



Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council
Employment, Social Policy and Health issues
Thursday and Friday 21-22 June in Luxembourg

On Thursday, the Council meeting, starting at 9.30, will be chaired by Biser Petkov, Minister for Labour and Social Policies of Bulgaria. On Friday, starting at 9.30, the Council will be chaired by Kiril Ananiev, Minister of Health.

On Thursday, ministers are expected to agree on a general approach on the **coordination of social security systems** (revision of regulations 883/2004 and 987/2009). The Council will also discuss the proposed **directive on work-life balance** and the proposed **directive on transparent and predictable working conditions**, with the aim of reaching general approaches.

Ministers will also take note of progress made on the proposed **regulation on establishing a European Labour Authority** and on the proposed **directive on equal treatment**.

The Council will hold a policy debate on the employment and social policy aspects of the **2018 European Semester exercise**, approving relevant documents including the 2018 country specific recommendations to each member state.

Furthermore, the Council is expected to adopt **conclusions** on the future of work, on a court of auditors special report on free movement of workers and on early childhood development. It is also expected to endorse the **key messages of the 2018 pension adequacy report**.

On Friday, ministers will hold a debate on the proposed **regulation on health technology assessment**. They will also discuss the **future of health in the EU**. The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on "**Healthy nutrition for children: the healthy future of Europe**".

Most of the meeting will be public and can be followed by video streaming at <http://video.consilium.europa.eu/>.

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Press conferences and public events by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu>

Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4) and photo gallery on: www.eucouncil.tv

¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY

Coordination of social security systems

Ministers are expected to agree on a **general approach** on the coordination of social security systems (revision of regulations 883/2004 and 987/2009). The general objective of the regulations is to continue the modernisation of EU social security coordination rules by making them clearer, fairer, and more easily enforceable, thus facilitating the free movement of persons within the EU. ([10052/18](#))

In particular, the proposal focuses on five areas and some miscellaneous amendments:

- **unemployment benefits**: updating rules on aggregation, exportability and coordination of unemployment benefits for frontier and cross-border workers
- **long-term care benefits**: establish a stable regime under which long-term care benefits are to be coordinated, thereby facilitating the mobility of persons in need of long-term care and persons caring for them
- **access to benefits for economically inactive persons**: ensure legal clarity
- **family benefits**: promote shared child raising responsibilities and remove potential financial disincentives for parents who reduce their working hours to take care of their child during the same period
- applicable legislation for **posted workers and persons working in two or more member states**: ensure legal clarity and combat fraud
- **miscellaneous amendments**: concerning data protection and cooperation between social security institutions of member states, among other things.

The Commission presented its proposal to revise the regulations in December 2016. In October 2017, the Council reached a partial agreement on the provisions concerning equal treatment of economically non-active mobile citizens and on applicable legislation for posted workers. In December 2017, the Council reached a second partial agreement on provisions regarding long-term care benefits and family benefits. On 21 June, ministers will aim to confirm an agreement on unemployment benefits and miscellaneous provisions, and adopt a full general approach covering all parts of the amending regulation.

[EU rules on coordination of social security systems \(background information\)](#)

Transparent and predictable working conditions

Ministers will also examine the proposed **directive on transparent and predictable working conditions**, with the aim of reaching a general approach. Discussion is expected to focus on the last pending issue: the inclusion or not of a definition of workers based on the ECJ case law. ([10054/18](#))

This directive will update and repeal existing directive 91/533/EEC concerning the right for employees to be notified in writing of the essential aspects of the employment relationship (written statement directive). It aims to address challenges brought by developments in the world of work since 1991, including a growing flexibilisation of the labour market and, in particular, the increase in the number of 'non-standard' forms of employment, such as temporary employment, part-time and on call work and multi-party employment.

The proposal includes revised obligations to inform workers of the essential aspects of their work and defines a set of minimum rights for workers, including rights to limit to 6 months the duration of the probationary period at the beginning of the job, to take up another job with a different employer in parallel, to know with a reasonable advance when work will take place, to receive a written reply to a request to transfer to a more secure job and to receive the mandatory training cost-free.

The Commission presented its proposal on 21 December 2017, as a follow-up to the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in November 2017.

