



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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COVER NOTE

from:	General Secretariat of the Council
to:	Delegations
Subject:	Work programme of the Social Protection Committee for 2011

Delegations will find attached the Social Protection Committee's work programme for 2011, as adopted by the Committee in accordance with its rules of procedure.



The Social Protection Committee

2011 WORK PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION

In line with its Treaty-based mandate, the SPC promotes cooperation on social protection policies between Member States and with the Commission¹. The integrated approach to fighting poverty and social exclusion established by the new Europe 2020 Strategy gives greater centrality to the work of the SPC in the European agenda.

In practice, this means that the Committee will continue to monitor the social situation and the development of social protection policies and social inclusion building on the important experience of ten years' cooperation under the OMC on social protection and social inclusion (see section I).

At the same time, the SPC can play fully its role in the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy, in accordance with the line agreed by EPSCO² (see section II). The Committee will be a key player in the agenda of the "European platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion" initiative³.

The specific activities planned in the areas of social inclusion, pensions and health/long-term care (section III) reflect the multi-annual approach requested by EPSCO⁴ and in line with the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

¹ Art. 160 TFEU.

² SPC opinion approved by EPSCO on 21/10/ 2010 (Council doc. 14254/1/10) and Council Conclusions of 6/12/2010 "*The Social dimension in the context of an integrated Europe 2020 Strategy*" (Council doc. 16512/10).

³ Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative: "*The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European Framework for social and territorial cohesion*" [COM(2010) 758 of 16 December 2010].

⁴ Council Conclusions of 6/12/2010 "*The Social dimension in the context of an integrated Europe 2020 Strategy*" (Council doc. 16512/10).

Appropriate reporting activities will be needed to implement the SPC work-programme taking into account the integrated nature of the Europe 2020 Strategy and its governance aspects. In this respect, equally crucial will be the cooperation with other EU policy Committees, notably the Employment Committee (EMCO), the Economic Policy Committee (EPC), and other relevant bodies, e.g. in the field of health, migration, education.

2011 is a crucial year for the “Europe 2020 Strategy”: following the transition phase, the implementation of the new Strategy will start under the first European Semester of Europe 2020. Having taken into account particularly the experience of the first NRPs that Member States will submit in April 2011, the SPC will debate on how to ensure coherence between the objectives and the working-methods of the Social OMC and the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy with a view to present an opinion at the June EPSCO Council and will possibly re-examine its provisional selection of themes (see section III).

I. THE WORK OF THE SOCIAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE

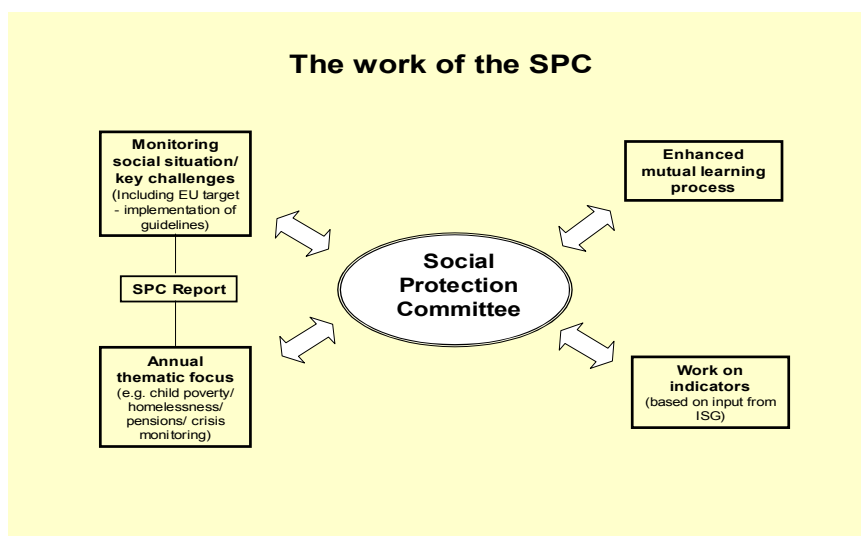
In monitoring the social situation and the development of social protection policies in the Member States and the Union, the SPC promotes exchanges of information, experience and good practice between Member States and with the Commission. On the basis of this OMC work, supported by the commonly agreed indicators, the SPC prepare reports, formulate opinions or undertake other work within its fields of competence, at the request of either the Council or the Commission or on its own initiative.

The main areas of activities for the policy cooperation within the SPC are (see fig. 1):

- Monitoring and analysis of the social situation and key challenges in the areas of social inclusion, pensions and health and long-term care.
- Annual thematic focus to concentrate efforts on common policy challenges, following previous examples (e.g. child poverty, homelessness, pensions, long-term care etc.).
- Enhanced mutual learning process.

