



Council of the
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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Work Programme of the Employment Committee for 2019

Delegations will find attached the 2020 Work Programme of the Employment Committee and its subgroups, as adopted in accordance with the Committee's rules of procedure, with a view to the meeting of the EPSCO Council on 19 March 2020 (Any Other Business item).

EMCO Work Programme for 2020

The Employment Committee (EMCO) is a Treaty-based advisory Committee, established in accordance to Article 150 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the EU (TFEU). It acts as advisory body for the EPSCO Council and is tasked to monitor, report on the employment situation and labour market developments in the EU, and in doing so, promote multilateral discussion on policy developments and new initiatives in respective Committees' domains.

EMCO adopts an annual Work Programme, which defines its activities for the coming year. Initial discussions in EMCO on the 2020 Work Programmes was started in November, finalised in February 2020 and to be presented at the March 2020 EPSCO.

Currently, the EMCO's work programme covers four main broad areas – European Semester, thematic work, benchmarking and monitoring/reporting. EMCO's work, in particular concerning benchmarking and monitoring/reporting, will be supported by the EMCO Indicators Group, which have its own Work Programme linked to the main priorities of EMCO and EMCO PAG and providing input to their activities. EMCO PAG will align its work and timing of meetings to the EMCO priorities set in this document.

The joint EMCO-SPC assessment of Europe 2020 includes suggestions to focus and streamline certain Semester formats and working methods. While some can be reflected more immediately, e.g. in the thematic planning and running of the EMCO and EMCO PAG meetings, others require more discussions to be operational – such as a possible multiannual perspective and the consolidating of monitoring tools (by the Indicators Group).

Sufficient time should be set aside to discuss and decide on a possible follow up to the EU2020 Strategy¹.

¹ For the latest debate in EPSCO, see the FI Presidency Summary of Strategic Vision for Social and Employment Policies in the Future EU, as shared with the Committee in December 2019.

1. Strategic priorities

EMCO will consider necessary adjustments to its Work Programme stemming from the policy priorities highlighted in the **Strategic Agenda of the European Council and the Commission's political priorities and work programme**, which are relevant to its remit of competencies, and which will require the preparation of input to EPSCO. Depending on respective timeframes, EMCO will stand ready to engage in the consultation and/or presentation of relevant policy initiatives identified in **relevant Mission Letters to VPs and Commissioners**, that relate to the 'Strong social Europe for a Just Transition' Communication published on 14 January 2020. Pending timing and final programme, of relevance for EMCO to address could be

- the strategic priorities to be defined in view of the Commission work programme, for example:
 - Fair minimum wage
 - Skills agenda
 - Labour and social conditions of platform workers
 - Youth Guarantee
 - European Green Deal - including the Just Transition Fund (JTF)
 - A European unemployment benefit reinsurance scheme

A gender perspective will be mainstreamed across EMCO activities.

- Developments related to the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-27, the proposed regulations for the ESF+ and EGF, as well as the Regulation on the establishment of the Reform Support Programme.

As a follow-up from its joint work with SPC on the assessment of the Europe 2020 Strategy, EMCO will reflect on how to adjust its working methods, reporting tools, and monitoring framework(s) and how to achieve a wider dissemination of the Committee's outputs. In addition, EMCO will stand ready to reflect on a possible successor strategy, with a view to providing its contribution to the debate on the future of social Europe post-2020. This will entail inter alia addressing the inclusion and monitoring of the SDGs in the Semester as well as taking part in the broad discussion aimed at building an Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and launched by the Commission in its Communication on building a strong social Europe for just transitions².

2. Existing commitments

a) European Semester

EMCO has a number of commitments under the European Semester and the Europe 2020 strategy. These commitments determine much of the Committee's calendar for the year; EMCO will continue to work on recurrent obligations, notably:

- Finalisation and adoption of the **Joint Employment Report** (for March EPSCO);
- Employment Guidelines
- Preparation of **Council Conclusions on the employment and social aspects of the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy** (jointly with SPC for March EPSCO);
- **Evaluation** of the implementation of the previous European Semester cycle's CSRs, whereby EMCO reviews all CSRs in its remit of competence and draws conclusions on their level of implementation. EMCO's conclusions are subsequently used in the negotiations on the new CSRs (Multilateral Surveillance (MLS) in October through April). EMCO will do this work in conjunction with its Policy Analysis Group (PAG) in the period October 2019 to May 2020. Given the experience of last year's reviews, EMCO will maintain the practise of having an enriched horizontal discussion on each thematic area preceding its Multilateral Surveillance Reviews.

