

14349/14

(OR. en)

PRESSE 525
PR CO 51

PRESS RELEASE

3339th Council meeting

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs

Luxembourg, 16 October 2014

President **Giuliano POLETTI**
Minister for Employment and Social Policy of Italy

P R E S S

Main results of the Council

Mid-term review of the EU 2020 strategy

The Council held a policy debate on the mid-term review of the [EU 2020](#) strategy, including the European Semester. The President of the Council, Giuliano Poletti, said: "We had a fruitful discussion, analysing both the limits and effectiveness of the existing tools, with a view to identifying those measures deemed necessary to give new impetus to the revised Strategy and address the multiple challenges we will be facing in the coming years."

Platform against undeclared work

The Council reached a general approach on a decision establishing a new Platform to improve prevention and deterrence of undeclared work. Minister Poletti said: "Undeclared work unfortunately represents a widespread phenomenon which has a negative impact on workers, businesses and governments. I am glad that, during the Italian Presidency, the Council reached an agreement on the proposal for establishing a European Platform to tackle undeclared work".

Ministers also discussed "parental and maternity leave: a way to reconcile work, family and private life".

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

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.....

Commission:

Ms Martine REICHERTS

Member

Mr László ANDOR

Member

ITEMS DEBATED

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

EU platform against undeclared work

The EPSCO Council today agreed a general approach on a decision establishing a Platform to improve cooperation at EU level in order to prevent and deter undeclared work more effectively ([13667/14](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

The proposal envisages the mandatory participation of all member states in the Platform and a non-exhaustive list of initiatives the Platform can carry out. At the same time, Council's general approach ensures that the member states would remain competent to decide on their level of involvement in the Platform's initiatives. Member states could also decide what measures to take at national level to give effect to the outcomes of these initiatives, depending on their own priorities and needs in the prevention and deterrence of undeclared work.

The Platform's tasks would include analysing policy measures taken until now, developing knowledge banks on different measures, and developing tools and handbooks for member states' cooperation.

The nature of undeclared work varies from one country to another, as well as the measures to tackle it. The Platform would allow the member states to learn from each other and would also give them the tools to join forces, where necessary, in curbing undeclared work.

The Platform would involve the social partners at EU level, both cross-industry and in those sectors more severely affected by undeclared work, and cooperate with relevant international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation and EU decentralised agencies, in particular Eurofund and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.

The Platform would work on the basis of two-year work programmes, setting out its detailed tasks covering all aspects related to undeclared work such as labour law, labour inspections, health and safety, social security, tax and migration. It would also regularly inform the European Parliament and the Council about its activities.

This general approach will be the Council's basis for negotiations with the European Parliament.

Europe 2020 strategy mid-term review

The Council held a policy debate on the mid-term review of the EU 2020 strategy and the European Semester.

The Council took stock of the Europe 2020 strategy, adopted in 2010, which sets five headline goals covering employment, education, social inclusion, innovation and climate/energy. Given the key importance of employment and social targets in the Europe 2020 strategy, the EPSCO Council is a major contributor to the ongoing mid-term review. The European Semester evaluation was also part of the debate, as it is an important instrument in the implementation of the strategy.

Ministers' interventions can be summarised as follows:

EU 2020 strategy is the right framework, the long-term strategy needed for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. EU 2020 employment and poverty targets are also right but, unfortunately, the crisis and a long recession have prevented or slowed down their attainment.

There is no need for new goals or targets but a better coordination and balance between economic and fiscal policies and social policies so as to achieve sufficient growth, jobs and social cohesion.

All stakeholders, including social partners, national, regional and local Parliaments have to be consulted and to participate in planning social and employment policy measures.

The crisis increased social exclusion and poverty. In order to overcome them in the five years ahead, member states should take supply-side measures and invest in human capital by providing young people with training, qualifications and skills possibilities, as well as by giving older workers easier access to the labour market and by promoting gender equality. Job creation will also depend on demand-side measures.

All initiatives, such as the youth employment initiative, must be fully implemented in the framework of the European Semester, a process which must still be further improved.

In March 2014, the Commission adopted a [communication](#) entitled "Taking stock of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth", drawing preliminary lessons from the first years of implementation of the strategy.

Progress towards the targets of the Europe 2020 strategy has been mixed. The EU is on course to meet - at least partially - its targets on education, climate and energy but not those on employment, research and development, and poverty reduction. The crisis hampered the convergence process. It has also highlighted growing inequalities in the distribution of wealth and income. These are challenges to be addressed in the review and subsequent revision of the strategy.