- Work on the measurement of poverty and social exclusion and on relevant indicators based on the input from the Indicators Subgroup.

Based on these activities, a **report** will be prepared by the Committee each year. The discussion on the draft report could take place at its November and December meetings.



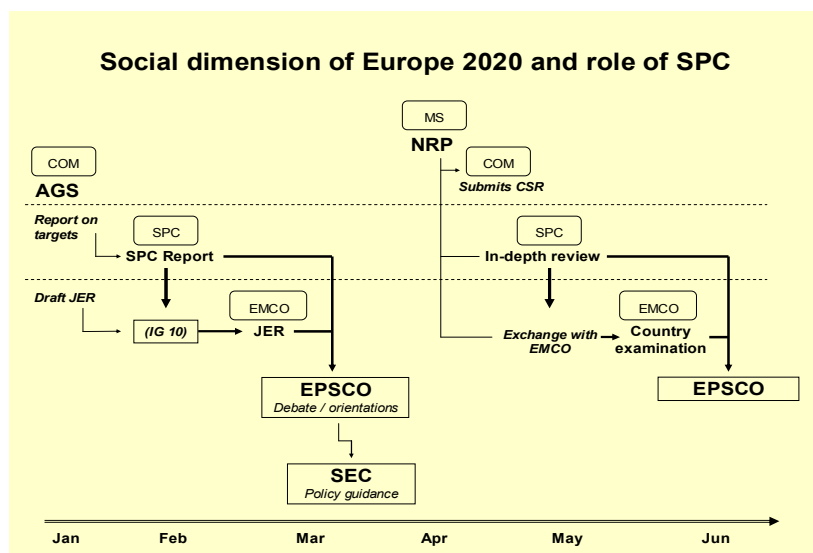
The analysis of the social situation and key national challenges will provide the basis for the monitoring of progress towards the poverty reduction/social inclusion target (see section II). The work of the SPC within the OMC will be a key element of the “European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion. In line with the European Council's political guidance on the Europe 2020 Strategy, the SPC will identify priority themes for its work, organise its mutual learning activities (in particular the peer review programme) and develop indicators.

II. SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SOCIAL PROTECTION DIMENSION OF EUROPE 2020

As requested by EPSCO⁵, the SPC will play its full role in the implementation and monitoring of the new Strategy on its areas of competence, namely the EU poverty reduction/social inclusion target as well as the social aspects of the Integrated Guidelines (in particular IG 10) reflected in the National Reform Programmes (see fig. 2). In particular, the SPC will:

⁵ SPC opinion approved by EPSCO on 21/10/2010 (Council doc. 14254/1/10) and Council Conclusions of 6/12/2010 *"The Social dimension in the context of an integrated Europe 2020 Strategy"* (Council doc. 16512/10).

- i) report on progress towards the EU-level headline target on poverty reduction/social inclusion target, building on its policy cooperation activities, work under the "Poverty Platform", etc.
- ii) cooperate with EMCO on the monitoring of implementation of social aspects of the Employment Guidelines. The SPC will provide its input on IG 10 in relation to the poverty reduction/social inclusion target.



The cooperation with EMCO covers:

- Transmission of the work of the SPC on the social aspects of the Employment Guidelines, in particular IG 10, for the preparation of the Joint Employment Report.
- Work on the EMCO-SPC-Commission Joint Assessment Framework for the monitoring of the Employment Guidelines.
- Contribution of the SPC to the EMCO country examination on the implementation of the social aspects of the Employment Guidelines.

Furthermore, the SPC will provide its input on Integrated Guidelines 1 to 6 in view of their social implications, in close dialogue with the EPC. Attention could be given notably to aspects relating to the quality and sustainability of public finances (reform of tax-benefit systems and age-related expenditure), orientation of R&D and innovation, e-inclusion, fair distribution of the costs and benefits of sustainable development measures, etc.

As requested by the EPSCO Council, the SPC will consider, building on the work of the Indicators Sub-Group, how to strengthen indicators in relation to the Europe 2020 Strategy⁶.

III. THEMATIC WORK OF THE SOCIAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE

Building on the experience of thematic work addressing specific issue in the areas covered by the Social OMC (e.g. child poverty, homelessness, pensions, long-term care, social impact of the crisis, etc.), the SPC could continue to prioritize its activities in the coming years. This approach would aim at ensuring a substantial underpinning of the social dimension of the National Reform Programmes in the Europe 2020 Strategy. A timely planning of the work on priority themes would allow an effective use of the policy cooperation process and its tools (e.g. peer review activities, studies, etc.).

