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Employment and Social Policy

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
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ITEMS DEBATED

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY

European Semester

Ministers endorsed the key messages from the [Employment Committee](#) (EMCO) based on the Annual Employment Performance Report and the Employment Performance Monitor as well as the key messages from the [Social Protection Committee](#) (SPC) based on the Annual Review of the Social Protection Performance Monitor.

EMCO and SPC advise ministers on matters relating to the employment, skills and social policy dimensions of the European Semester. They prepare reports monitoring member states' progress in implementing reforms within the Semester.

The European Semester is a cycle of economic, fiscal, labour and social policy coordination within the EU. Following the publication of the Commission communication 'The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan', the European Semester has also provided a framework for coordinating and monitoring member states' efforts in implementing the principles and rights set out in the pillar, on the basis of recent EU legislative proposals, initiatives and strategies. ([11899/21](#); [12174/21](#))

Guidelines for the employment policies of the member states*

Member states also adopted a Council decision on Guidelines for the employment policies of member states. In the EU, member states consider their economic and employment policies to be a matter of common concern, and coordinate them within the Council. The Council adopts guidelines of this kind every year. ([12403/21](#))

The future of the European Semester with a strong role for the European Pillar of Social Rights

COVID-19 led to a number of changes to the 2021 European Semester process (e.g. no country reports or non-fiscal country-specific recommendations). Ministers for employment and social affairs called early on for a return to a fully-fledged Semester process with a strong social dimension. The European Pillar of Social Rights and the pillar's action plan, with its 2030 EU headline targets on employment, skills and poverty reduction, should provide guidance in this respect.

Based on a presidency steering note, ministers discussed how the action plan, and in particular the three EU headline targets, can best be reflected in the future European Semester and which elements and features are essential for the future European Semester process, so as to ensure a strong social dimension. They also debated the role of the Council (EPSCO) and its preparatory bodies EMCO and SPC in the future Semester process. ([12198/21](#))

Gender mainstreaming in the EU Budget*

The Council approved conclusions on this subject. The European Court of Auditors recently assessed whether gender mainstreaming had been applied in the EU budget to promote equality between women and men. Promoting equality between women and men is an EU treaty obligation. The Court has defined gender mainstreaming as ‘actively promoting equality between women and men at all stages and in all areas of policy-making and implementation’ and ‘concluded that the Commission had not yet lived up to its commitment to gender mainstreaming in the EU budget’.

In its conclusions, the Council notes the report's recommendations and calls on the Commission to, among other things, step up efforts to systematically mainstream a gender perspective in future EU strategies and policies, to further examine the member states' recovery and resilience plans and their implementation from a gender equality perspective, and to support and promote the systematic production, collection, analysis, reporting and dissemination of sound and comparable sex-disaggregated data regarding EU funding programmes. ([12829/21](#))

Safety and health at the heart of the future of work

Sustainable work assists people with working and remaining in work throughout their working lives and thus contributes to their well-being at all ages and to the productivity and sustainability of our economies. This human-centred approach to the future of work is vital for addressing challenges that the world of work is facing, such as population ageing, digitalisation, climate change and transformations in work organisation. In turn, a high level of occupational safety and health is a key factor in enabling sustainable work for all. The EU strategic framework on health and safety at work 2021-2027 defines the priorities and actions for improving workers' health and safety in the years ahead.

In its background note for the policy debate on this topic, the presidency stressed that efforts are needed at all levels to deliver on the objectives of the new EU strategic framework. Ministers reflected on the main challenges in implementing the framework and on the EU-level activities they consider necessary to deliver on its objectives. Ministers also discussed to what extent health and safety policies in their countries are actively contributing to work becoming more sustainable over the course of life. ([12199/21](#))

Other business

Under 'other business', the Commission presented its long-term vision for rural areas and both the presidency and the Commission informed ministers about the [Tripartite Social Summit](#), to be held on 20 October 2021.

The Commission gave a presentation on the state of play of the Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI) instrument and on the European Social Security Pass (ESS Pass). The EESSI project implements electronic exchanges related to social security coordination cases between the social security institutions in member states. The ESS Pass aims at improving the verification of social security coverage for mobile workers and workers in cross-border situations. ([10404/21](#); [12703/21](#))

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Amendments of the European Parliament to the Council's position on the draft budget for 2022

The Council agreed it could not approve all of the European Parliament's amendments to the Council's position on the draft 2022 EU annual budget. ([12442/21](#))

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

EU-Japan mutual legal assistance

The Council adopted a decision authorising the opening of negotiations with Japan for the amendment of the EU-Japan agreement on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters ([12141/21](#) + [ADD1](#)).

