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European Union

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DRAFT MINUTES
COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
(**Employment, Social Policy**, Health and Consumer Affairs)
15 March 2019

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1. **Adoption of the agenda**

The Council adopted the agenda set out in 7101/19.

2. **Approval of "A" items**

Non-legislative list

7254/19

The Council adopted the "A" items listed in 7254/19 including COR and REV documents presented for adoption. Statements related to these items are set out in the Addendum.

Non-legislative activities

3. **European Semester 2019**

6623/19

Policy debate

Ministers welcomed the economic upswing, but pointed out that further efforts were needed to better integrate employment and social policies. Delegations highlighted the need to invest in skills, education and life-long learning, and to employ disadvantaged groups (youth, the elderly, women, persons with disabilities, the long-term unemployed and people with a migrant background).


Effective and targeted policies are needed to address the skills mismatch and to upskill and to reskill workers and job-seekers, in order to respond to labour market needs. In this context, efficient social security schemes and education policies are essential.

Some delegations stressed the need to foster women's labour market participation, to ensure work-life balance for men and women, to offer childcare services, and to close the gender pay gap.

Ministers welcomed the exchange of information and best practice between Member States as valuable mechanisms in the Semester process and in the implementation of the EPSR; in addition many recalled the fundamental role of EU funds in supporting Member States in the implementation of the Semester. Some Ministers reminded that the involvement of social partners in reform programmes is of utmost importance.

- a) **Priorities for action in the areas of employment and social policies: Political guidance in 2019**  6167/19
6635/19 + COR 1
- i) **Joint Employment Report**
- ii) **Conclusions on the 2019 Annual Growth Survey and Joint Employment Report**
- Adoption*



The Council adopted the Joint Employment Report as set out in 7619/19 and the Conclusions on the 2019 Annual Growth Survey and Joint Employment Report as set out in 7613/19.

- b) **2019 Country reports**  6560/19
- Presentation by the Commission*

The Council took note of the information provided by the Commission.

Legislative deliberations

(Public deliberation in accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union)

4. **Regulation on the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF)**   6842/19
9701/18
+ COR 1 REV 1
+ ADD 1
+ ADD 1 COR 1
REV 1
- Partial general approach*

The Council reached a partial general approach as set out in doc. 7624/19. The Netherlands submitted a statement to the Council minutes as set out in the Annex.

Non-legislative activities

5. Social dimension of Europe post-2020

6622/19

Policy debate

The Council held a topical debate focussing on the key aspects of the future social dimension and on areas where action must be taken in order to protect and strengthen the European social model in the future. Ministers called for an integrated approach where the interlinked social and economic dimensions are addressed together. They stressed that the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Semester should continue to be the basis of the social dimension, also taking into account the Sustainable Development Goals. They also considered that there is no need for further instruments or legislation. Furthermore, they shared the opinion that the focus should be put on the implementation of legislation, paying due regard to national circumstances.

Any other business

6. a) Tripartite Social Summit

Information from the Presidency and the Commission

The Council took note of the information by the Presidency and the Commission on the preparations for the next Tripartite Social Summit of 20 March.

b) Implementation of the Council Recommendation on upskilling pathways

7199/19

Information from the Commission

The Council took note of the information by the Commission.

- c) **Current legislative proposals** 1 C
(Public deliberation in accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union)
- (i) **Directive on the accessibility requirements for products and services** 14799/15
+ ADD 1 - 3
 - (ii) **Directive on work-life balance** 8633/17
 - (iii) **Revision of Directive on carcinogens and mutagens (third batch)** 7733/18 + ADD 1
 - (iv) **Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions** 16018/17
 - (v) **Regulation on establishing a European Labour Authority** 7203/18
 - (vi) **Revision of the Regulations on the coordination of social security systems (883/04 and 987/09)** 15642/16 + ADD 1
+ ADD 1 REV 1
Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information by the Presidency.

- d) **Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI)** 2 6986/19
Information from the Commission on the state of play

The Council took note of the information by the Commission.

- e) **High level Conference on EU Framework on National Strategies for Roma Inclusion - (Bucharest, 4-5 March 2019)** 2 7003/19
Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information by the Presidency.

- f) **Employment Committee (EMCO) and Social Protection Committee (SPC) work programmes 2019**
Information from the respective Chairs

 6356/19
6969/19

The Council took note of the information provided by the EMCO and SPC Chairs on their Committees' respective work programmes for 2019.



First reading



Public debate proposed by the Presidency (Article 8(2) of the Council's Rules of Procedure)



Item based on a Commission proposal

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Statements to the legislative "B" items set out in 7101/19

Ad "B" item 4: Regulation on the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF)
Partial general approach

STATEMENT BY THE NETHERLANDS

"The Dutch government and Parliament attach great importance to the current negotiations on the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027. This EGF regulation cannot be seen in isolation from these negotiations.

A new MFF requires us to critically review our spending. At the same time, a new MFF offers opportunities. Opportunities to modernise and improve our funds. Due to the broadening of the scope of the EGF, the new EGF and the European Social Fund overlap to a large extent. Therefore, the Netherlands is of the position that all social funds should be merged into the European Social Fund plus. One European fund to invest in people increases the efficiency and prevents overlap. Moreover, one European fund to invest in people will increase the visibility of the EU and subsequently the understanding of what the EU can do for its citizens.

Another aspect of the EGF that could have been improved is co-financing. To reflect the current favourable economic climate, a larger national contribution and thus lower co-financing rates would have been warranted. Larger national contributions also increase the ownership of projects.

Considering all of this, the Netherlands cannot support the partial general approach on the EGF regulation."