² <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1487&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9524>

- EMCO and SPC will have a joint session in 2020, where cross-cutting CSRs (considering also the underpinned policy advice) would be reviewed jointly;
- Monitoring of the employment situation based on the **Employment Performance Monitor (EPM)**;
- **Review of the Commission’s proposals for new CSRs** (May-June);
- **Opinions** on the implementation of the previous year's CSRs and assessment of the new CSR package (for June EPSCO);
- Input in preparation of the 2020 **ASGS** (for October EPSCO);
- Discussion on Commission’s proposal for the **Euro Area Recommendation** (December).

EMCO and its Indicators Group will continue to produce the Employment Performance Monitor. EMCO will submit this to the October EPSCO Council alongside the EMCO Annual Performance Report, along with some key messages about the employment situation in the EU. This will represent EMCO's contribution to the preparation of the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy for 2021, which will start the 2021 Semester cycle.

b) Collaboration with other committees and stakeholders

In fulfilling its Semester-related obligations, EMCO will continue to work with other Council advisory bodies and preparatory committees, notably with the **Social Protection Committee (SPC)**, the **Economic Policy Committee (EPC)**, and the **Education Committee (EDUC)**.

Cooperation with EPC could be organised through joint thematic discussions – to be timed/aligned with the Commission work programme. A first exchange would be on use of benchmarking in February. In line with the priorities of the Croatian Presidency, a more extensive exchange of views between EMCO and EDUC could be organised alongside the EMCO-EDUC reviews of CSRs in March. Within the institutional setting of the Treaty, EDUC input to EMCO on relevant parts of the employment guidelines could be considered.

Collaboration with the European Network of Public Employment Services (PES Network) will be further developed – e.g. through participation in meetings and with the Indicator Group on the effectiveness of labour market policies and their bench-learning.

Also, EMCO will continue its practice to involve the **European Social Partners** and may seek to develop further its cooperation with the **civil society organizations**.

c) Thematic work

EMCO will also carry out as part of its regular work **thematic reviews**³, some of which in the past have usefully fed into the preparation of Council conclusions⁴ and Commission initiatives.⁵ EMCO will continue to be involved in the review of the employment aspects of the Economic Reform Programme with the Western Balkans and Turkey.⁶

³ In-depth thematic reviews form a key Committee instrument, helping Member States learn from one another, engaging in multilateral discussions on successful measures addressing policy challenges in the areas of employment, social protection and social inclusion.

⁴ For example: on Early Childhood Development with the Bulgarian presidency or on the Future of Work with the Austrian Presidency

⁵ For example: thematic work on reconciliation of private and professional life as an input to the work-life balance package; and review on social protection gaps as an input to the Access to social protection initiative.

⁶ In the context of the Economic and Financial Dialogue, the Western Balkan countries and Turkey submit annual Economic Reform Programmes (ERPs) to the European Commission, which are assessed in EPC and EMCO meetings in April. This assessment leads to 'joint conclusions' with targeted policy guidance, agreed by EFC and adopted by the Economic and Financial Dialogue between EU Member States and the Western Balkans and Turkey, adjacent to the ECOFIN Council meeting.

EMCO will continue to deliver on its **review commitments on two Recommendations**, namely on Long-Term Unemployment (LTU), foreseen for 2020⁷, and the Youth Guarantee (YG), as well as on the involvement of the social partners in the European Semester (**social dialogue**). A thematic seminar with the social partners could focus on apprenticeship schemes⁸. While the review on social dialogue is organised every year, the reviews on the two Council Recommendations take place in alternate years. In case of presence of relevant CSRs, EMCO will also review the implementation of these CSRs in the context of these thematic reviews, as already done in the past year in an effort to streamline and simplify. For the LTU review in the autumn, it may be explored to have a two-days meeting for the reviews.

EMCO will consider reflecting in its work the **priorities of the forthcoming Croatian and German Presidencies**, usually in the form of thematic work, key messages of which are to be endorsed by the Council and/or used for preparation of Council Conclusions. The priorities of the Croatian Presidency will include well-being at work and developing skills of the labour force, primarily at the work place. Germany may be interested in the following subjects for the Committee work: minimum standards for work in the platform economy, as well as minimum wages and minimum income in the context of upward convergence.

EMCO will follow developments related to the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), 2021-2027, the proposed regulations for the ESF+, EGF and JTF, as well as the Regulation on the establishment of the Reform Support Programme. In particular, EMCO together with SPC will seek a prominent role in assessing Member State reform priorities also in the context of new financing tools like the Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness, reflecting the division of labour currently applied to the European Semester's CSRs.

⁷ The 2019 Commission evaluation of the implementation of the LTU Recommendation (COM(2019) 169 final), called for a holistic approach towards activation and integration of social and employment services. To that end, a joint EMCO-SPC review session may be envisioned in 2020.

