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#### COVER NOTE

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations  
Subject: Work Programme of the Social Protection Committee for 2017

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Delegations will find attached the 2017 Work programme of the Social Protection Committee and its permanent and temporary subgroups, with a view to the meeting of the EPSCO Council on 3 March 2017 (Any Other Business item).



# The Social Protection Committee

## 2017 SPC Work Programme

The Social Protection Committee (SPC) is an advisory policy Committee, established in accordance with art. 160 of the TFEU, providing representative forum for multilateral social policy coordination, dialogue and cooperation at EU level. It brings together senior policy makers from all EU Member States and the Commission in an effort to discuss and identify the most appropriate policy measures necessary to respond to the social policy challenges across the EU. The Committee actively participates, on behalf of the Council of the European Union for employment, social affairs and health, in the European Semester process of policy coordination as per Article 2 (2b) of Council Decision (EU) 2015/773 establishing the SPC.

The Treaty-based mandate of the SPC stipulates that the Committee monitors the social situation in the EU and the development of social protection policies.<sup>1</sup> SPC delivers on this mandate through the use of the social open method of coordination as the main policy framework, including all major social policy strands: social inclusion, pensions, health and long-term care.

The SPC may, if necessary, prepare additional reports, formulate opinions or undertake other work within its fields of competence, at the request of the Council, the Commission or its own initiative as per Article 2(1c) of the Council Decision 2015/773, establishing the Committee.

### 1. Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Semester and the social dimension of the EMU

#### **Contribution to the EPSCO input for the Spring European Council**

SPC will contribute to the preparation of the EPSCO input to the Spring European Council with its assessment of the social protection issues raised in the Commission 2017 Annual Growth Survey and its accompanying documents, notably the 2017 Joint Employment Report, including the scoreboard of key employment and social indicators.

	Activities	Deliverables to the Council
1 <sup>st</sup> half 2017	Reaction to the 2017 Annual Growth Survey (AGS) and Joint Employment Report, offering an analysis of the relevant social protection and social inclusion issues	Contribution to the drafting of the Council Conclusions on the 2017 AGS and JER: political guidance on employment and social policies – March EPSCO
1 <sup>st</sup> half 2017	Examination and input into the Joint Employment Report and its key messages on issues related to social protection and social inclusion, including the analysis of key employment and social indicators	Input through EMCO

<sup>1</sup> Art. 160 TFEU

### **Multilateral implementation reviews**

The SPC will continue its multilateral surveillance on the implementation of policy reforms to address the Council country-specific recommendations. It will inform the Council of its views on the social protection and social inclusion aspects of the Commission Country Reports, including the in-depth reviews provided for under art. 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011. In this context, Member States will have the opportunity to report on past measures but also on intentions for future measures as a form of ex-ante discussion of social policy reforms. It will also follow-up on the implementation of the social protection aspects of the Eurozone recommendation in cooperation with the **Employment Committee (EMCO)** and the advisory Committees of the ECOFIN Council.

It will explore ways of further strengthening its working methods and the multilateral nature of the reviews undertaken by the Committee. It will engage in joint reviews with other Council advisory committees and the **Working Party on Public Health at Senior Level (WPPHSL)**, where relevant. The Committee will make use, where appropriate, of the results of the peer review programmes and successful social policy innovation projects.

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Deliverables to the Council</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> half 2017</b>	<b>Multilateral examination of the implementation of the 2016 Council country-specific recommendations in the area of social protection and social inclusion and the relevant issues in the 2017 Commission Country Reports</b>	Horizontal opinion and country-specific conclusions

### **Review of the proposals for Council country-specific recommendations and Eurozone recommendation**

The Committee will prepare the Council's adoption of the 2017 country-specific recommendations by reviewing all Commission proposals for country-specific recommendations falling under its Treaty-based competence on issues related to social protection and social inclusion. In its assessment, it will use the conclusions of the multilateral implementation reviews to be carried out in the first half of the year. It will adopt joint opinions with other Committees on all recommendations falling under joint competence. It will examine in the second half of the year any social protection issues which may be included in the Commission proposal for Eurozone recommendation, in cooperation with the **Employment Committee (EMCO)** and the advisory Committees of the ECOFIN Council, and contribute to the preparation of the EPSCO views.

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Deliverables to the Council</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> half 2017</b>	<b>Country-specific opinions to the Council on the 2016 Commission proposals for Council recommendations on the National Reform Programmes</b>	Country-specific opinions – June EPSCO

## **Monitoring of the social situation and developments in social protection policies**

The SPC will continue its monitoring of the social situation in the EU, including the progress towards the Europe 2020 poverty and social exclusion target and the identification of key social challenges and good social outcomes, and the development of social protection policies as per its Treaty mandate. It will produce its annual report on the results of the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) and the analysis of the main trends in the evolution of social protection policies for the October EPSCO. On this basis, it will propose for endorsement by the October EPSCO key messages on the main policy priorities in the area of social protection and social inclusion in view of the Commission preparatory work for the 2018 Annual Growth Survey. An intermediate update of the SPPM dashboard will be produced by Spring 2017, to take account of the availability of the full set of results from EU-SILC 2015.

