



Council of the  
European Union

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**NOTE**

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From: Presidency  
To: Delegations  
Subject: Presidency events  
*Information from the Presidency*

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Delegations will find attached an information note from the Presidency on the following events:

- I. Digitalisation of Work;
- II. Fight against occupational cancer;
- III. Gender Equality Events

with a view to the meeting of the EPSCO Council on 6 December 2018

(Any Other Business item).

## Presidency events

### I. Digitalisation of Work

Digitalisation of work is one of the priorities of the Austrian Presidency in the field of employment and social affairs. The topic featured on the agenda of the following events:

#### Informal Meeting of Employment and Social Policy Ministers in Vienna on 19 - 20 July 2018

The conference focused on the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation. A particular emphasis was placed on the social and labour law related protection of employees in the context of new forms of work and especially platform work. In three workshops participants dealt with questions related to labour law developments, the challenges emerging with respect to social protection and the potential offered by new forms of work with a view to improved access to the labour market for people with disabilities.

Another topic discussed in the context of the meeting was how robots are changing the day-to-day work of many workers.

An exploratory opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee, requested by the Austrian Presidency, entitled "EU concepts for transition management in a digitalised world of work - key input for an EU White Paper on the future of work", was also presented at the informal meeting.

An exhibition on the margins of the conference presented practical examples of current developments in the fields of digitalisation and robotics.

## Conference on "Digitalisation of Work" in Vienna on 19 September 2018

One of the three main priorities defined in the programme of the Austrian Presidency is "Securing prosperity and competitiveness through digitalisation". Building on the work of the trio partners Estonia and Bulgaria, the conference on "Digitalisation of Work", which was co-financed by the European Commission, focused in particular on the organisation of new forms of work and on the organisation of work and employment relationships in the platform economy. In addition to issues relating to working time and workload, virtual migration and algorithmic management, participants also dealt with opportunities for co-determination and changes in employer-employee relations.

In order to contribute to a continuation and deepening of the debate, the latest scientific findings were presented at this conference. Building on these findings, appropriate framework conditions at European and national level could be supported to thus enable EU citizens to take advantage of the opportunities offered by digitalisation.

### **Based on these activities, the Austrian Presidency draws the following conclusions:**

- **Fully tapping into the opportunities offered by digitalisation and actively shaping digitalisation**
  - Digitalisation offers major opportunities while at the same time presenting us with a large number of challenges. It is thus important to take a positive approach towards change and to make use of the opportunities offered by digitalisation.
  - Digital change must be fully aligned with European values aimed at full employment, social progress, a high level of protection, the reduction of poverty and inequalities, and build on the European pillar of social rights.
  - We should promote and design technologies in such a way that they support people rather than adapting people to technology.
  - Only an active and shaping policy will be able to contribute towards distributing the gains from digitalisation in an equitable manner. The goal is to ensure that everyone stands to benefit from the enormous opportunities offered by new technologies - workers, citizens and businesses.

- The platform economy offers the opportunity to make undeclared work visible. This can enable both better law enforcement and shifting work away from the informal economy. This opportunity should be used pro-actively through cooperation and exchange of information, while at the same time protecting data and privacy.
- New forms of work and in particular platform work create new challenges for social partners, change employer-employee relations and possibilities of co-determination within the company. This also includes the issue of platform workers who are classified as self-employed and who frequently carry out activities similar to those of employees. In order to respond to this situation, a large number of new activities and initiatives have already been launched by the social partners. The goal is thus to promote learning from each other based on intensified cross-border exchange of information and relevant experience gained.
- **A Europe that protects also needs to protect its employees**
  - We should strive to ensure that all flexible forms of employment created and emerging as a result of digitalisation be covered by comprehensive social protection systems, that basic labour standards be maintained and that quality of work be taken into account.
  - Currently, the employment status of many platform workers is unclear. Social security, training opportunities and the application of specific legal provisions on working conditions are regulated based on employment status. We are therefore called upon to mitigate potential adverse effects of a changing world of work, safeguard social and labour law related protection and ensure opportunities for further training.
  - New technologies create new challenges, such as the possibility of seamless monitoring of workers. This calls for transparency, fairness and appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms.
  - Another important topic in this context is ensuring data interoperability: platform workers should be able to take their data and collected assessments from one platform to the next.

