



Council of the
European Union

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SOC 496
EMPL 302
SAN 390
CONSOM 231

DRAFT MINUTES
COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
(**Employment, Social Policy, Health** and Consumer Affairs)
20 and 21 June 2024

MEETING ON THURSDAY 20 JUNE 2024 (10:00)

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Council adopted the agenda set out in document 11047/24.

2. Approval of 'A' items

Non-legislative list

11227/24

The Council adopted all "A" items listed in the document above, including all linguistic COR and REV documents presented for adoption.

A statement to this item is set out in the addendum.

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY¹

Legislative deliberations

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

3. Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment (Article 19)

SC

10817/24

Progress report

The Council took note of the progress report on the Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation in areas other than employment (Article 19), as set out in the document above.

Non-legislative activities

4. Key conclusions on the 2024 Pension Adequacy Report of the Social Protection Committee and the European Commission

2

10251/1/24 REV 1
+ ADD 1-2

Presentation by the chair of the Social Protection Committee

The Council took note of the presentation by the chair of the Social Protection Committee.

¹ Attended by the respective chairs of the Employment Committee (EMCO) and the Social Protection Committee (SPC).

5. **Conclusions on Pension Adequacy**

 10550/24

Approval

The Council approved the Conclusions on Pension Adequacy, as set out in the document above.

6. **2024 European Semester**



(a) **Spring package**

Presentation by the Commission

The Council took note of the presentation by the Commission of the European Semester Spring package.

(b) **Social convergence within the European Union: opinion of the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee**

10799/1/24 REV 1

*Presentation by the respective chairs of the Employment
Committee and the Social Protection Committee*

The Council took note of the presentation by the respective chairs of the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee of the Opinion on Social convergence in the European Union, as set out in the document above.

7. **Conclusions on the role of labour market, skills and social policies for resilient economies**

 11066/24 + ADD 1

Approval

The Council approved the Conclusions on the role of labour market, skills and social policies for resilient economies, as set out in the document above.

Estonia presented a statement, as set out in the Annex.


8. Voluntary guiding principles for EU Member States prepared by the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee for evaluating economic effects of reforms and investments in the labour market, skills and social policy domains

 10779/24

Endorsement

The Council endorsed the Voluntary guiding principles for EU Member States prepared by the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee for evaluating economic effects of reforms and investments in the labour market, skills and social policy domains, as set out in the document above.

9. Implementation of the Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market: Key Messages from the Employment Committee

 10793/24 + COR 1
+ ADD 1-3
+ ADD 3 COR 1

Endorsement

The Council endorsed the key messages from the Employment Committee on the implementation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market, as set out in the document above.

Legislative deliberations

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

10. Revision of the European Works Councils Directive

  10750/24

General approach

The Council reached a general approach on the above item.

11. Traineeships Directive

  10455/24

Progress report

The Council took note of the progress report on the Traineeships Directive, as set out in the document above.


Non-legislative activities

12. **Council Recommendation on a Reinforced Quality Framework for Traineeships**
Progress report

  10443/24

The Council took note of the progress report on the Council Recommendation on a Reinforced Quality Framework for Traineeships, as set out in the document above.

13. **La Hulpe Declaration on the Future of the European Pillar of Social Rights**
Endorsement

 10676/24
+ ADD 1-2

There was not the required support for the Council to endorse the La Hulpe Declaration on the Future of the European Pillar of Social Rights set out in the document above.

Ireland and Hungary presented statements, as set out in the Annex.

14. **Social dimension of the internal market**
Policy debate

 10777/24

The Council held a policy debate on the Social dimension of the internal market, on the basis of a Presidency steering note as set out in the document above.

Any other business

15. (a) **Presidency events**
Information from the Presidency

 10517/24

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on the Presidency events.

- (b) **Current legislative proposals (public deliberation in accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union)**

Regulation establishing an EU Talent Pool
Information from the Presidency

  15550/23 + ADD 1

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on the Regulation establishing an EU Talent Pool.

(c) Labour and skills shortages in the EU: an action plan



8153/24

Information from the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Commission on Labour and skills shortages in the EU: an action plan.

