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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on a reinforced Quality Framework for Traineeships and replacing the Council Recommendation of 10 March 2014 on a Quality Framework for Traineeships - <i>Progress report</i>

I. INTRODUCTION

On 20 March 2024, the Commission adopted a proposal for a Council Recommendation on a reinforced Quality Framework for Traineeships. The initiative aims to supersede the 2014 Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships and to improve the quality of traineeships, in particular as regards learning and training content and working conditions, in order to ease the transition from education, unemployment or inactivity to work. The Recommendation includes provisions on fair remuneration, access to adequate social protection, mentorship, equal access for individuals from diverse backgrounds, and the possibility of hybrid and remote working arrangements. The proposal was published as a package together with the proposal for a ‘Traineeships Directive’.

Under the Belgian Presidency, the Working Party on Social Questions met on three occasions: 9 April, 22-23 April and 28 May 2024, and completed the first article-by-article examination of the proposal. The progress achieved is summarised in Section II below.

Most delegations welcomed the objective of the proposal, while stressing the need to ensure enough time for thorough examination, especially given its cross-cutting nature as well as its interconnections and overlaps with the Traineeships Directive. Several delegations continue to have scrutiny reservations.

II. THE COUNCIL'S WORK UNDER THE BELGIAN PRESIDENCY

The Working Party on Social Questions initiated the examination of the proposed Recommendation under the Belgian Presidency on 9 April 2024, three weeks after its publication. On that occasion, the Commission presented the proposed Recommendation and delegations had the opportunity to submit preliminary general comments and questions.

The Commission proposal was accompanied by an Impact Assessment which also covers the proposed 'Traineeships Directive'. A questionnaire on the Impact Assessment was shared with delegations by the Presidency on 4 April 2024. Twenty-one Member States responded to the questionnaire. The impact assessment was analysed and discussed in depth at a Working Party on Social Questions on 22 April 2024. The summary of the evaluation and responses of the Member States to the Impact Assessment can be found in doc. 10456/24.

The meetings of the Working Party on Social Questions on 23 April and 28 May 2024 were dedicated to the examination and discussion on the proposed Recommendation, in order to ensure a better understanding of the proposal. On these occasions, delegations raised their comments and questions, which were addressed by the Commission, in particular as regards the scope of the proposed Recommendation and the level of detail and prescriptiveness.

III. MAIN ISSUES DISCUSSED AT WORKING PARTY LEVEL

Legal basis

Some delegations raised questions regarding the legal basis of the proposal, pointing to the limited competences of the EU in the field of education and training. Delegations also reiterated that the proposal should be compatible with national systems and legislation on traineeships.

Scope

The proposal seeks to extend the scope of the 2014 Council Recommendation on Quality Framework for Traineeships, which only applies to open market traineeships and to traineeships as part of active labour market policies, to two additional types of traineeships: traineeships that are part of curricula of formal education and training, and traineeships that are a mandatory requirement to access a certain profession.

Several delegations underlined that the scope of the proposal was not clear, questioning how it related to the existing 2018 Council Recommendation on Apprenticeships and whether all actions recommended in the proposal could actually apply to all types of traineeships, given the difference in their objectives, e.g. access to the labour market vs. educational training.

Some delegations further stressed that traineeships that were part of formal education should not be covered in the proposal.

Fair pay

Several delegations were cautious of the recommended point that all traineeships should be “fairly paid” and asked for clarification on what is to be understood as “fair”. The Commission explained that “fair pay” was an important concept which has been strongly supported by the European Parliament and that it left room for interpretation.

Written agreement

Some delegations were sceptical about the added value of written agreements, especially for educational traineeships, and about consulting trainees in the setting of the written agreement.

Alignment with the Traineeships Directive

Several delegations called for a greater degree of alignment with the “Traineeships Directive”, as regards definitions and implementation deadlines. Delegations also questioned the need to submit a national implementation plan.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The Belgian Presidency ensured a timely and productive start of the discussions on the proposed Recommendation. Three successive meetings of the Working Party on Social Questions allowed the delegations to complete the first thorough examination of the proposal. As a result of constructive exchanges among delegations, as well as with the Commission, clarifications have been provided and a degree of shared understanding has been achieved.

Further technical discussions are necessary to build on this work in view of reaching a compromise text.
