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NOTE

From: Presidency

To: Delegations

Subject: AOB for the meeting of the EPSCO Council of 9 March 2026:
Presidency events
- Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find attached information on the events organised by the Presidency, with a view to the EPSCO Council of 9 March 2026 (Any Other Business item).

**INFORMATION ON EVENTS ORGANISED BY THE CYPRUS PRESIDENCY OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

1. Informal Meeting of Employment and Social Affairs Ministers, 12-13 February 2026

On 12 and 13 February, the Cyprus Presidency convened the Informal Meeting of Employment and Social Affairs Ministers. **The meeting was chaired by the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance, Mr. Marinos Moushoultas and the Deputy Minister of Social Welfare of Cyprus, Ms. Clea Papaellina.** The successful meeting brought together Ministers, high-level representatives from the European Commission, the European Parliament, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the European Labour Authority (ELA), representatives from the private sector and delegates from all EU Member States. Furthermore, representatives from three EFTA countries, the Employment and Social Protection Committee Chairs (EMCO and SPC), high level and distinguished representatives of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the Committee of Regions (CoR) and Civil Society Organizations alongside academia, have also been invited and attended the meeting.

The two-day programme opened with a cultural event in Larnaka, highlighting Cyprus' rich cultural heritage and traditions, and concluded with a Gala Dinner.

On the second day, in Lefkosia (Nicosia), the meeting focused on three key themes:

- Fair Employment for Social Justice;
- the forthcoming European Anti-Poverty Strategy; and
- Person-Centered Long-Term Care as a Driver of Active Ageing.

The first plenary session, entitled “*Fair Employment for Social Justice*”, opened with a keynote online speech, by Mr. Gilbert F. Houngbo, Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), who set the scene for the discussion on advancing fair employment in support of social justice. The key messages that emerged from the ensuing debate highlighted national policies that have proven effective in promoting fair employment. The session also explored concrete actions to ensure that EU employment policy instruments will deliver tangible results, thereby strengthening fair employment in support of social justice.

The second plenary session entitled «Towards the EU’s Anti-Poverty Strategy: “*Building a Better Future for All*”, focused on the forthcoming first-ever EU Anti-Poverty Strategy. Discussions underlined the shared understanding that poverty constitutes a multidimensional phenomenon that extends beyond income at EU, national, regional, and local levels. Key challenges were highlighted and best practices were shared, notably, access to quality essential services, social participation, education, healthcare, transport, affordable housing, and combating energy poverty. A strong consensus emerged on the need for a systemic and horizontal policy approach which is also proactive, with child poverty identified as a central concern and priority, particularly the need to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of prevention alongside measures aimed at addressing and mitigating the effects of poverty, as well as on framing social investments as strategic investments rather than expenditures. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and Long-Term Care (LTC) were identified as critical policy areas. Furthermore, reinforcement of the European Child Guarantee was recognized as a key priority, while access to labour market and removal of related barriers were considered essential for social inclusion. Finally, the decisive role of EU funding and the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) in enabling the effective implementation of policies was emphasized, reaffirming that poverty reduction is intrinsically linked to social cohesion and in enhancing EU’s Competitiveness.

The meeting concluded with the third plenary session titled “*Person-Centered Long-Term Care as a Driver of Active Ageing: Policy Measures, System Reforms, and Innovative Practices to Address Emerging Challenges*”. The discussion confirmed that long-term care is widely recognized as an important pillar for promoting active and dignified ageing, especially during demographic ageing, with a clear need to transition towards preventive, integrated, and person-centered care models. It was emphasized that policies prioritizing home-based and community care, prevention, participation, rehabilitation, and the preservation of autonomy can substantially improve the quality of life of older persons while contributing to the sustainability of care systems. Structural challenges were commonly acknowledged, particularly workforce shortages and the need for stronger integration between health and social care services. It was underlined that investments in long-term care should be treated as social investments, with particular attention to improving working conditions, training, and skills development for care workers, as well as to supporting informal carers. The important role of innovative practices and digital technologies was also recognized, provided these are embedded within coherent national policy frameworks. Lastly, the essential contribution of the European Union was highlighted through the European Care Strategy, funding instruments, and technical support, stressing the importance of ensuring continuity and sustainability of reforms.

During the discussion, Ms. Adelina Comas-Herrera, Director of the Global Observatory of Long-Term Care, presented best practices from countries facing similarly rapid population ageing, providing valuable international examples of policies and approaches to support long term care and active ageing.