The Council endorsed a joint contribution from the **Employment Committee** and the **Social Protection Committee (SPC)** ([13809/14](#)) as well as an SPC report on social policy reforms for a fair and competitive Europe, which provides the SPC's key messages for the 2015 annual growth survey ([13693/14](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

Ministers' views will feed into a presidency summary report which will be presented to the December European Council.

The Commission is expected to present its proposals on the mid-term review of the strategy early next year, taking into account the results of the public consultations and the Council debates.

Any other business

- **Tripartite Social Summit**
The presidency informed the Council about the upcoming social summit on 23 October.
- **G20 labour and employment ministerial meeting**
The presidency and the Commission informed the Council about the meeting held on 10-11 September in Melbourne.
- **EU budget - Impact on ESF implementation**
The Commission informed the Council about the situation of the EU budget in 2014/2015 and its impact on European Social Fund (ESF) implementation.
- **State of play on current issues**
The presidency informed the Council about various current issues.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

EMPLOYMENT

Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Spain and Belgium

The Council adopted two decisions mobilising a total amount of EUR 1.6 million under the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF), providing support for workers made redundant in Spain and in Belgium.

An amount of EUR 1 million is being deployed following the dismissal of 633 workers in 142 Spanish enterprises operating in the manufacture of metal products. The redundancies are the result of the global financial and economic crisis. A further EUR 570 945 is being mobilised after 512 workers at eleven Belgian enterprises operating in passenger car production were dismissed.

The EGF helps workers to find new jobs and develop new skills when they have lost their jobs as a result of changing global trade patterns, e.g. when a large company shuts down or a factory is moved outside the EU, or as a result of the global financial and economic crisis. The help of the EGF consists in co-financing measures such as job-search assistance, careers advice, tailor-made training and re-training, mentoring and promoting entrepreneurship. It also provides one-off, time-limited individual support, such as job-search allowances, mobility allowances and allowances for participating in lifelong learning and training activities.

TRADE POLICY

Generalised tariff preferences: Philippines

The Council decided not to object to a Commission regulation adding the Philippines to the list of beneficiary countries of the EU's GSP+ system of tariff preferences.

This amends Annex III of Regulation 978/2012 applying a scheme of generalised tariff preferences.

The regulation is a delegated act pursuant to Article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. It can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

FISHERIES

Partnership agreement between EU and Guinea-Bissau - New protocol

The Council adopted a decision on the signing, on behalf of the EU, and provisional application of the Protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA) between the European Community and the Republic of Guinea-Bissau ([11666/12](#)).

The partnership agreement in the fisheries sector between the European Community and Guinea-Bissau was concluded in 2008. The main objective of the protocol to this FPA is to define the fishing opportunities offered to EU vessels as well as the EU financial contribution. Following the negotiations, a new protocol was initialled on 10 February 2012. The previous protocol expired on 15 June 2012 but the adoption procedure for the new one was suspended due to the political situation in the country. In order to allow EU vessels to carry on fishing activities, the new protocol should be applied from the date of its signature on a provisional basis, pending the completion of the procedures for its formal conclusion.

In addition to the the signing of the provisional application of this new protocol, the Council also adopted a regulation on the allocation of the fishing opportunities under the Protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the FPA between the European Community and the Republic of Guinea-Bissau ([11670/12](#)).

TRANSPORT

Vehicle weights and dimensions: Council's first-reading position*

The Council adopted its position at first reading on a draft directive on maximum weights and dimensions of heavy-goods vehicles, buses and coaches ([11296/2/14 REV 2](#); statements: [14074/14 ADD 1](#)). The aim of the draft directive is to improve those vehicles' aerodynamics, fuel efficiency and road safety by amending the [current directive](#) from 1996.

The adoption of the Council's first-reading position follows the political agreement reached last June. For details of the text agreed by ministers, see press release [8837/14](#).

The Council's position on the initial Commission proposal ([8953/13](#)) and the European Parliament's first-reading position ([8310/14](#)) are explained in detail in the Council's statement of reasons ([11296/2/14 REV 2 ADD 1](#)).

The presidency has already started initial technical discussions with the European Parliament in order to seek agreement on a final text to be adopted jointly by the two institutions at second reading.

TRANSPARENCY

Public access to documents

On 16 October 2014, the Council approved the reply to confirmatory application No 27/c/01/14 ([13329/14](#))
