



Council of the  
European Union

Brussels, 4 December 2015

14802/15

SOC 701  
EMPL 456

**NOTE**

---

from: Presidency  
to: Council (EPSCO)  
Subject: Conferences organised by the Presidency  
*-Information from the Presidency*

---

Delegations will find attached a note by the Presidency on the above subject, with a view to the EPSCO Council on 7 December 2015 (AOB item).

**Conference - Promoting the participation of women in economic and political decision-making (15-16 October 2015)**

On 15 and 16 October 2015, an international conference on women's participation in economic and political decision-making was held in Luxembourg. Organised by the Minister for Equal Opportunities in cooperation with the National Council of Women of Luxembourg (CNFL), this conference brought together experts, researchers and political representatives. On the first day, the exchanges focused on the importance of quotas. Lydia Mutsch, the Minister for Equal Opportunities, insisted on the fact that "in the places where decisions are taken, women are in the minority", despite the fact that they are well-educated. She highlighted the importance of "collective awareness that something should change", adding that the subject of equality in decision-making is a priority for the Luxembourg Presidency. During the second day of the conference, the need for quotas in economic decision-making bodies was at the heart of the discussion.

**Conference - Individual taxation and employment (29-30 October 2015)**

On 29 October 2015, the Minister for Labour, Employment and the Social and Solidarity Economy, Nicolas Schmit, and the Minister for Equal Opportunities, Lydia Mutsch, took part in a conference on individual taxation and employment organised in the Grand Duchy as part of the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Several European tax and social policy experts took stock of the current situation regarding individual taxation and of the degree of individualisation in the Member States. They studied the link between the degree of individualisation and its repercussions on employing women, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, and looked at the characteristics of the transition phases, so as to determine the factors for creating a favourable tax environment for equality between women and men.

Minister Schmit stressed the importance of a taxation system which fully takes into account the development of the role of women in society. Minister Mutsch called for work to be remunerated in such a way that it encourages both men and women to join the labour market, and called into question the legal taxation framework based on marriage and on the principle of a main breadwinner in terms of household income.

### **Conference – Digital Economy: Let's be ready for the new jobs! (10-11 November 2015)**

On 10 and 11 November 2015, the Luxembourg Presidency, with the support of the European Commission, organised a conference entitled "Digital Economy: Let's be ready for the new jobs!" Decision makers, social partners and experts discussed the digitalisation of the economy, its impact on employment, public policy responses to this challenge, and the role of the European Social Fund.

The speakers addressed the consequences of the digital economy on job creation and loss within the EU. In this regard, Xavier Bettel, Luxembourg's Prime Minister and Minister for Communications and Media, stressed that "the challenges are enormous" within the EU, particularly in terms of digital skills, a problem also raised by the other speakers.

The panel of experts was asked to discuss investment in human capital to deal with the ongoing digital revolution. The Minister for Labour, Employment and the Social and Solidarity Economy, Nicolas Schmit, concluded the conference by calling for reflection on "a new digital deal".

### **SLIC Thematic day: Recruitment and training of labour inspectors; initiative on an EU-level action (12 November 2015)**

On 12 November 2015, the Luxembourg Presidency organised a thematic day to discuss the challenges faced by labour inspectors when it comes to staying abreast of economic developments, technological and scientific change, and innovation.

The Minister for Labour and Employment, Nicolas Schmit, noted the need to review the recruitment and training of labour inspectors in the EU and to provide them with adequate tools and skills to carry out their tasks in a world of work that is undergoing a profound transformation.

He noted that the last EPSCO Council in October adopted Council conclusions on a new Agenda for health and safety at work to foster better working conditions. The conclusions are focused on the future. It is noted in the conclusions that all the changes must be taken into account in European legislation on health and safety at work, in order to secure decent working conditions.

While "social dialogue cultures" differ from one Member State to another, the Minister noted that there are "similar problems", such as so-called independent workers and pseudo-sole traders. This raises a number of issues: the relationship between workers and employers, the status of employment contracts – classic employment contracts are being watered down – and the question of working time. Faced with these challenges, a platform for Member States could be set up to exchange information and best practices, particularly as regards recruitment and training of labour inspectors.