2. Informal Videoconference of the Ministers responsible for Housing – 3 February

An informal videoconference of ministers responsible for housing was held on 3 February, chaired by Minister of Interior Mr. Konstantinos Ioannou where the newly launched European Affordable Housing Plan (EAHP) was presented by Commissioner for Energy and Housing, Mr. Dan Jørgensen. The meeting brought together ministers from the majority of Member States and from diverse portfolios and offered a platform for the Ministers' preliminary remarks. Member States broadly welcomed the Plan while underscoring the importance of respecting subsidiarity and national competences in housing policy.

Key themes raised during the discussions included: measures to address speculation, boost housing supply, simplify regulations, foster innovation, and reinforce the social and demographic dimensions of housing policies, with many delegations highlighting national priorities and implementation experiences. The meeting also provided an opportunity to exchange views on upcoming Presidency events and ensure continued coordination on housing affordability and sustainability across the EU.

3. Informal Meeting of the Employment Committee (EMCO), 16-17 February 2026

On 16 and 17 February 2026 in Larnaka, the Cyprus Presidency organized an informal meeting of the Employment Committee (EMCO), attended by delegates from 25 EU Member States; representatives from EEA/EFTA countries; senior representatives from the European Commission and CEDEFOP.

The meeting was held under the thematic priority “*Collective responsibility for the Union of Skills*” and focused on skills development and the anticipation of labour market needs in support of a resilient and inclusive labour market.

Discussions addressed collective responsibility for skills, cooperation at national and European level, skills forecasting, and innovative approaches to lifelong learning. The programme included presentations by the European Commission, CEDEFOP, and national authorities, followed by exchanges of views among Member States.

4. Informal meeting of the Social Protection Committee 18-19 February 2026

The Informal Social Protection Committee meeting held on **18–19 February 2026** in Lefkosia (Nicosia) focused on the theme “*The Role of Enabling Services in Reducing Poverty and Encouraging Activation*”, exploring how enabling services can strengthen the EU’s social model and combat poverty, social exclusion and support sustainable activation. The discussions, attended by SPC members and representatives from the Council, MS, the Commission, 1 EFTA country and former SPC Chairs, emphasized the importance of comprehensive enabling services, including social work, counselling, coaching, psychological support, healthcare, long-term care, education and training, and housing, as essential complements to income support and activation measures to promote social inclusion and employment across the Union. Three parallel workshops took place on (a) “*Strengthening enabling services for persons with disabilities*” (b) on “*Enabling services for migrants, long-term unemployed persons and people experiencing complex disadvantages*” and (c) on “*Strengthening the quality of enabling services – delivery models, standards and monitoring*”. The meeting also marked the 25th anniversary of the Social Protection Committee (SPC) and concluded with a symbolic time capsule of messages for the future to be opened in 25 years.

5. Upcoming European Labour Authority (ELA) Annual Conference on Declared Work, 11 March 2026

The European Labour Authority (ELA) and the Cyprus Presidency, are organizing the ELA Annual Conference on Declared Work 2026, celebrating ten years of the European Platform dedicated to combating undeclared work. The event will be held on 11 March 2026 in Larnaka and will provide an excellent opportunity to review the Platform’s progress and reaffirm the shared commitment to declared, fair, and quality employment throughout Europe.

6. Upcoming Euroguidance Network Working Group Meeting, 5-7 May 2026

From 5 to 7 May, the Euroguidance Network Working Group Meeting will take place in Larnaka. During the meeting, peer learning sessions will take place, focusing on the theme of Artificial Intelligence and counselling.

7. Upcoming High-level Conference “Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities: Empowerment and Support in a Community for All”, 7 May 2026

The High-Level Conference on Disability will take place on 7 May 2026 in Lemesos (Limassol), bringing together policymakers, civil society organizations and lived-experience representatives. During the event, the Cyprus Presidency will have the honor of hosting the first presentation of the European Commission’s Communication on Enhancing the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities up to 2030, to strengthen and build on the existing Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-.

Moreover, the Conference will focus on advancing empowerment, self-determination and autonomy for persons with disabilities, core principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, by highlighting high-quality, inclusive, community-based and person-centered support services. The event will be followed by a Disability Platform Meeting, hosted for the first time outside of Brussels.