- **New forms of work and especially platform work are highly diverse and develop and/or change rapidly**
  - It is assumed that platform work constitutes a small, growing part of the labour market. However, neither its exact size nor the number of platform workers is known and therefore its importance for the labour market in the European Union is currently very difficult to assess. For this reason, we should monitor developments closely. By expanding EU-wide monitoring, the EU can make an important contribution in this respect.
  - The same platform can take on very different forms in different countries and even in the same country it is often the case that several different employment relationships are offered by one and the same platform. Policy measures therefore have to take into account the heterogeneity of platform work and the different working and employment conditions of the various forms of platform work.
  
- **Next steps...**
  - Opportunities and challenges must be addressed with the involvement of all actors and in line with the principle of subsidiarity.
  - A flexible and effective strategy aimed at addressing the multiple challenges is to promote the exchange of experience and good practice, for which there are already a large number of established structures and practices in place at EU level.

The European Commission is invited to continue to give high priority to the topic and to consider developing a White Paper on the effects of digitalisation on working conditions and social protection of workers.

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## II. Fight against occupational cancer

The fight against occupational cancer is a priority of the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the field of health and safety at work. The topic also featured prominently on the agenda of the following Presidency events:

### Conference on "Fighting occupational cancer" held in Vienna on 24/25 September 2018

Europe has always attached great importance to fighting work-related cancer. Yet despite the substantial efforts undertaken, too many workers continue to be diagnosed with cancer in the EU. Although the issue has moved back into the focus of attention over the last few years, recent statistics show that there is still much to be done. Every effort must therefore be undertaken to reach the goal of preventing the occurrence of occupational cancer.

In the context of this event, which was co-financed by the European Commission, renowned experts, practitioners and policymakers discussed the current state of research and presented new approaches towards handling hazardous substances at work. The conference provided an overview of ongoing initiatives and current challenges. The topics addressed ranged from the European perspective through to simple measures and practical solutions in companies. In workshops, participants had the opportunity to discuss the latest developments as well as awareness-raising measures and activities.

As a highlight of the event, the "Roadmap on Carcinogens 2016 - 2018 from Amsterdam to Vienna" was extended in a symbolic act until the Finnish Council Presidency in 2019. This voluntary action programme aimed at fighting occupational cancer seeks to raise awareness of the risks posed by carcinogens in the workplace and encourage the exchange of good practice and practical solutions.

### Senior Labour Inspectors Committee - SLIC, Vienna, 8/9 October 2018: European labour inspectors discuss occupational cancer

In the context of the semi-annual meeting of the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC), which was co-financed by the European Commission, a Thematic Day was held on 9 October focusing on "Carcinogenic substances - old and new challenges".

The fight against occupational cancer is not new. Labour inspectorates have been dealing with some of the fundamental problems for many years now, including for instance how to identify those areas where most workers are exposed to carcinogenic substances, what are the most promising measures, and how to help companies replace carcinogens with less dangerous substances. In addition to these, new challenges have emerged as a result of changes in EU legislation. New limit values for quartz dust and for chromium (VI) compounds also require strengthened action on the part of regulatory authorities directed at those areas of work where these substances occur.

Labour inspectorates shared reports from practice, discussing how they address these challenges and, for example, how they identify those areas where intervention is most effective. Furthermore, new guidelines on dealing with quartz dust were presented and discussions focused on how to successfully implement these guidelines in practice.

**Based on these activities, the Austrian Presidency draws the following conclusions:**

- With the "Roadmap on Carcinogens", the Netherlands took the initiative in 2016 to place a special focus at both the European and the national level on carcinogenic substances in the context of occupational health and safety. As this is a long process, it is all the more important that the momentum driving the Roadmap be maintained and that Finland has taken over until the end of 2019. Together with all Roadmap partners, including in particular the EU Commission and the social partners, the fight against occupational cancer continues in the spirit of safeguarding workers' health.
- In order to make joint progress in the field of prevention, it is also essential to support campaigns such as those launched by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) "Healthy Workplaces - Manage Dangerous Substances".
- Alongside enhanced information-sharing and awareness-raising, the exchange of good practice at European level also needs to be further promoted in order to prevent exposure to hazardous substances or to ensure that the best possible protective measures are in place.

- This awareness must also focus on the principle that risks must be eliminated as far as possible at source prior to taking protective measures for individual workers. The exposure of workers must be reduced to the greatest extent possible in order to minimise the risk of developing cancer.
- The discussions showed that some labour inspectorates have already developed successful concepts that may also be of interest to other members. The exchange of experience in this area should therefore be continued.

