



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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DRAFT MINUTES

Subject: **3226th** meeting of the Council of the European Union (**EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS**) held in Brussels on 28 February 2013

PUBLIC DELIBERATION ITEMS¹

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¹ Deliberations on Union legislative acts (Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union), other deliberations open to the public and public debates (Article 8 of the Council's Rules of Procedure).

NON-LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES - PUBLIC DEBATES

(Pursuant to Article 8(2) of the Council's Rules of Procedure [proposed by the Presidency])

3. Proposal for a Council Recommendation on "Establishing a Youth Guarantee"

(Legal basis proposed by the Commission: Article 292 of the TFEU)

– Political agreement

17585/12 SOC 996 ECOFIN 1060 EDUC 372 JEUN 106 REGIO 159

6463/13 SOC 104 ECOFIN 116 EDUC 49 JEUN 15 REGIO 21

The Council reached a political agreement on the Recommendation, as set out in doc. 6463/13.

CZ and PT entered statements into the Council minutes.

The version sent for juristic-linguistic revision is to be found in doc. 6944/13.

Statement by Portugal

"Portugal welcomes the approval of the Youth Guarantee which it considers a very important instrument for combating the social scourge of youth unemployment.

We consider that paragraph 28 of the Recommendation should be interpreted in line with the conclusions of the European Council meeting on 7 and 8 February 2013, namely those contained in paragraph 59 referring to the Youth Employment Initiative: (...) *It will act in support of measures set out in the youth employment package proposed by the Commission in December 2012 and in particular to support the Youth Guarantee (...).*"

Statement by the Czech Republic

"The Czech Republic considers youth unemployment as one of the key challenges of the European labour markets, with potential long-term negative impacts on the whole generation. The Czech Republic therefore supports actions and tools aimed at tackling youth unemployment and promoting integration of young people into the labour market, including the Youth Guarantee. However, considering the variety of situation and conditions among the Member States, and the demanding challenges for the public employment services in the current period of high overall unemployment and fiscal restraints, the Czech Republic would have welcomed a higher flexibility in setting the deadline for guaranteeing activation measures to the young unemployed."

4. Communication from the Commission on "Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion – including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020"

– Presentation by the Commission

6380/13 SOC 99 ECOFIN 110

+ ADD 1- ADD 8

6671/13 SOC 116 ECOFIN 126

The Council took note of the Commission's presentation.

5. **European Semester 2013: Contribution to the European Council on 14 and 15 March 2013**

- Policy debate
6199/13 SOC 89 ECOFIN 98 EDUC 44 POLGEN 20

The Council held a policy debate on the basis of a Presidency note (6199/13) on issues relevant to the Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Semester and the Annual Growth Survey (AGS), including the Joint Employment Report (JER). The results of this debate were reflected in the Presidency Synthesis Report (7236/13). The Council Conclusions and the Joint Employment Report were submitted as the EPSCO Council's contribution to the European Council of 14-15 March.

a) **The Annual Growth Survey and the Joint Employment Report in the context of the European Semester: political guidance on employment and social policies**

- Adoption of Council conclusions
6462/13 SOC 103 ECOFIN 115 EDUC 48

The Council adopted the conclusions. The final version of the conclusions is to be found in doc. 6936/13. These conclusions were forwarded to the European Council.

HU and MT entered statements into the Council minutes.

Statement by Hungary

"Hungary generally agrees with the priority of the Annual Growth Survey that Member States should implement growth- and employment friendly fiscal consolidation measures to preserve future growth potential and adequate social protection.

As regards growth-friendly fiscal consolidation, Hungary reiterates its commitment towards a more employment-friendly tax system. To this end Hungary will continue to shift the burden of taxation away from labour.

At the same time, Hungary reserves the right to decide on matters falling within the scope of exclusive national competence such as those in the area of taxation.

Hungary expresses its concerns over the procedure applied to adopt Council conclusions related to the European Semester. These discussions should be based on open dialogue both at Committee level (EMCO, SPC) and political level (Coreper) and should be prepared by the Social Questions Working Party in substance. The expert level discussions in the preparatory committees provide for professional background, but these expert bodies can by no means substitute political leadership.

For these reasons, Hungary considers that the procedure needs to be revisited at the earliest – taking into account lessons learnt from previous European Semesters –, so that it can bring political messages that each Member States take full ownership of."

Statement by Malta

"We wish to express our reservations on the process being used to adopt Council Conclusions in relation to matters related to the Europe 2020 strategy.

We fully respect the role of the Treaty-based committees, notably the Employment Committee (EMCO) and the Social Protection Committee (SPC), in reporting to EPSCO according to Articles 150 and 160 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and we credit their work in preparing matters Council conclusions related to the Europe2020 strategy. Nevertheless, we consider that following such a preparatory stage at committee level, the due process leading to the EPSCO Council must also be respected and retained, notably through the preparation of the Council documents by both the Social Questions Working Party and COREPER.

In a regretful repetition of last year's experience, the procedure currently being followed does not allow for this due process to be fulfilled. Member States representatives at both working party level and at COREPER level are not being given the faculty of thoroughly analysing and debating the texts referred to them by EMCO and SPC. Rather, what is requested is but a simple endorsement of what resulted from one single discussion in these committees.

This regrettable situation leads to the adoption of Council Conclusions that have not been debated fully at all appropriate levels, resulting in Member States not being able to take ownership of the political messages contained therein.

For these reasons, we consider that this procedure needs to be revisited at the earliest."

- Adoption of the Joint Employment Report
16669/12 ECOFIN 984 SOC 959 COMPET 728 EDUC 358 ENV 885
RECH 433 ENER 493 FISC 180
+ ADD 2
+ ADD 2 REV 2 (sk)
6545/13 SOC 108 ECOFIN 120 EDUC 51 JEUN 16

The Council adopted the Joint Employment Report. The final version of the Report is to be found in doc. 6799/13. The Report was forwarded to the European Council.

b) Proposal for a Council Decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States

- General approach
17244/12 SOC 982 ECOFIN 1022 EDUC 367
+ COR 1 (en)
6509/13 SOC 106 ECOFIN 118 EDUC 50

The Council reached a general approach as set out in doc. 6509/13.

c) **The social situation and trends to watch in the European Union: Key conclusions and policy messages (prepared by the Social Protection Committee)**

- Endorsement
6138/13 SOC 83

The Council endorsed the key conclusions and policy messages on the social situation and trends to watch in the European Union as set out in doc. 6138/13.

6. **Tripartite Social Summit: Preparation of the meeting on 14 March 2013**

- Oral information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on the preparation of the next Tripartite Social Summit taking place on 14 March 2013.