Work-life balance for parents and carers

The Council will discuss the proposed **directive on work-life balance**, with the aim of reaching a general approach. Ministers are expected to focus on the main outstanding issues, that is the duration of non-transferable parental leave, the inclusion of people leaving in the same household in the definition of carer and the reference to "adequate" when defining the level of payment or allowance. ([10055/18](#))

The general objective of the proposal is to improve access to work-life balance arrangements such as leaves and flexible working arrangements for parents and carers, as well as to increase the take-up of family-related leaves by men, thus contributing to increasing female labour market participation.

In particular, the proposal would update the minimum standard on parental leave, and introduce new minimum standards on paternity leave and carers' leave.

The Commission submitted its proposal on 26 April 2017.

[Work-life balance for parents and carers \(background information\)](#)

Equal treatment

The Council will take stock of progress on the equal treatment directive ([9734/18](#)). The proposed directive implements the principle of equal treatment between persons, irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. It aims to extend protection against discrimination to areas outside employment, including social security, healthcare, education and access to goods and services, including housing.

The Bulgarian Presidency, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the proposal, proposed a questionnaire in order to find ways to overcome the persisting deadlock in Council negotiations and find ways forward. It focused on the aim, the scope and the economic impact of the proposed directive. The Presidency hopes that this debate will give a new impetus to the file.

The Presidency also continued work on:

- **multiple discrimination**: the Presidency sought to further clarify the concept, specifying that it can occur on the basis of any combination of the grounds for discrimination and that it can also occur where the situation would not give rise to discrimination if the grounds were taken separately.
- **equality data**: the Presidency streamlined the text in the recital and added a reference to data based on human rights indicators (which would allow to include data collected by UN bodies)

The proposal for an equal treatment directive was presented by the European Commission in 2008. It falls under Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which means unanimity in the Council is required, following the consent of the European Parliament.

European Labour Authority

Ministers will take note of progress on the regulation on establishing a European Labour Authority ([9659/18](#)).

The Commission proposal, presented on 13 March 2018, intends to create a new agency, the European Labour Authority (ELA). This authority will, in particular:

- facilitate access to and exchange of information related to cross-border mobility for workers, employers and national administrations,
- support coordination between member states in cross-border enforcement of relevant EU law,
- mediate between member state authorities in cases of cross-border disputes between them,
- facilitate solutions in case of labour market disruptions.

The ELA will pool the technical and operational tasks of seven existing EU bodies to form a permanent structure.

European semester 2018

The Council will hold a policy debate on the employment and social policy aspects of the 2018 European Semester exercise and will adopt the relevant documents.

The policy debate will be steered by two presidency questions. ([10015/18](#))

- Country specific recommendations (CSRs)

The Council will approve recommendations to each member state on the national reform programmes 2018 concerning the employment and social policy aspects. ([9454/18](#))

- Employment Committee and Social Protection Committee

The Council will endorse opinions of the Employment Committee (EMCO) and the Social Protection Committee (SPC). ([9931/18](#))

These opinions provide for an assessment of the employment and social protection/inclusion challenges in the national reform programmes 2018 focusing on the implementation of the 2017 CSRs. They also provide an analysis of the 2018 CSRs and the related process, while focussing on horizontal issues, on the political dimension of multilateral surveillance and on the implementation of the CSRs.

- Guidelines for the employment policies of the member states

The Council is expected to reach a political agreement on the guidelines for the employment policies of the member states ([10088/18](#)). Since the 2015, the employment guidelines had been maintained stable. They are now being amended to align them with the principles of the European pillar of social rights.

Future of work

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the future of work from the perspective of a lifecycle approach. ([10057/18](#))

The conclusions call on member states and the Commission to undertake a range of actions to adapt skills, education and training and to manage new forms of work and working conditions.

Free movement of workers

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on a court of auditors special report on "free movement of workers - the fundamental freedom ensured but better targeting of EU funds would aid worker mobility" ([9497/18](#)).

Early childhood development

The Council will adopt conclusions on integrated early childhood development policies as a tool for reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion ([9724/18 + COR 1+2](#)).

These conclusions were drafted on the basis of a dedicated peer review of the Social Protection Committee, which took place in Sofia on 21 March 2018. They highlight the importance of developing integrated policies in order to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion. The focus of the conclusions is in the social field, where much can be done to improve the situation of children.

