On-going activities

1. Structural activities

1.1. SPC opinion to Council on 2013 recommendations on the National Reform Programmes

The Committee's opinion to Council on the Commission proposal for Council recommendations in 2013 will be based on strengthened multilateral surveillance which will include three forms:

- country surveillance on the implementation of Council recommendations to Member States issued in July 2012;
- country surveillance on NRPs 2013;
- thematic in-depth reviews on social 'trends to watch' established by the Social Protection Performance Monitor

As regards the surveillance on the recommendations examined by SPC in June 2012, the Committee will discuss progress made by Member States and reach conclusions in plenary. In its evaluation in autumn 2013, the Committee will reflect on possible new ways for carrying out the surveillance. While the surveillance linked to the Council recommendations and the National Reform Programmes will take place in the first half of the year, the in-depth reviews on the social trends to watch will take place, as a rule, in the second half of the year.

For the purpose of the country surveillance, Member States will be paired throughout the year. This will allow for organising the multilateral surveillance on the basis of stable 'pairs' composed of 'reviewing' and 'reviewed' Member States.

Each surveillance review will produce conclusions adopted by the Committee. These conclusions will assess the implementation record of Member States by taking a comprehensive look at all factors relevant for the implementation status of the examined recommendation.

When preparing its opinion to Council, the Committee will continue to seek joint positions with other Committees.

1.2 In-depth reviews on the social 'trends to watch' of the Social Protection Performance Monitor

In-depth reviews will address the social trends to watch as established by the Social Protection Performance Monitor. These reviews will take place, as a general rule, in the second half of the year.

The in-depth reviews will be introduced by the Commission through a thematic note on the 'trends to watch'. The 'reviewing' Member States will be those concerned by the 'trends to watch' while Member States with positive outcomes will play the role of reviewed Member States ('reversed pairs'). On the basis of a short presenting document received from the reviewed Member State, the reviewing Member State will prepare a country fiche analysing the key successful factors identified in the policy approach of the reviewed Member State. The Committee will conclude each session with conclusions on how to address the social trend to watch taking into account the Commission's input and the country analysis.

This examination will help the Committee gain a deeper understanding of the different socio-economic variables likely to exert an influence on the social trends to watch in Member States, the applied policy approaches, their effectiveness and transferability. It will also discuss the progress towards the objectives of the OMC.

1.3 SPC Annual Report on the social dimension of Europe and the Social Protection Performance Monitor

In 2013, the Annual Report on the social situation will be prepared on the basis of strategic updates of the 2012 National Social Report covering the annual development of social protection policies focussing on recent reforms. The report will also draw on available data at the time of publication. On the basis of the annual report, the Committee will submit key messages to Council for its session in October 2013.

The next generation of National Social Reports will be submitted in 2014. The Social Protection Performance Monitor 2013 will be presented to subsequent Council meetings.

2. On-going activities

Financing of social protection:

To comply with the Council mandate (see point 9 of Council conclusions 17th February 2012) "*to undertake work on the financing of the social protection systems, inviting other relevant Committees to take part in this important work*" and to further develop its work undertaken in the Joint social protection report 2008 on the same topic, the SPC will launch in 2013 the work on **financing of social protection systems and efficiency and effectiveness of social protection expenditure**. For this purpose the Committee will set up an expert group which will launch the work after carrying out a thematic review on this subject with a view to create county knowledge and identify areas for further examination.

3. Supporting work by the Indicators Sub-group

In line with the priorities set by the SPC for 2013, the ISG will continue the analysis of the poverty and social exclusion target, especially in view of the mid-term review planned for 2014-15. It will continue its work on improving the Social Protection Performance Monitor (based on the first year of experience) and the Joint Assessment Framework (by exploring the feasibility of developing two further policy areas related to health and pensions). It will finalise the review of the portfolio of EU indicators on social inclusion and social protection in line with the needs and role of the social OMC in the Europe 2020 context. In the context of this work, specific focus will be given to the review of the indicators related to the health care dimension and examining the dynamics of poverty. It will also start the preparatory work leading to the next Pension Adequacy report. The ISG will contribute actively to the preparation of the 2013 Annual SPC Report. It will continue its work on strengthening the child dimension of the portfolio of EU indicators on social inclusion and social protection. It will continue its on-going work on enhancing the statistical capacity related to the three strands of the OMC and its active collaboration with Commission services, especially Eurostat, other international organizations and research institutions.

4. Working methods for 2013

In 2013, the Committee will hold monthly meetings of 1.5 days. The Committee may hold additional meetings upon decision of the Chair in cases where it needs to examine the proposal of the Commission for Council recommendation on the National Reform Programmes. The Committee may also hold joint meetings with other Committees.

In the context of the European semester, the co-operation between the SPC and other Committees, in particular EMCO, EPC and EFC, will be guided by the recommendations of the synthesis report of the Presidency as examined by the General Affairs Council in 2012 (Council document 15674/12).

Annex 1 shows the indicative dates of the SPC meetings for 2013 as well as the likely distribution of tasks to be performed (this annex will be removed from the work programme before it is referred to the Council).

SPC working groups

The SPC-AGE group will concentrate its work on long-term care issues until mid-2013. Thereafter, the SPC-AGE group will be composed of pension experts to prepare, in co-operation with the ISG, the next Pension Adequacy Report.

The SPC group on Social Services of General Interest will submit its final report to the SPC in June 2013. Thereafter the Committee will decide whether to give further mandate to the SSGI working group.
