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Subject: Work Programme of the Social Protection Committee for 2016

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Delegations will find attached the 2016 Work programme of the Social Protection Committee and its permanent and temporary subgroups, as adopted in accordance with the Committee's rules of procedure, with a view to the meeting of the EPSCO Council on 7 March 2016 (Any Other Business item).



## 2016 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 2016 work programme takes account of the Commission Communication on steps towards Completing the Economic and Monetary Union, the Commission 2016 Work Programme, the 2016 AGS package, the Council Conclusions on Social Governance for an inclusive Europe and the Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market (both adopted by the December 2015 EPSCO Council).

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. Main activities

### 1.1 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 2016 Annual Growth Survey and its accompanying documents, notably the 2016 Joint Employment Report, including the scoreboard of key employment and social indicators.

	Activities	Deliverables to the Council
1 <sup>st</sup> half 2016	Reaction to the 2016 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 2016 AGS and JER: political guidance on employment and social policies – March EPSCO
1 <sup>st</sup> half 2016	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 the scoreboard 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, better use of the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM), including by developing its function related to the identification of key social protection challenges and good social outcomes, and the conclusions of the thematic 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. In this framework, it will also reflect on ways to continue the voluntary ex-ante discussion of major social policy reforms.

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Deliverables to the Council</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> half 2016</b>	<b>Multilateral examination of the implementation of the 2015 Council country-specific recommendations in the area of social protection and social inclusion and the relevant issues in the 2016 Commission Country Reports, including the MIP in-depth reviews</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 2016 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. Following the advancement of the publication of the Eurozone recommendation to November, it will examine in the second half of the year any social protection issues which may be included, 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 2016</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
<b>1<sup>st</sup> half 2016</b>	<b>Assessment of the 2016 CSRs package and the implementation of the 2015 Council CSRs in the area of social protection and social inclusion</b>	Horizontal opinion – June EPSCO

## **Monitoring of the social situation and the development of 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 development of social protection policies as per its Treaty mandate. It will rationalise its reporting to the Council in view of its political and policy impact. It will merge its current two reports into a single one, which would include the results of the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) and the analysis of the main trends in the evolution of social protection policies. The report, on this basis, 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 2017 Annual Growth Survey. As a transitional phase, given the ongoing work on the 2014 SPPM results, the Committee will adopt in March 2016 the most recent SPPM results which will assist its Semester work in the spring. As new data becomes available in the second half of the year, it will update the SPPM results for its future report for the October EPSCO.

The SPC will continue its thematic reviews in the second half of the year but will reflect in the spring on the best ways to identify the topics for review in order to meet priority policy needs, avoid overlaps and enrich its thematic expertise.

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Deliverables to the Council</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> half 2016</b>	<b>Preparation of an annual short report on the social situation in the EU and overview of social protection reforms on the basis of the SPPM and [reporting by Member States in the context of the multilateral implementation reviews and/or National Social Reports]</b>	Short report + Main messages on the social situation and key social policy priorities as input to the preparation of the 2017 Annual Growth Survey – October EPSCO

### **1.2 Thematic work**

The SPC will continue its thematic work on relevant issues related to social inclusion, pensions, health and long-term care. It will take into account the priorities of the Dutch and Slovak Presidencies as well as the Commission 2016 work programme in the selection of thematic areas for discussion.

Upon the invitation of the Dutch Presidency, the Committee will contribute to the drafting of Council Conclusions on an integrated approach to combatting poverty and social exclusion, planned for adoption by the June EPSCO.

It will contribute to the Commission work on a European pillar of social rights, with a specific focus on the development of social benchmarks.

The SPC will cooperate with EMCO, mainly through the SPC Indicators' Sub-group, in the development of the monitoring framework for and implementation of the Council recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployment into the labour market, on aspects related to social services and income provision.

Following discussions in the fall of 2015, the Committee will look into the possibility of doing thematic work on the impact of the refugees' crisis on social protection systems and the social integration of migrants, integrated provision of social services, as well as ex-ante social impact assessment, either in the context of thematic reviews and/or peer reviews.

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Deliverables to the Council</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> half 2016</b>	<b>Contribution to the preparation of Council Conclusions on an integrated approach to combatting poverty and social exclusion</b>	<b>Draft Council Conclusions – June EPSCO</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>Contribution to the Commission work on a European pillar of social rights, and more specifically on the definition of social benchmarks</b>	<b>tbd</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> half 2016</b>	<b>Thematic in-depth reviews on the SPPM social trends to watch and/or other priority topics</b>	
<b>1<sup>st</sup> half 2016</b>	<b>Contribution to the development of the monitoring framework for and implementation of the Council recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployment into the labour market</b>	<b>Input through EMCO</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>Continuation of the work on pension adequacy with a focus on delivering on longer working lives and cost-effective supplementary retirement savings, as a follow up to the EPSCO Conclusions of June and October 2015</b>	<b>tbd</b>

## 2. Social reporting

Member States will continue their formal social reporting in the context of the social OMC on the basis of targeted thematic reporting in response to specific thematic questionnaires in view of input already provided in the context of the multilateral implementation reviews and the National Reform Programmes (NRPs). The topics of the thematic reporting and the exact timing for submission will be decided by the Committee at the beginning of each year on the basis of its thematic work and expected deliverables for the Council. Member States which prepare National Social Reports for national purposes will be welcome to share them with the Commission and the Committee.

### **3. Contribution of the SPC Indicators' Subgroup (ISG)**

The SPC will continue to be supported in its work by the Indicators' Sub-group, which will focus its work during 2016 on the following issues: strengthening the social monitoring framework (scoreboard of key employment and social indicators, SPPM, JAF), producing the SPPM results and related analysis of the social situation in the EU, continuing the work on further developing the capacity for monitoring of health policies, as a follow-up to the work on JAF health, monitoring and analysis of the 2020 poverty and social exclusion headline target, including reviewing proposed improvement of the severe material deprivation component of the target indicator. The ISG will continue pursuing the work on exploring ways of obtaining timelier indications of social developments, including by monitoring progress on better timeliness of data and on “nowcasting” of indicators. 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, investigate improvements to existing income-based indicators and explore additional income inequality indicators, and develop indicators which give a better view of the dynamic aspects of the social situation. It also stands ready to provide support regarding any potential activities related to the work on the European pillar of social rights.

### **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 the line with the common EU objectives as well as the conclusions of the Joint SPC-EMCO opinion on the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy. 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 2015, on consultation with social partners and social NGOs at key moments in the European Semester and in relation to the Committee's thematic work.