⁸ Following the set-up of the thematic review by EMCO PAG on skills mismatches on 7 November 2019.

d) Benchmarking and monitoring frameworks

In line with its general aim to support structural reforms and convergence towards best performer, benchmarking is used as a vehicle to support the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, as a tool for building evidence base for CSRs under the European Semester and as an instrument for mutual learning under the Social Open Method of Coordination. Since 2016, EMCO together with SPC, with the active support of the Commission (DG EMPL), carry out work in developing benchmarking frameworks, being a comparative assessment of country performance and policies using agreed policy indicators.

EMCO has already adopted benchmarking frameworks on **unemployment benefits** and **active labour market policies** (on ALMPs component of the framework still being finalised) and **skills**.

EMCO will continue its ongoing work on a benchmarking framework on **minimum wage**⁹ and on mapping **collective bargaining**.

Outside of development of benchmarking frameworks, EMCO is involved in the regular development of indicators and analytical frameworks. Through its subgroups, EMCO and SPC jointly are working on **Work-life Balance** indicators to measure the take-up of paternity leave, parental leave and carers' leave.

e) Committees' Reports and meetings

In addition to its usual Annual reports¹⁰ monitoring the employment situation and the development of related policies, EMCO together with SPC and their sub-groups have jointly carried out an **assessment of the Europe 2020 strategy in 2019**. A final assessment of the progress against the quantitative targets based on 2020 LFS and EU-SILC survey figures will be produced in 2021.

The use of video conferences could be explored for some meetings by looking into the experience of other fora, e.g. the EPC and Eurofound.

⁹ Preparatory work on the benchmarking of minimum wage at the EMCO Indicators Group with a presentation of the Commission's note on 12 September 2019. An additional presentation took place on 14 November.

¹⁰ The EMCO and SPC annual reports will feed into the preparation of the Autumn 2020 package in the context of the European Semester. In line with the President-elect political guidelines, the Committees will promote the availability of reports in digital format.

PROVISIONAL MEETINGS CALENDAR FOR FIRST HALF OF 2020

The calendar below is of necessity provisional and subject to change from April and forward.

DATES	COMMITTEE(S)	MAIN AGENDA POINTS
21 January	EMCO	MLS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALMP and PES
22 January	IG (partly joint with ISG)	JER
27 January	EMCO (am) – EMCO/SPC (pm)	Work programme 2020, PAG Chair election
28 January	EMCO / SPC	Autumn Package with Social Partners and NGOs, Commission social priorities, euro area recommendation.
18 February	PAG	MLS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • labour market segmentation and undeclared work, wages, competitiveness and labour taxation
19 February	EMCO EMCO - EPC	JER and ASGS CC – input to March EPSCO - Minimum wages benchmarking With EPC: benchmarking MS performance in the Semester
3 March	IG	
10 - 11 March	EMCO – EDUC	Joint reviews (one day) and thematic discussion
17 March	PAG	MLS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • labour market participation of women and disadvantaged groups
<i>19 March</i>	<i>EPSCO Council</i>	

26-27 March	EMCO (Croatia)	“Impact of demographic trends on labour market”
2 April	EMCO-SPC (Joint reviews of cross cutting issues)	MLS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • labour market participation of women and social protection & social inclusion • integration of employment and social services
24 April	EMCO	Dialogue with the Western Balkans and Turkey
<i>27-28 April</i>	<i>Informal EPSCO</i>	Back to back with Western Balkan Ministerial
5 May	EMCO	European Green Deal / Just Transition Fund (tbc)
6 May	EMCO-SPC (tent.)	•
12 May	IG	
<i>20 May (tbc)</i>	<i>COM release of draft CSRs</i>	
May-June	EMCO-SPC EMCO-SPC-EPC	Discussion on Commission’s new draft CSRs
<i>11 June</i>	<i>EPSCO Council</i>	

Second half of 2020:

Thematic review with (European/national) social partners on VET/apprenticeship

EMCO in Germany – 17-18 September

Follow-up on joint EU2020 assessment / Social Pillar Action Plan

Review of the LTU Recommendation

Preparation of EMCO Annual Employment Performance Report

EMCO Indicators Group Work Programme 2020

a) EMCO Indicators Group Core Business

In 2020, the EMCO Indicators Group (EMCO IG) will continue to support EMCO in the quantitative description and analysis of relevant policy issues. The broad EMCO priorities imply that the EMCO IG will continue to support the surveillance and monitoring capacities of EMCO in the following ways:

The European Semester

- It will discuss the draft Joint Employment Report, including the use and interpretation made of the Social Scoreboard. Particular attention will be devoted to the issue of monitoring upward social convergence.
- It will update the Employment Performance Monitor (EPM), the key tool to monitor progress towards the Europe 2020 employment target and identify the key employment challenges and good labour market outcomes of the Member States and the EU as a whole.
- It will also start reflecting on how to transform and adapt the EPM post-Europe 2020 Strategy, possibly focusing on increasing the synergies with the employment indicators of the Social Scoreboard and/or with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as envisaged in the EMCO Work Programme for 2020.
- It will contribute to the refinement of the indicators and methodology used under the Joint Assessment Framework (JAF).
 - This can include revisiting the 10 JAF Policy Areas and refining the list of indicators in view of enhancing the usability of the tool and of better reflecting the latest Employment Guidelines.