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Deliverables to the Council</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> half 2017</b>	<b>Preparation of an annual report on the social situation in the EU and overview of social protection reforms on the basis of the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) and reporting by Member States</b>	Report + Main messages on the social situation and key social policy priorities as input to the preparation of the 2018 Annual Growth Survey – October EPSCO

## **2. Social OMC**

### **2.1 Social reporting**

By the end of June, SPC members will submit their annual social reporting on the basis of a permanent module on the main areas of social protection policies, and a thematic module whose topic will be decided by end of February. All MS will be invited to submit the social reporting in order to ensure comparability and the possibility of comprehensive analysis. The underlying questionnaires of both modules will be approved by the SPC by February. They will contain the possibility for delegates to avoid duplication of reporting by indicating where the requested information has already been reported (e.g. NRP, multilateral surveillance), or flag if there is nothing to report on the given issue.

### **2.2. Thematic work**

The SPC will continue its thematic work on relevant issues related to social inclusion, pensions, health and long-term care. In the selection of thematic areas for discussion, it will take into account policy priorities of the Maltese ('moving away from benefit dependency and making work pay') and Estonian (long-term care and deinstitutionalisation) Presidencies as well as the Commission 2017 work programme. In this context, topics for thematic work may include: i) gaps in access to social protection, including for atypical workers and categories of self-employed, and ii) the role of social protection systems in making work pay, iii) long-term care and deinstitutionalisation.

The Committee will also contribute with its expertise on relevant social protection aspects of the Commission's work-life balance initiative, in cooperation with EMCO.

Following the joint SPC-EMCO opinion on the European Pillar of Social Rights, the SPC will actively follow the related Commission proposals and will contribute accordingly.

SPC will monitor the developments following the Commission communication "On steps towards completing EMU"<sup>2</sup> and contribute its expertise to discussions on the development of potential benchmarks in the policy areas within its mandate.

It will start the preparation of the 2018 Pension Adequacy Report through an ad-hoc working group on Ageing Issues (WG-AGE).

Based on the outcome of its discussion on the role of social protection systems in facilitating the social inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers, the SPC will decide the appropriate follow-up for 2017.

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Deliverables to the Council</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> half 2017</b>	<b>Thematic review on the role of social protection systems in making work pay</b>	<b>Input for the Informal EPSCO meeting and Council Conclusions on 'Making work pay'</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> half 2017</b>	<b>Thematic reviews on gaps in access to social protection</b>	
<b>2017</b>	<b>Contribution to the Commission work on the European pillar of social rights</b>	
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> half 2017</b>	<b>Thematic review on long-term care and deinstitutionalisation</b>	
<b>2017</b>	<b>Preparation of the 2018 Pension Adequacy Report through the WG-AGE</b>	

### 3. Input from working groups

#### 3.1 Contribution of the Indicators' Subgroup (ISG)

The SPC will continue to be supported in its work by the Indicators' Sub-group, which will focus its work during 2017 on the following issues: monitoring and analysis of the 2020 poverty and social exclusion headline target, including improvement of the severe material deprivation indicator and the scope for improvement of the (quasi-)jobless household indicator, following work on improving the timeliness of social indicators and on the production of flash estimates of key income-based indicators, producing the SPPM results and related analysis of the social situation in the EU and developing a common methodology and policy indicators for measuring the quality of social services. It will also explore indicators of the performance of social policies, policy packages and the policy drivers behind social outcomes, and strive for an enhanced capacity to assess social impacts. The ISG will also continue working on the identification and development of indicators on benefits coverage, income support and in-kind services, and explore indicators and possible benchmarks in the area of minimum income. A major effort will be the cooperation with the SPC WG-AGE on indicator related aspects in the context of the production of the 2018 Pensions Adequacy Report. The ISG will also work together with the Commission on social indicators for monitoring of the UN Sustainable Developments Goals, and continue the work on further developing the capacity for monitoring of health policies. It also stands ready to provide support regarding any potential activities related to the work on the European pillar of social rights.

<sup>2</sup> COM(2015) 600 final, 21.10.2015

### **3.2 Contribution of the ad-hoc Working Group on Ageing Issues (WG-AGE)**

The WG-AGE will work on the preparation of the 2018 Pension Adequacy Report according to its approved terms of reference and respective time frame.

### **4. Working methods and relations with other Committees**

In its cooperation with other policy Committees (EMCO, EPC, EFC) and with the Working Party on Public Health at Senior Level (WPPHSL), the SPC will be guided by Council Decision (EU) 2015/773 establishing the SPC, the European Council Conclusions of 24-15 October 2013 calling for more work to strengthen cooperation between the various Council configurations in order to ensure consistency of the economic, employment and social policies in line with the common EU objectives. This includes joint meetings and coordination of the views on different cross-cutting policy issues.

### **5. Cooperation with the EU social partners' organizations and social NGOs**

SPC will continue its practice, consolidated in previous years, on consultation with social partners and social NGOs at key moments in the European Semester and in relation to the Committee's thematic work.

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