2018 pension adequacy report

The Council is expected to endorse the key messages of the 2018 pension adequacy report ([9523/18](#)). This report is drafted by the Commission and the Social Protection Committee every three years. The 2018 edition analyses how current and future pensions help prevent old-age poverty and maintain the income of men and women for the duration of their retirement.

Any other business

- European social fund plus and European globalisation adjustment fund

The Commission will inform the Council about the proposals on the European social fund plus and the European globalisation adjustment fund, in the context of the next multiannual financial framework for the years 2021-2027.

[Commission proposal for a regulation on the European social fund plus](#)

[Commission proposal for a regulation on the European globalisation adjustment fund](#)

- Current files (legislative and non legislative proposals)

The Presidency will inform the Council about the state of play of current legislative and non legislative proposals.

- Transitional arrangements regarding the free movement of workers from Croatia

The Commission will inform the Council about transitional arrangements regarding the free movement of workers from Croatia. ([10043/18](#))

- Recent international developments in the field of employment and social policy

The Commission will inform the Council about recent international developments in the field of employment and social policy.

- Work programme of the incoming presidency

The Austrian delegation will inform the Council about its work programme.

HEALTH

Health technology assessment

Ministers will hold a debate on the proposed regulation on health technology assessment to provide guidance on possible ways to improve the current cooperation. ([9805/18](#))

The Commission adopted the proposal on 31 January 2018. While health technology assessment is a complex process, factoring clinical evidence but also an evaluation of costs and other non-clinical aspects, the proposal focuses on clinical aspects. Its main aim is to support joint EU clinical assessments that compare selected new medicines or medical devices to existing ones. The proposal also aims to harmonise member states' rules on carrying out clinical assessments for health technologies at national level. The Commission considers that these goals will improve the functioning of the Internal Market in pharmaceuticals and medical devices.

Health technology assessment allows Member States to take decisions on the added value of a medicine or medical device and is therefore a very useful tool for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of such products.

The future of health in the EU

Ministers will also discuss the future of health in the EU ([9798/18](#)). This debate takes place during a period of intense debate on the future of the policies of the European Union, triggered by the March 2017 Commission white paper on the future of Europe and the upcoming negotiations on the multiannual financial framework. It should also be seen against the rapid development in fields such as eHealth, pharmaceuticals and medical devices. It is a follow-up of a number of preparatory debates at political and technical level organised by the Bulgarian Presidency with the aim of identifying key perspectives and areas for co-operation important for Member States. Its aim is to provide an opportunity for health ministers to contribute to shaping the political agenda in the health field at European level.

Conclusions on "healthy nutrition for children: the healthy future of Europe"

The Council is to adopt conclusions on 'Healthy nutrition for children: The healthy future of Europe' ([9796/18](#)).

The conclusions aim at the protection of young people's health.

Childhood is a unique window of opportunity for influencing health and quality of life with lifetime effects through healthier diets.

Bearing in mind that an unhealthy diet is one (avoidable) risk factor behind serious chronic diseases, the conclusions focus on promotion of healthier diets for children, as one of the best investments for a young European generation in good health.

The conclusions especially underline that valuable results could be achieved through preventive action from the earliest stage of life involving actors from all policy areas.

The conclusions suggest possible measures to be taken by the authorities with a view to creating the proper environment for children's healthy lifestyle.

Any other business

- Current legislative proposal: Regulation 726/2004 as part of the veterinary medicines package

The Presidency will inform the Council about amendments to regulation 726/2004 as part of the veterinary medicines package.

[Medicinal products for human and veterinary use \(background information\)](#)

- Communication and recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine preventable diseases

The Commission will present to the Council a proposal for a Council recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine preventable diseases and a Communication on the same subject.

[Communication on strengthened cooperation against vaccine preventable diseases](#)

[Proposal for a Council recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine preventable diseases](#)

- Communication on enabling the digital transformation of health and care in the Digital Single Market

The Commission will present to the Council a communication on enabling the digital transformation of health and care in the Digital Single Market.

[Communication on enabling the digital transformation of health and care in the Digital Single Market](#)

- Outcomes of conferences organised by the Bulgarian presidency

The Presidency will inform the Council about outcomes of conferences organised by the Bulgarian presidency.

- Work programme of the incoming presidency

The Austrian delegation will inform the Council about its work programme.