- It will produce the EMCO Annual Employment Performance Report, which will represent EMCO's contribution to the preparation of the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy for 2021.
- It will continue to work on the benchmarking proposals from the Commission to contribute to the analysis underpinning work on the Semester. Work will go on to complete the benchmarking frameworks on unemployment benefits and active labour market policies, and minimum wage as well as mapping collective bargaining.

Monitoring of Council Recommendations

The EMCO IG will continue its work on analysing the results of the data collections on monitoring the Council Recommendations on Youth Guarantee and on Long-term unemployed. Where necessary, the EMCO IG will evaluate the pertinent Indicator Frameworks.

Assessment of the Europe 2020 Strategy

As a follow-up to its joint work with the **Social Protection Committee** and its Indicators Subgroup (SPC ISG) on the assessment of the Europe 2020 Strategy, EMCO IG will reflect on adapting its working methods, reporting tools, and monitoring framework(s) in view of a possible successor strategy. It will also be ready to provide its contribution to the debate on the future of social Europe post-2020, taking into account the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, the planned Action plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights and the **European Council's** new strategic agenda for the EU for the period 2019-2024.

Employment indicators for monitoring of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The EMCO IG is ready to follow up and support the work carried out by the Commission on employment indicators for monitoring of the UN Sustainable Developments Goals.

Reconciliation of work and private life

The EMCO IG, in cooperation with the SPC ISG, will continue to work on enhancing comparative EU-level data on the topic of reconciliation of work and private life.

Other analytical areas

The EMCO IG will continue its work on monitoring multidimensional policy concepts through the JAF. The EMCO IG will look (when and if necessary) at the results of impact assessment studies, especially on the impact of ESF financed measures in the context of employment policies and the effectiveness of labour market policies.

b) Working Methods

The main discussions of the EMCO IG take place during its scheduled meetings. In order to facilitate the discussion and to allow Members to prepare adequately for the meeting, documents will be sent sufficiently in advance of the meeting, where possible.

Written procedures can be helpful in the follow-up to meetings, when agreements have to be reached before the next scheduled meeting or when documents are circulated too close to the meeting date, but should not replace discussions in the working group on a regular basis.

When the number of agenda items does not justify full-day meetings in Brussels, the EMCO IG Secretariat will also envisage organising written procedures and/or videoconferences instead of scheduled meetings, with the approval of the EMCO IG Chair.

Building on past successful experience, the EMCO IG could envisage organising *ad hoc* working groups consisting of a few Member States to develop proposals to be discussed in the EMCO IG concerning specific areas of the EMCO IG work such as revising/developing a policy area or developing indicators for monitoring a specific subject.

c) Co-operation with other Committees and institutions

The EMCO IG will continue to promote close working relationships with all other relevant committees, particularly on work related to the JAF and the scoreboard for monitoring of the European Pillar of Social Rights, and the EMCO IG Chair and the Secretariat will regularly update the Members on relevant work carried out in the other committees.

In addition to the close cooperation with the SPC ISG in the context of the work on the JAF and on the Social scoreboard, the EMCO IG will continue its collaboration with the EPC sub-group that deals with the Europe 2020 monitoring (LIME) in order to enhance consistency between our work and macro-economic monitoring, with DG EAC's Standing Group on indicators and benchmarks (SGIB) with respect to the benchmarking work on skills and measuring the education headline targets, with the Eurostat Working Group on labour market statistics (LAMAS) and the PES Network focusing on their PES bench-learning, in particular on the effectiveness of labour market policies, as well as with the European Platform on preventing and deterring undeclared work..

Also, the EMCO IG will continue to promote the cooperation with other institutions and bodies carrying work in the area of analysis of the labour market, including CEDEFOP, EUROFOUND, and international organisations such as ILO and OECD.

Specific methodological issues

In order to enhance surveillance and monitoring capacities, and to facilitate the link with the qualitative aspects of the monitoring, a number of additional specific methodological issues would merit further attention. Work in these areas will be prioritised to follow the work of EMCO (pending the adoption of the EMCO Work programme).

- Fair minimum wage
- Skills agenda
- Labour and social conditions of platform workers
- Youth Guarantee
- European Green Deal - including the Just Transition Fund
- A European unemployment benefit reinsurance scheme