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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Work Programme of the Social Protection Committee for 2018

Delegations will find attached the 2018 Work programme of the Social Protection Committee and its permanent and temporary subgroups, with a view to the meeting of the EPSCO Council on 15 March 2017 (Any Other Business item).



The Social Protection Committee

The Secretariat

2018 SPC Work Programme

The Social Protection Committee (SPC) is an advisory policy Committee, established in accordance with art. 160 of the TFEU, providing a 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.¹ 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, the European Pillar of Social Rights 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 2018 Annual Growth Survey and its accompanying documents, notably the 2018 Joint Employment Report, including the treatment of the scoreboard proposed by the Commission for the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR).

	Activities	Deliverables to the Council
1 st half 2018	Reaction to the 2018 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 2018 AGS and JER: political guidance on employment and social policies – March EPSCO
1 st half 2018	Examination and input into the Joint Employment Report and its key messages on issues related to social protection and	Input through EMCO

¹ Art. 160 TFEU

social inclusion, including the analysis of key employment and social indicators.

1st half 2018	Examination of the social protection issues and input to the Commission proposal for a Council decision on Guidelines for the Employment Policies of the Member States (Annex)	Input through EMCO
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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.

	Activities	Deliverables to the Council
1 st half 2018	Multilateral examination of the implementation of the 2017 Council country-specific recommendations in the area of social protection and social inclusion and the relevant issues in the 2018 Commission Country Reports	Horizontal opinion and country-specific conclusions – June EPSCO

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

The Committee will prepare the Council's adoption of the 2018 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 a 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.

	Activities	Deliverables to the Council
1st half 2018	Country-specific opinions to the Council on the 2018 Commission proposals for Council recommendations on the National Reform Programmes	Country-specific opinions – June EPSCO
2nd half 2018	Examine social protection issues included in the Commission proposal for a Eurozone recommendation	Contribution on social protection parts of Eurozone recommendation 2018 – December 2017 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. Pending a review it will carry out on its current reporting activity with regard to monitoring the social situation, and in particular the linkage to future reporting on the scoreboard for the EPSR, 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 2019 Annual Growth Survey. An intermediate update of the SPPM dashboard will be produced by Spring 2018, to take account of the availability of the full set of results from EU-SILC 2016.

	Activities	Deliverables to the Council
2nd half 2018	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	Report + Main messages on the social situation and key social policy priorities as input to the preparation of the 2019 Annual Growth Survey – October EPSCO

Contribution to the Commission Initiatives following the proclamation of the European pillar of Social Rights

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. It will, following the proclamation of the EPSR, review the proposed scoreboard for the EPSR and related list of indicators. It will also contribute to further work on benchmarking in the area of Social Protection, in particular finalising the benchmarking of minimum income. It will also contribute to any related revision of the Employment Guidelines concerning social protection aspects, and reflect on the impact of the EPSR and related scoreboard on its analytical tools and its annual reporting on the social situation.

The Committee will also contribute with its expertise on relevant social protection aspects of the Commission's initiatives related to the European Pillar of Social Rights, including the work-life balance initiative (in cooperation with the [Employment Committee](#) (EMCO)) and the social protection for all initiative, and the European social security number initiative.

SPC will also monitor developments following the Commission Communication "On steps towards completing EMU"², the reflection papers on the "Deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union"³ and "On the future of EU finances"⁴, as well as the December 2017 policy package⁵.

	Activities	Deliverables to the Council
2018	Contribution to further Commission work on the European pillar of social rights, including review of social protection aspects of related initiatives and of the social scoreboard, and further work on benchmarking	

2. Social OMC

2.1 Thematic social reporting

By the end of June, SPC members will submit their inputs for the annual social reporting under the *thematic*⁶ module whose topic will be decided by the end of March. All Member States will be invited to submit their reporting in order to ensure comparability and the possibility of comprehensive analysis. The underlying questionnaires will be approved by the SPC in April.

2.2. Thematic work

The SPC will continue its thematic work on relevant issues related to social inclusion, pensions, health and long-term care. This will include carrying out thematic reviews and undertaking peer reviews on specific topics. In the selection of thematic areas for discussion, it will take into account the policy priorities of the Bulgarian ('early child development policies', 'social dimension of the EU multi-annual financial framework') and Austrian ('future of work') Presidencies in the field of social protection as well as the Commission 2018 work programme. In this context, topics for thematic work may include, among others, i) early childhood development policies, ii) active inclusion and income inequality, and iii) health policy. In accordance with the priorities of the Austrian presidency, the SPC will also reflect upon the social aspects of the digitalization of work (i.e. platform-based work) with the aim of submitting key messages to the Council in December.

The SPC will contribute to the development of better measures of long-term care, following up on the 2017 thematic review in this area, and review the progress on work to develop a joint assessment framework in the area of health. It will also monitor progress on the definition and development of comparable measures of quality of social services.

Finally, the SPC will review the 2018 Pension Adequacy Report, prepared in cooperation with the Commission through an ad-hoc working group on Ageing Issues (WG-AGE), in view of its adoption.

	Activities	Deliverables to the Council
1 st half	Thematic review on early childhood	Input for the Informal April 2018 EPSCO meeting and Council Conclusions on

² COM(2015) 600 final, 21.10.2015

³ COM(2017) 291, 31.05.2017

⁴ COM(2017) 358, 28.06.2017

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/economy-finance/completing-europes-economic-and-monetary-union-policy-package_en

⁶ On the SPC meeting from 1 December 2018, and based on the 2018 NRP guidelines, the SPC took a decision to discontinue the permanent module of the Social Reporting, as of 2018. Member states are invited to report on the social policy aspects in their respective national reports.

2018	development policies	'early childhood development' in June
1st half 2018	Adoption of the 2018 Pension Adequacy Report	Input for the June EPSCO meeting and main messages on pension adequacy
2nd half 2018	Thematic review on active inclusion and income inequality.	
2nd half 2018	Thematic review on social aspects of the digitalization of work (i.e. platform-based work)	Input for December EPSCO meeting
2nd half 2018	Thematic review on health policy exchange on the basis of JAF Health	

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 2018 on the following issues: monitoring and analysis of the 2020 poverty and social exclusion headline target, including 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 policy levers 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, the reconciliation of private and professional lives, child material deprivation, inequality in its key dimensions and long-term care. Over 2018 it will carry out a review of its monitoring tools. It also stands ready to provide support regarding any potential activities related to the European pillar of social rights and related benchmarking exercises, and will follow up the social scoreboard for the EPSR and its relation with existing SPC analytical tools. It will continue its work on thematic monitoring in the context of the OMC, including on health and support for the PAR. A full overview of ISG activities is presented in the 2018 ISG work programme.

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

The WG-AGE will work on finalising 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.

Annex: Tentative calendar of SPC meetings for 2018

30-31 January	SPC
7-8-9 March	SPC (multilateral implementation reviews)
15 March	EPSCO (BE)
20-21 March	Informal SPC (Bulgaria)
17-18 April	EPSCO (BG)
25 April	SPC (TBC)
16 May	SPC (TBC)
30 May - 1 June	SPC (TBC)
6-7 June	SPC (TBC)
21-22 June	EPSCO (LU)
19-20 July	EPSCO (AT)
17-18 September	Informal SPC (Austria)
11 October	EPSCO (LU)
30 October	SPC (TBC)
28-29 November	SPC (TBC)
6-7 December	EPSCO (BE)