

**Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council
(Employment and Social Policy issues)
Thursday 13 October 2016 in Luxembourg**

The Council will start at 9.30, chaired by Mr Jan Richter, Slovak minister for Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Most of the meeting will be public and can be followed by video streaming at <http://video.consilium.europa.eu/>.

*The Council is expected to reach a general approach on a revised directive protecting workers from exposure to **carcinogens or mutagens** at work.*

*The Council is expected to reach a political agreement on a directive dealing with the **work in fishing** Convention 2007, of the International Labour Organisation.*

*The Council will discuss the implementation of the recommendation on **long-term unemployment**, and the Commission will present to the Council its review of the **Youth guarantee** and the **Youth employment** initiatives.*

*The Council will hold a policy debate on a new **skills agenda** for Europe, endorsing an opinion of the Employment Committee.*

*On **European Semester 2017**, the Council is due to endorse the main messages, reports and monitors of the Employment and Social Protection Committees.*

*The Presidency and the Commission will inform the Council on the preparations of the **Tripartite Social Summit** on 19 October and on recent developments concerning the new start for **social dialogue**.*

The Council is due to adopt conclusions on the "report from the European Court of Auditors on EU policy initiatives and financial support for Roma integration".

Over lunch, ministers are invited to discuss: "Saving the future of the Youth guarantee".

A Presidency press conference will be held at the end of the meeting (+/- 16.30).

* * *

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.

Carcinogens or mutagens at work

The Council is expected to reach a general approach on a revised directive protecting workers from the risks related to exposure to **carcinogens or mutagens** at work ([12224/16](#)).

The proposed directive aims at increasing significantly the number of carcinogens for which occupational limit values are set, as compared to those of the 2004 directive.

It proposes the revision or introduction of exposure limit values for 13 chemical agents with carcinogenic and mutagenic effects. The Commission is expected to present a second list of limit values for other substances by the end of 2016.

The proposed revision concerns in particular annex I and III of directive 2004/37/EC. In annex I, a provision is added on exposure to respirable crystalline silica dust generated by a work process.

With regard to annex III, while the current directive includes three carcinogenic agents (hardwood dust, benzene, and vinyl chloride monomer) and their limit values for occupational exposure, the proposal revises the limit value for two of these substances and includes new limit values for eleven substances.

European Parliament

EP's Employment Committee will examine a draft report in November; its adoption is expected in February 2017.

Work in fishing

The Council is expected to reach a political agreement on a directive dealing with the **work in fishing** Convention 2007, of the International Labour Organisation ([12226/16](#)).

This directive implements the agreement between the general Confederation of agricultural cooperatives in the EU (COGECA), the European transport workers' Federation (ETF) and the Association of national organisations of fishing enterprises (EUROPÉCHE).

It provides fishermen with decent working and living conditions.

More particularly, this agreement clarifies the EU legislation on the working conditions in the fisheries sector by merging existing provisions with new provisions from the ILO Convention.

The main ambition is to create a level playing field for EU workers and employers once the Convention enters into force, giving fishermen decent working and living conditions on-board of fishing vessels.

Employment-related issues

The Council will hold an exchange of views on the implementation of the recommendation on **long-term unemployment** (LTU). It will hear Commission's presentation of the report on the **implementation of the Youth employment initiative/Youth guarantee**, as well as a presentation from the Commission and the Chair of the public employment services network.

Long-term unemployment

Discussions will be based on a Presidency background note ([12492/16](#)).

The Council will endorse the main messages of the new Employment Committee indicator framework for monitoring the LTU recommendation ([12493/16](#)).

According to the **main messages**, **prevention** is more effective than remedy. When prevention fails, job integration agreements should contain clear provisions on mutual responsibilities, pointing out who is in charge of follow-up actions.

Clear goals, job search commitments, benefit conditionality and sanctions are important elements for effective job integration agreements.

Effective channels for **personalised contact** between the unemployed and the counsellor are particularly important for addressing LTU. Evidence shows that **intensified counselling** is particularly promising and should complement IT interfaces.

Well-developed IT infrastructure allowing relevant organisations to access client data and transfer individual files and case histories between service providers is essential for the single point of contact.

The Council recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market was adopted in February 2016 (OJ C 67, of 20.2.2016, page 1). It is based on the model used for the youth guarantee and aims at a specific target group particularly affected by the economic crisis, the long-term unemployed (i.e. longer than 12 months) over 30 years of age (or between 25-30 years old and not beneficiaries of the youth guarantee). In contrast to the youth guarantee, long-term unemployed are a heterogeneous group, thus making the implementation and evaluation of measures more complex.

The EU and the member states have put a lot of effort and resources on the young and the long-term unemployed as the crisis and its effects have hit them mostly. Modernising the **Public Employment Services** (PES) has also been central to assisting these groups.