In general, according to Minister Schmit, a "broad approach is needed to continually train and motivate labour inspectors". They must understand both the labour market and labour law, have a good knowledge of evolving techniques, and possess strong psychological capacities as mediators between employers and employees, as "the job is about working in conflict situations".

### **Conference "Boosting Social Enterprises in Europe" (3-4 December 2015)**

The conference on "Boosting Social Enterprises in Europe" organised by the Luxembourg Ministry of Labour, Employment and the Social and Solidarity Economy will take place on 3 and 4 December in Luxembourg. The main agenda is structured around the systematic integration of social innovation in the creation of economic activities. A panel of international experts in the field of social enterprises will address the question of an adapted ecosystem to promote access to finance for social enterprises.

In the continuity of previous Presidencies and in the margins of this Conference on "Boosting Social Enterprises in Europe", the representatives of governments will adopt a roadmap towards a more comprehensive ecosystem for social economy enterprises. In this context, the EPSCO Council of 7 December will be invited to adopt the Council Conclusions on the promotion of the social economy as a key driver of economic and social development in Europe.

## **Interparliamentary Conference on stability, economic coordination and governance in the European Union (SECG) (9-10 November 2015)**

On 9-10 November 2015, the interparliamentary conference established pursuant to Article 13 TSCG<sup>1</sup> took place in Luxembourg. The Presidency's focus on the social dimension of the EMU featured prominently in the proceedings and was reflected in the interventions by Prime Minister Bettel and Minister Schmit. Calls for more effective scrutiny of economic and monetary governance and for a rebalancing of fiscal and social policy goals in the European Semester dominated the debates. In the panel on "Growth and the Economic and Monetary Union", Prime Minister Bettel made an impassioned plea for Europe to be more daring in investment and innovation.

The panel on the Social Dimension of Economic Governance included a keynote by Minister Schmit and the presentation of a Presidency-commissioned study<sup>2</sup> by the European Social Observatory on how to "*socialize the European Semester*". Minister Schmit was open to national parliaments, and indeed social partners, playing a stronger role in shaping EU economic policy. He considered this to be a way of countering the de-politicisation of EU policy, which appears more and more devolved to technocratic agencies and mechanisms ("*indicators cannot replace policy*").

---

<sup>1</sup> Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union (TSCG, or "Fiscal compact").

<sup>2</sup> European Social Observatory (2015), "Further Socializing the European Semester: Moving Forward for the Social Triple A".  
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.fr.events-and-activities-social-values-governance-presentations.37431>

**Presidency Conference on the 'Triple A social meeting – restoring the social dimension to the heart of European policy' organised by the Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies**  
**(19 October 2015)**

The Chairs of the Committees on Social Affairs of Member States as well as MPs of candidate countries for accession met in Luxembourg for a Presidency conference organised by the Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies on the *"Triple A social rating"*. Participants discussed the integration of the social dimension into all of the European Union's policies. Minister Romain Schneider called for social governance to be made an integral part of the European Semester. *"We must be more ambitious in terms of our social protection systems and aim for upward social convergence in order to strengthen the well-being and prosperity of our citizens,"* the Minister explained, calling on the States to remain sovereign when it comes to defining their social protection systems. The President of the Luxembourg Chamber, Mars Di Bartolomeo, deemed it *"essential"* to reintroduce the social dimension as central to the European project. Commissioner Marianne Thyssen spoke about the positive developments after seven years of severe economic crisis: *"This shows that the reforms put in place in the Member States, together with favourable external factors, are starting to have a positive impact."*

**Joint conference of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Economic and Social Council of Luxembourg on "common social values and principles and social governance" (4 November 2015)**

The aim of this event in Luxembourg was to hold key social deliberations on the EESC opinion *"Principles for effective and reliable welfare provision systems"*, on the academic contributions on *'Common social values in the EU'* by Fran Bennett and Sandy Ruxton, and on the European Social Observatory study *"Socializing the European Semester? Economic Governance and Social Policy Coordination in Europe 2020"*, of which the latter two were both commissioned by the Luxembourg Presidency.