



The Social Protection Committee

Work programme for 2014

Introduction

The Social Protection Committee is an advisory policy Committee which provides representative forum for multilateral social policy coordination, dialogue and cooperation at EU level. It brings together policy makers from all EU Member States and the Commission in an effort to identify discuss and implement the policy mix that is most fitted to respond to the various challenges faced by social policies. The Committee actively participates, on behalf of the Council of the European Union for employment and social affairs and health, in the European semester process of policy coordination.

It monitors the social situation as well as the development of social protection policies in the Member States and at EU level. It uses the social open method of coordination as the main policy framework combining all major social policy strands: social inclusion, pensions, health and long-term care.

In 2014 the Social Protection Committee (SPC) will continue to pursue its mandate through a set of actions in response to the policy priorities outlined below. While in the first half of the year the Committee will carry on preparing its input to the 2014 Council recommendations on the National Reform Programmes - as it had already done within the framework of the European Semester in the past 3 years - the second half of 2014 will be devoted to reinforcing its thematic and country examination of social protection reforms in order to fully use the opportunities provided by the open method of coordination for further social policy coordination and mutual learning.

The SPC working groups (the Indicators Sub-group/ISG and currently the 2 working ad-hoc groups – SPC-FEE and SPC-AGE) will continue to support the SPC by respectively strengthening the analytical and evidence basis underpinning of the social policy priorities (ISG), pursuing work on the financing of social protection systems (SPC-FEE ad-hoc group) and preparing the 2015 Pension Adequacy Report (SPC-AGE ad-hoc group).

The 2014 work programme contains the key political and thematic priorities of the Committee for the next year:

1. Policy priorities for 2014

1.1. European Semester for policy coordination

The Committee will continue - in line with the wishes of the EPSCO Council - its involvement in the European Semester so that the challenges and achievements of social protection reforms are properly reflected in the Council recommendations on the National Reform Programmes. The work programme will give priority to the SPC input and reinforced examination in the framework of the European Semester.

The SPC deliverables under this priority include:

- a. Contribution to Council conclusions on the 2014 Annual Growth Survey and its accompanying documents, offering an analysis on social protection issues appearing in the AGS and its accompanying documents;
- b. Country-specific opinions to the Council on the Commission proposals for Council recommendations on the 2014 National Reform Programmes. These opinions will be followed by an evaluation of the 2014 process for the attention of Council;
- c. Multilateral country examination of the implementation of the 2013 Council recommendations and conclusions on their implementation;
- d. Contribution to the review of the 'six-pack' legislation.

1.2 Social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union

The European Council set an agenda for strengthening the social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union. The Council approved the employment and social scoreboard with the views to identify developments that warrant policy responses.

The SPC activities under this priority include:

- a. Follow-up of the Commission communication on the social dimension of the EMU as well as on the Council mandate in this respect;
- b. Further examination of the employment and social scoreboard and its links with the Social Protection Performance Monitor;
- c. Ex-ante coordination and discussion on plans for major social policy reforms based on a feasibility test.

1.3 Monitoring the social situation and the development of social protection policies

- a. The Annual Report on the social situation in the EU *Social Europe: one objective, many ways* will present an overview of the latest social developments in the Union based the EUSILC data and on the SPPM analysis;
- b. A report on recent structural social policy reforms covering the period 1 July 2013-30 June 2014. The report will also inform on the implementation of the Council policy recommendations;
- c. Contribution to Council conclusions on the Social Situation in the EU and a contribution related to the mid-term review of Europe 2020 strategy;
- d. Monitoring of the key social trends.

2. Thematic strands of work within the Committee's working groups

In the course of 2014, the Committee will pursue work on the following social policy themes:

- a. Following on the Council mandate to "*assess the performance of social policies in terms of their investment, protection and stabilisation functions, paying particular attention to their interaction, sustainability, adequacy, and growth-enhancing capacity*" (Council conclusions on social investment, EPSCO Council meeting of 20-21 June 2013), the Committee and the Commission will develop an overall assessment framework;
- b. The Committee will complete the work on the financing, effectiveness and efficiency of social protection systems and present its report to the Council in the second half of 2014;
- c. The Committee will also approve the report on long-term care in the EU;
- d. The Committee will launch the preparation of the pension adequacy report for 2015.

2.1. Indicator Sub-Group: Quantitative analysis for better social policies

In line with the priorities set by the SPC for 2014, the ISG will continue the analysis of the poverty and social exclusion target, especially in view of the Europe 2020 mid-term review planned for 2014-2015.

The ISG will continue its work on improving the Social Protection Performance Monitor and analytical work on better monitoring key social trends and pensions. Also, the ISG will support the SPC in co-operation with the European Commission in delivering on the Council mandate to "*assess the performance of social policies in terms of their investment, protection and stabilisation functions, paying particular attention to their interaction, sustainability, adequacy, and growth-enhancing capacity*" (Council conclusions on social investment, EPSCO Council meeting of 20-21 June 2013).

Furthermore, the ISG will contribute actively to the preparation of the 2014 Annual SPC Report. The ISG will also continue its on-going work on enhancing the statistical capacity related to the three strands of the OMC and its active collaboration with Commission services, especially Eurostat, other international organizations and research institutions.

2.2. SPC-FEE: Financing, efficiency and effectiveness of social protection systems

Following up on the Council's mandate to the SPC to pursue work on the financing of social protection systems, the SPC-FEE ad-hoc group will continue its activities with a view to presenting a report on the financing, efficiency and effectiveness of social protection systems for approval by the SPC in the course of the year 2014 before its formal submission to the Council.

2.3 SPC-AGE: Long-term care

The working group on long-term care will complete and deliver its report in March 2014.

2.4. SPC-AGE: Pension adequacy

The Committee, through its working group on ageing (SPC-AGE) will launch the preparation of the Pension Adequacy Report, which will be released in 2015. This will usefully complement the next Ageing report of the Economic Policy Committee.

3. Working methods and relations with other Committees

In its cooperation with other policy Committees, the SPC will be guided by the European Council conclusions from 24-25 October 2013 calling for more work to strengthen cooperation between the various Council configurations in order to ensure consistency of the economic, employment and social policies in line with the common EU objectives. This includes coordination of the views on different cross-cutting policies and also joint meetings with other Committees.

In the context of the European Semester, the co-operation between the SPC and other Committees, in particular EMCO, EPC and EFC, will be guided by the recommendations of the synthesis report of the Presidency (Council document 14618/13) and the roadmap on the implementation of the 2014 European Semester (Council document 16359/13).