PES network: The PES Network was set up in May 2014 and aims at enhancing and strengthening cooperation between Public Employment Services of the member states. After running for two years, the bench-learning programme, a central activity of the PES network, will be presented to the EPSCO ministers.

Youth Guarantee / Youth Employment Initiative

The Council adopted the recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee on April 2013 (OJ C 120, of 26 April 2013, page 1).

In order to support the youth guarantee schemes, and to tackle youth unemployment more generally (which stood at over 23,5% in the EU at the beginning of 2013), the European Council of February 2013 agreed on the financial envelope of the Youth Employment initiative (YEI) of EUR 6 billion for the period 2014-2020.

Employment ministers have discussed implementation measures at several EPSCO sessions. As regards the monitoring, the YG recommendation tasked the Employment Committee to monitor the implementation of the recommendation through the European Semester's multilateral surveillance.

At the March EPSCO, the 'key messages on the way forward for the youth guarantee post-2016' were adopted. In this way, the EMCO gave its input to the Commission's report of 4 October on the implementation of the YG and on the operation of the YEI.

New skills agenda for Europe

The Council will hold a policy debate on a new skills agenda for Europe steered by a Presidency note ([12483/16](#)). It will endorse an opinion of the Employment Committee ([12485/16](#)).

The main messages of the discussion will be summarised in a letter to be sent to the Education Council in charge of this dossier.

The new skills agenda for Europe consists of a cross-cutting set of proposals covering areas such as skills development, mutual recognition of qualifications, support for both vocational education and training and higher education, as well as ways of exploiting the full potential of the digital economy, aiming to promote 'lifelong investment in people'.

In its communication ([10038/16](#)), the Commission announced the launching of several initiatives under this umbrella during 2016 and 2017, such as:

- digital skills and jobs coalition building on the existing grand coalition,
- a blueprint for sectorial cooperation on skills in order to tackle skills shortages in six big economic sectors,
- a skills profile tool for third country nationals,
- a revision of the key competences framework to develop their shared understanding,
- a new initiative on graduate tracking.

European Semester 2017

The Council is due to endorse the main messages, reports and monitors of the Employment and Social Protection Committees ([12486/16](#), [12488/16](#), [12490/16](#), [12606/16](#) and [12607/16](#)).

The Council formally adopted the 2016 country-specific recommendations in July.

In view of the Autumn economic package of the Commission, the Council is asked to endorse contributions from the Employment and Social Protection Committees. These contributions are forward-looking and serve as an important input to the forthcoming Semester.

Both committees have set up a new framework for reporting. They are transmitting to the Council the main messages of their all-year round multilateral surveillance exercise, accompanied by two short reports which build on their two main monitoring products, the employment performance monitor of EMCO and the social protection performance monitor of SPC.

Pillar of social rights

The Council will endorse the joint opinion of the EMCO and SPC on the European pillar of social rights ([12605/16](#)).

Over the past months the EMCO and SPC, have held discussions on the possible orientation of the pillar. The result of this examination is outlined in the above joint opinion.

In March 2016, the Commission launched a consultation on a European pillar of social rights running until the end of 2016.

The pillar aims at strengthening the focus on employment and social aspects and at making the European social model fit for the challenges of the 21st century.

EPSCO ministers had an exchange on the social pillar at the informal meeting held in Amsterdam in April. The discussions focused on equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, and adequate and sustainable social protection.

Social dialogue

The Presidency and the Commission will inform the Council on the preparations of the Tripartite Social Summit on 19 October 2016, and on recent developments concerning the new start for social dialogue.

The main theme of this **Social Summit** is "Addressing Europe's common challenges: generating growth, creating jobs and ensuring fairness". The three sub-themes are covering the European Semester and its current main challenges; the integration of refugees into labour market and society; and the new skills agenda.

In this context, the Council will adopt a decision on the establishment of the Tripartite Social Summit itself.

Roma integration

The Council will adopt conclusions on a European Court of Auditors' report ([12225/16](#)) which concerns EU policy initiatives and financial support for Roma integration.

The report focuses on political initiatives and the use of financial incentives through the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund.

In 2011, the Council established an EU framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020. It invited the member states to draw up national Roma integration strategies, pursuing goals, in particular, in the fields of education, employment, healthcare and housing with a view to closing the gaps between marginalised Roma communities and the general population.

Stressing the interests and difficulties of Roma women and girls, the conclusions highlighted the need to pay special attention to the gender dimension in all this work. The Commission was given the role of assessing the national strategies and their implementation through annual monitoring reports.

In 2013, the Council adopted a recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the member states aiming to boost the implementation of the national strategies.

Any other business

a) Current dossiers

The presidency will inform the Council about following dossiers

- i) Blue card for highly skilled employment
- ii) Action plan on the integration of third country national
- iii) Collaborative economy.

b) The Greek delegation will inform the Council on collective bargaining and the future of work: update on the negotiations process on labour market reforms in Greece.