The general objective of the amendments is to support and strengthen the cooperation between the member states and Japan in the area of mutual legal assistance in criminal matters by strengthening safeguards with respect to the protection of personal data. The amendments should not change the purpose and forms of cooperation under the agreement.

GENERAL AFFAIRS

EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement – notifications

The Council approved the notifications by the EU made in accordance with the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement ([11856/3/21 REV 3](#) + [11861/1/21 REV 1](#))

EU-UK joint committee

The Council adopted a decision establishing the EU position in the joint committee as regards the adoption of a decision to amend the Withdrawal Agreement of the UK from the EU ([12369/21](#))

The Council adopted a decision on the EU position in the joint committee as regards the amendment of the decision establishing a list of persons of an arbitration panel under the Withdrawal Agreement of the UK from the EU ([12372/21](#))

INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY

Formal qualifications and titles of training courses

The Council decided not to object to the Commission delegated decision amending Annex V to Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the evidence of formal qualifications and titles of training courses. ([12579/21](#) + [COR 1](#); [11394/21](#) + [ADD 1](#))

Classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures

The Council decided not to object to the Commission delegated regulation correcting Annex VI to Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures.

The amendment refers to an error in Annex III to Commission delegated regulation (EU) 2020/2172. It concerns a signal word code: Annex III erroneously contains the signal word code ‘Dgr’ (danger), which should be ‘Wng’ (warning). ([12576/21](#); [11358/21](#))

AGRICULTURE

Extension of the International Sugar Agreement

The Council adopted a decision on the EU’s position in the International Sugar Council with respect to the extension of the 1992 International Sugar Agreement. ([12474/21](#) + [ADD 1](#); [12197/21](#))

Amendment of the International Sugar Agreement

The Council adopted a decision on the EU’s position in the International Sugar Council with respect to amending the 1992 International Sugar Agreement. ([12485/21](#) + [COR 1](#) + [ADD 1](#); [12289/21](#))

ENVIRONMENT

Baltic Sea action plan

The Council endorsed the Commission's intention to approve a new Baltic Sea action plan and a ministerial statement on behalf of the Union.

Ministers of the contracting parties of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (also known as the Helsinki Commission or HELCOM) are invited to endorse the new Baltic Sea action plan and the ministerial statement at the occasion of the next ministerial meeting of HELCOM, to be held on 20 October 2021, in Lübeck, Germany.

The current HELCOM Baltic Sea action plan, adopted by its contracting parties in 2007, is a regional programme of measures and action for a healthy marine environment in the Baltic Sea.

The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission is an intergovernmental organisation and a regional sea convention in the Baltic Sea area. (12451/21)

Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area ('Helsinki Convention') on the adoption of a recommendation for amending an annex of the Convention.

Since the envisaged amendment of Part II of Annex III to the 1992 Helsinki Convention will modernise requirements regarding the protection of the Baltic Sea and improve the protection of the environment, the Union will support the adoption of the recommendation.

The recommendation is set to be adopted by the contracting parties of the Helsinki Convention at the occasion of the next ministerial meeting, to be held on 20 October 2021, in Lübeck, Germany.

The Council will inform the European Parliament of its decision in accordance with Article 218(10) of the TFEU. (12423/21 + ADD 1; [12169/21](#))

Calculation of municipal waste recycling targets

The Council decided to extend by two months the period for raising objections to a Commission delegated act concerning the calculation of recycling targets of municipal waste.

The delegated act supplements the waste framework directive that establishes targets for the preparation for re-use and recycling of municipal waste to be achieved by 2025, 2030 and 2035, respectively. It also lays down how member states can calculate the recycling targets for municipal waste.

The directive requires that only the input to the recycling operation should be taken into account for the purposes of calculating the recycling targets for municipal waste and that as a rule the actual measurement of the amount of the waste has to be done at that point. By way of a derogation, member states can calculate the recycling targets also by measuring the output of sorting operations. If member states use this derogation, in accordance with Article 11a(3) of the directive, they have to ensure that certain safeguards are met, namely that further losses due to preliminary treatment before the specific waste material enters the recycling operation are deducted and that the output waste is actually recycled. Average loss rates for sorted waste is one of the options member states may use to calculate further losses in order to establish the amount of waste reported as recycled.

The delegated act establishes uniform rules for the calculation, verification and reporting of the weight of materials or substances which are removed after a sorting operation and which are not subsequently recycled based on average loss rates for sorted waste.

The Council will inform the Commission and the European Parliament of the decision to extend the period for raising objections. ([12585/21](#); [11525/21](#))