#### A Europe that protects must also protect its employees

- In order to prevent the more than 100,000 deaths estimated to be the result of work-related cancer each year in Europe, it is necessary to set further EU-wide occupational exposure limits for carcinogenic substances.
- In the common interest of the health of all workers in Europe, we must therefore continue the process launched by the European Commission with its proposals for amendments to the Carcinogens Directive, in cooperation with the European Parliament.

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III. Gender Equality Events: Three events were organised by the Presidency, as follows:

# Conference Gender Equality and YOU. Young Voices. Joint Initiative.

11-12 October 2018

As a participatory conference, Gender Equality and YOU brought together 250 participants from all over Europe to take part in an open dialogue on the future priorities for the work on gender equality of the EU.

By actively involving young people, youth representatives and NGOs, and by facilitating discussions between them and Ministers for Gender Equality, the conference ensured that young people's visions and needs regarding gender equality are being heard and taken into account.

The event has been prepared by the Austrian Federal Chancellery, in cooperation with the Austrian National Youth Council and the European Youth Forum. Additionally, the conference agenda has been developed together with young people in a series of workshops, to identify the topics.

Participants focused on strategies how to effectively strengthen gender equality in the field of labour market, media, politics, education and training, in relationships and sexuality as well as in the prevention of and fight against gender-based violence.

The forward-looking and innovative results of the conference will soon be shared with participants and relevant stakeholders in the form of a report accompanied by a conference video.



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# Informal Ministerial Breakfast of Gender Equality Ministers

12 October 2018



(c) BKA/Katja Gerstmann



(c) BKA/Michael Gruber



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In the morning of 12 October, the Austrian Presidency invited Gender Equality Ministers from the EU28, EFTA countries and the Western Balkans to exchange their views on the topic of 'Gender Equality, Youth and Digitalisation' during an Informal Ministerial Breakfast.

In the beginning, the European Institute for Gender Equality presented its report on the Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States entitled "Gender equality and youth: opportunities and risks of digitalisation" prepared at the request of the Austrian Presidency.

This report provides an analysis of the opportunities and risks of digitalisation for girls and boys, with particular focus on civic and political participation online as well as on new forms of online violence. It offers quantitative analysis, as well as insights based on the voices and expertise of young Europeans themselves. The report is a basis for the Draft Council Conclusions on 'Gender Equality, Youth and Digitalisation' which will be presented to the EPSCO Council for adoption.

Following EIGE's presentation, Ministers shared good practices from their national context on 'How does digitalisation contribute to the equal civic and political participation of girls and boys?'. The Austrian Presidency is currently preparing a 'Good Practice Guide' which compiles the participants' contributions and will be distributed in December 2018.



# Informal Meeting of EU Gender Equality Ministers

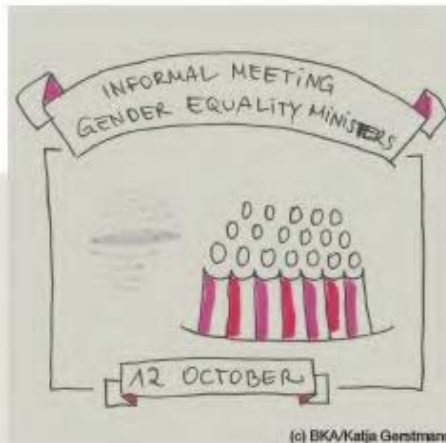
12 October 2018

Recent discussions – most obvious regarding the European Commission’s Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality – have demonstrated that gender equality has lost importance on the EU’s working agenda. In order to ensure further progress in the field of gender equality, there is a need for regular and institutionalised dialogue about gender equality at the EU level as well as a need for strategic instruments, for stronger input into the political process by gender experts and for visibility at a high political level.

With the objective of strengthening the high-level political debate on gender equality, an informal meeting of EU Ministers for Gender Equality hosted by Austrian Federal Minister for Women, Families and Youth Juliane Bogner-Strauss took place in the afternoon of 12 October 2018. Ministers discussed ways to strengthen cooperation and to institutionalize the dialogue between them in the area of gender equality in a participatory workshop. The workshop was structured around three topics:

1. The strength of a high-level, stand-alone EU Gender Equality Strategy
2. Building strong networks between all relevant actors in the area of gender equality
3. Using the momentum of the Trio Presidency to promote gender equality

The outcomes of the Ministerial discussion will be shared with the participants in December 2018.



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