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From:	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)
To:	Council
No. Cion doc.:	7416/18
Subject:	Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed - Adoption

STATEMENT BY THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The social security of the population and workers has historically been for the Czech Republic one of the basic pillars of the functioning of a democratic society and a market economy. Therefore, the Czech Republic shares the generally recognized value of the high level of social protection, solidarity and social inclusion enshrined in the Treaty on European Union. At the same time, the Czech Republic considers the gradual convergence of the level of social protection of the population as an important part of the process of gradual economic and social integration of the European Union countries.

In view of the fundamental changes taking place on the labour market, the Czech Republic fully supports the objectives of the Recommendation, i.e. in particular ensuring access for all workers and self-employed persons to adequate social protection, transferability and transparency of social security rights.

However, the Czech Republic primarily insisted on possibility for EU Member States to decide independently on voluntary or compulsory access of self-employed persons to different social protection schemes. As this assumption is expressly provided for in point 10 of the Council Recommendation, the Czech Republic can support the Council Recommendation.

In view of the immense diversity of national social protection systems, their historical and social development and the socioeconomic environment of each EU country, the Czech Republic considers the legally non-binding recommendation of the Council to be a suitable tool for implementation of principle 12 of the European Pillar of Social Rights – ensuring adequate social protection within EU.

The Czech Republic welcomes that the Council Recommendation confirms the exclusive competence of Member States to organize social security systems and provides Member States with a high degree of flexibility in setting the level of social security contributions, determining the threshold of income from which premiums are paid, the level of benefits and the conditions for participation in the social security system, in particular for the self-employed.

The principle of subsidiarity, the division of competences set out in the Treaty as well as diversities among Member States and their economic conditions must be taken into account in the progressive implementation of the Recommendations according to point 21 of the Recommendation.

The Czech Republic underlines that the way and pace of achieving the objectives of the Recommendation must remain the exclusive competence and responsibility of the Member States in line with Article 153 (4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union which sets out that „The provisions adopted pursuant to this Article: shall not affect the right of Member States to define the fundamental principles of their social security systems and must not significantly affect the financial equilibrium thereof...”