(d) European Year of Skills



10528/24

Information from the Presidency and the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency and the Commission on the European Year of Skills.

(a) (continued) Presidency events



10517/24

Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on the Presidency events.

(e) Work programme of the incoming Presidency

Information from Hungary

MEETING ON FRIDAY 21 JUNE 2024 (10:00)

HEALTH

Legislative deliberations

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

16. Pharmaceutical package:

  9557/24
10034/24

- (a) **Directive on the Union code relating to medicinal products for human use**
- (b) **Regulation laying down Union procedures for the authorisation and supervision of medicinal products for human use and establishing rules governing the European Medicines Agency**

Progress report

Policy debate

The Council took note of the progress report on the Pharmaceutical package and held a policy debate on ways forward regarding these incentives.

Non-legislative activities

17. Conclusions on the Future of the European Health Union



 9900/24 + ADD 1

Approval

The Council approved the Conclusions on the Future of the European Health Union.

Portugal and Spain presented a statement, as set out in the Annex.

18. Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers (legal basis proposed by the Commission: Article 168(6) TFEU)

  10128/24 + ADD 1
(*)

Adoption

The Council adopted the Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers.

Hungary presented a statement, as set out in the Annex.

Any other business

19. (a) A call for action at the EU level to protect young people from harm caused by novel tobacco and nicotine products



10268/1/24 REV 1

Information from the Latvian delegation on behalf of the Cyprus, Estonian, Finnish, Irish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Luxembourg, Maltese, Netherlands, Portuguese, Slovenian and Spanish delegations

The Council took note of the information provided by Latvia on behalf of Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain on a call for action at the EU level to protect young people from harm caused by novel tobacco and nicotine products.

(b) Strengthening efforts to protect children from direct marketing and sale of tobacco and nicotine products, especially on digital platforms



10527/24

Information from the Danish delegation on behalf of the Danish, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Irish, Luxembourg, Maltese, Netherlands, Polish, Slovenian and Spanish delegations

The Council took note of the information provided by Denmark on behalf of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and Spain on strengthening efforts to protect children from direct marketing and sale of tobacco and nicotine products, especially on digital platforms.

(c) Health crisis in the strip of Gaza: state of play and call for action



11033/24

Information from the Spanish delegation on behalf of the Irish, Luxembourg, Maltese, Slovenian and Spanish delegations

The Council took note of the information provided by Spain on behalf of Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia and Spain on the state of play and call for action for the health crisis in the strip of Gaza. Portugal expressed its support to this information.

- (d) **A call for action at the EU and national level to prioritise efforts and investment towards ending HIV epidemic in Europe until 2030, ensuring the implementation of appropriate political actions in the next crucial 6 years to come**

 11173/24

Information from the Romanian, Polish and Spanish delegations

The Council took note of the information provided by Romania, Poland and Spain on a call for action at the EU and national level to prioritise efforts and investment towards ending HIV epidemic in Europe until 2030, ensuring the implementation of appropriate political actions in the next crucial 6 years to come.

- (e) **WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC): Tenth Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 10) (Panama 5-10 February 2024)**

 10154/24

Information from the Presidency and the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency and the Commission on the outcome of the Tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

- (f) **Presidency events**

 9959/24

Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on the Presidency events.

- (g) Impact of excessive national stockpiling strategies on the EU solidarity

11156/1/24 REV 1

Information from the Cyprus, Czech, Maltese, Romanian, Slovak and Slovenian delegations

- (h) Negotiations for an international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, as well as complementary amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005)

10159/24

Information from the Presidency and the Commission

- (i) Work programme of the incoming Presidency

Information from Hungary



First reading



Special legislative procedure



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



Item based on a Commission proposal



Item on which a vote may be requested

Statements to the non-legislative "B" items set out in doc. 11047/24

Ad "B" item 7: **Conclusions on the role of labour market, skills and social policies for resilient economies**
Approval

STATEMENT BY ESTONIA

“Estonia supports the goal of the Council Conclusions to facilitate better and more comparable measurement of economic effects of labour market, skills and social policies at the national level. Whereas stressing, that such quantifying assessments must remain voluntary.