8. Upcoming Informal Ministerial Conference on Housing “Unlocking Housing Potential: Simplification, Innovation and Mobilizing Investments”, 11-12 May 2026

The informal ministerial meeting titled “Unlocking Housing Potential: Simplification, Innovation and Mobilizing Investments”, to be held on 11–12 May 2026 in Cyprus under the Cyprus Presidency, will bring together ministers responsible for housing to advance practical solutions to the European housing crisis. Building on the European Affordable Housing Plan, which emphasizes boosting supply, cutting red tape and mobilizing investment at all levels of governance, the meeting is planned to showcase best practices from national and regional authorities on reducing administrative burdens and accelerating housing delivery. Delegations will exchange views on concrete examples of simplification measures, innovative construction approaches and regulatory reforms aimed at speeding up permitting and increasing the availability of affordable, high-quality housing. In addition, the meeting is planned to initiate discussions on the Pan-European Investment Platform, a key tool to channel public and private financing into sustainable and affordable housing projects across the Union, reflecting a shared commitment to strengthen investment frameworks and support collaborative action on affordable housing solutions.

9. Upcoming High-Level Conference on “No Child is Left Behind: Promoting Child Well-Being and Combating Child Poverty”, 20–21 May 2026

The High-Level Conference on Child Wellbeing will **follow the National Child Guarantee Coordinators Meeting on May 19**. These events are particularly timely, as they will provide an important opportunity for the Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, Roxana Mînzatu to present the planned reinforcement of the European Child Guarantee, thereby contributing to the broader policy discussions on child well-being and the fight against child poverty at the European level.

During the Conference discussions will focus on combating child poverty, the effectiveness of child benefits, and future policy orientations. Particular emphasis will be placed on investing in the early years, ensuring inclusive child benefits for all, and reinforcing the European Child Guarantee as a key instrument for safeguarding the best interests of every child. Also, during the conference, an exchange of views on coordinated strategies is planned, aiming at preventing and reducing child poverty and social exclusion, while strengthening social investment approaches across the Union.

10. Upcoming High-Level Conference, on ‘Preventing and Combating All Forms of Gender-Based Online Violence Against Girls’, Nicosia on 18–19 May 2026

The conference aims to highlight the urgent need to address and prevent online violence, reinforcing our collective commitment to ensuring a safe digital environment for all. It will underline a clear and uncompromising message of zero tolerance to all forms of violence, particularly in the online space, and promote coordinated action to safeguard the rights, dignity and well-being of women and girls across the European Union.

11. Upcoming EURES European Coordination Group (ECG) Meeting, 19-21 May 2026

On 19–21 May, the EURES European Coordination Group (ECG) Meeting will take place in Larnaka focusing on key thematic issues relevant to the Network. The meeting will provide a platform for an overview of current labour market dynamics, highlighting emerging trends, structural transformations, and key areas requiring coordinated policy attention.

12. Upcoming Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC) Meeting, 20 May 2026 and Thematic Day of the European Union Senior Labour Inspectors' Committee, 21 May 2026

On 21 May, the Cyprus Presidency will host the Thematic Day, followed by the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC) Meeting on 20 May in Nicosia. The SLIC Committee will provide opinions on matters concerning the enforcement of EU Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) legislation.

The Thematic Day event will review SLIC's achievements and explore future challenges, with emphasis on OSH risks linked to new forms of work, digital transition, the green economy, and climate change, in the context of demographic, economic, and geopolitical trends.

13. Upcoming High-level Conference on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), 11 June 2026

The Cyprus Presidency will host a High-Level Conference on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) on 11 June in Nicosia. The Conference will promote a preventive, predictive and human-centered approach to occupational safety and health, with a view to eliminating workplace accidents and occupational diseases in line with the Vision Zero ambition. Discussions will examine how a strong and positive safety culture can help address contemporary challenges, including digitalization, climate change and psychosocial risks.

14. Upcoming 25th Board Meeting of The European Network of Public Employment Services, 18-19 June 2026

On 18–19 June, the Cyprus Presidency will host the 25th Board Meeting of the European Network of Public Employment Services (PES) in Nicosia, under the theme “Strengthening Enterprise Competitiveness through a Union of Skills.” The meeting will focus on the role of PES in advancing the EU initiative Union of Skills, aimed at building a more skilled, adaptable, and prosperous European workforce.

The Presidency will provide input on how a Union of Skills can enhance alignment between enterprise skill needs and education, training, and employment services—particularly for SMEs—and on the role PES can play in supporting enterprises with skills anticipation, recruitment, and workforce upskilling. In addition, the Presidency will highlight how coordinated skills strategies can balance enterprise competitiveness with job quality, inclusion, and long-term workforce development.