While certain social policies will undoubtedly foster macroeconomic stability, it is crucial to maintain a balance between social welfare spending and long-term fiscal sustainability in the EU (and in the euro area).

Therefore, the intention of any future work stemming from the Conclusions should not be to weaken the implementation of the EU's economic and fiscal governance rules. In particular, it should not encourage Member States to create new and undefined concepts – such as social investments – that could potentially be used to extend the fiscal adjustment periods of any Member State. Introducing at EU level such approaches, that are not supported by evidence-based methodologies, would particularly serve the interests of Member States with high social protection expenditure and high unsustainable public debt levels, which would undermine the effective implementation of EU's fiscal and budgetary rules and safeguarding the ultimate aim of the Stability and Growth Pact.

Moreover, all discussions regarding the implementation of the economic governance rules should stay in the remits of ECOFIN.”

Ad "B" item 13: **La Hulpe Declaration on the Future of the European Pillar of Social Rights**
Endorsement

STATEMENT BY IRELAND

“Ireland is fully supportive of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which provides a comprehensive framework of 20 principles that guide EU and national policies in the areas of Equal opportunities and access to the labour market; Fair working conditions; and Social protection and inclusion. Ireland is fully committed to strengthening implementation of the Pillar principles.

The Irish Constitution protects the right to freedom of association in Article 40.6.1°:

‘The state guarantees liberty for the exercise of the following rights, subject to public order and morality:

...

iii. the right of the citizens to form associations and unions. Laws, however, may be enacted for the regulation and control in the public interest of the exercise of the foregoing right.’

The system of industrial relations in Ireland is essentially voluntary in nature. There has been agreement on all sides that the terms and conditions of employment of workers is best determined by the process of voluntary collective bargaining between an employer or employers' association and one or more trade unions, without the intervention of the State.

The State's role in industrial relations has been largely confined to facilitating the collective bargaining process through establishing by legislation, institutions to assist in the resolution of disputes between employers and workers.”

STATEMENT BY HUNGARY

“Hungary declares that the Commission’s Communication on the ‘a Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025’ mentioned in the La Hulpe Declaration on the Future of the European Pillar of Social Rights should be interpreted with due regard to national competences and the specific circumstances in each Member State. In line with its national legislation and constitutional values enshrined in the Fundamental Law, Hungary interprets the concept of ‘gender’ as reference to ‘sex’ and the concept of ‘gender equality’ as reference to ‘women and men shall have equal rights.’”

Ad "B" item 17: Conclusions on the Future of the European Health Union *Approval*

STATEMENT BY PORTUGAL AND SPAIN

“Portugal and Spain praise the efforts by the Belgian EU Council Presidency to create an ambitious and indispensable vision for the future of the European Health Union with the shared goal of caring for and protecting European citizens. Coordinated actions are key for national health systems’ preparedness to address both existing and future health challenges. In this context, we have been committed to efforts to mitigate medicines shortages and their impacts on patients. We support the shared call on the European Commission to consider proposing a Critical Medicines Act. However, Portugal and Spain interpret the corresponding measures described in paragraph 73 in a non-restrictive manner. We believe that the Critical Medicines Act should be based on a thorough impact assessment that considers all relevant measures, including EU-level support instruments, that can help to strengthen EU production of critical medicinal products, while ensuring a level playing field among Member States. In this way, we can safeguard an equitable access to critical medicines and to Health for all citizens across all Member States.”

Ad "B" item 18: Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers (legal basis proposed by the Commission: Article 168(6) TFEU) *Adoption*

STATEMENT BY HUNGARY

“Hungary recognises and promotes equality between men and women in accordance with the Fundamental Law of Hungary and the primary law, principles and values of the European Union, as well as commitments and principles stemming from international law. Equality between women and men is enshrined in the Treaties of the European Union as a fundamental value. In line with these and its national legislation, Hungary interprets the term ‘gender’ as a reference to sex and the concept of ‘gender equality’ as reference to ‘providing equal rights and opportunities to women and men’ in the draft Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers.

Hungary declares that the Commission's communication on 'Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025', mentioned in footnote of the draft Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers, should be interpreted with due regard to national competences and the specific circumstances in each Member State."