In line with the EPSCO conclusions on the social dimension of Europe 2020⁷, including aspects relating to the OMC framework, the SPC identifies key and focussed priorities through a multi-annual work programme, taking into account possible new priorities that could emerge. Its multi-annual work refers to the annual thematic focus in the areas of social inclusion, pensions and health/long-term care and the enhanced mutual learning process in line with the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. It takes also account of the work of the SPC in the context of the Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion⁸

⁶ “During the process of implementation of the EU 2020 Strategy, there will be scope for strengthening the current instruments for measuring progress in the reduction of poverty and deprivation and for understanding the phenomenon of exclusion from the labour market. The relationship between labour market exclusion and the situation of poverty at individual level will have to be better taken into account.” EPSCO Council Conclusions, 7-8 June 2010 (Council document 10560/10).

⁷ Council Conclusions of 6/12/2010 “The Social dimension in the context of an integrated Europe 2020 Strategy” (Council doc. 16512/10).

⁸ Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative: “The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European Framework for social and territorial cohesion” [COM(2010) 758 of 16 December 2010]. The SPC will present an opinion on this Flagship Initiative at the March EPSCO Council.

Therefore, in 2011 and in view to prepare its work in the subsequent years⁹, the SPC will conduct, building on the OMC, the following activities in the social protection and social inclusion areas:

- The SPC will prepare an opinion on how best to ensure coherence between *the objectives and the working-methods of the Social OMC and the new context of the Europe 2020 Strategy* and its governance in light of the experience of the first National Reform Programmes to be presented in April 2011. An *ad hoc* group of the SPC will prepare the discussion within the Committee. The SPC opinion on this issue will be transmitted to the June EPSCO meeting.
- The SPC will continue to **monitor the social impacts of the economic situation and ongoing fiscal consolidation**, with a particular attention to longer-term implications for the social protection systems. A report prepared jointly by the Commission and the SPC will be finalised during the second semester of 2011 in time for presentation at the December EPSCO Council. This work will contribute to the preparation of the next SPC report on the social dimension of Europe 2020.
- The Committee's work on **active inclusion** will continue in 2011 along the lines agreed in the July note on the follow-up [SPC/2009/07/11-final] to the Commission Recommendation. This work, including the development of relevant indicators, will contribute to the preparation of the Commission staff working paper, which is scheduled for 2012, which will provide an in-depth assessment of the implementation of active inclusion strategies at national level.
- The SPC will consider closely the initiative presented in the Platform against poverty and social exclusion aimed at enhancing actions to tackle **child poverty** and enable education in order to contribute to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty and step up prevention. The Committee will provide its input aimed to contribute to the announced Commission Recommendation on child poverty, expected in 2012. In this context, the ISG will continue to work on the development of indicators of child poverty and well-being (notably child deprivation).

⁹ The SPC can at any stage review elements of its multi-annual work presented in this work-programme, following consideration by the Bureau of the Committee.

- Policies to promote the economic and social inclusion of **Roma** will be given a specific attention in 2011 in light of the initiatives planned by the Commission (Communication on a EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies expected for April 2011) and the Council (ad hoc EPSCO meeting in May 2011). The SPC will prepare in due time its contribution in view of the EPSCO meeting of next May.
- The SPC will develop work in relation to the outcome of the European Consensus Conference on *homelessness*. This work will be also based on the ISG further work on homelessness indicators.
- The SPC will consider how *social innovation* and *social experimentation* can contribute to more effective and efficient social interventions, in light of the initiatives that will be developed in the context of the Platform.
- The SPC will also enhance its work relating to the **ageing challenge** so it can feed into the *European Year 2012 on Active Ageing* and the analytic work leading to the 2012 Ageing Report by the Ageing Working Group of the Economic Policy Committee. The SPC will give particular attention, from an integrated approach involving social protection, inclusion and health and long-term care policies and strategies to identifying the set of activities that will form its contributions to the European Year 2012.
- Concerning **pensions**, the SPC will *follow-up the EPC-SPC Joint Report and the related Council conclusions* on the need for deeper methodological and data work on adequacy and sustainability measurements and on modelling of pension outcomes.

From the beginning of the year, the SPC will liaise with the Economic Policy Committee (including at the technical level with the Ageing Working Group) on its work on pensions for the 2012 Ageing Report. All adequacy aspects would be considered, notably the ability of pensions to contribute to poverty reduction. Attention to private pension will be further deepened through a peer-review on good practice and through further work with OECD on data questions. The SPC will hold a discussion in March on the preparation of its timely contributions for the 2012 Ageing Report, including working arrangements.

- In **health and long-term care** the SPC would launch work that will bring deliverables in 2012 (as part of its contribution to the European Year on Active Ageing) and 2013, related in particular to the development of an *agenda of active, healthy and dignified ageing*.

In response to the 2009 Council conclusions, the SPC will launch a multi-annual work on policies to promote active, healthy and dignified ageing. To this aim, the SPC will consider establishing a voluntary ad hoc group of interested Member States' experts. Beginning in the autumn of 2011 with presentations that map the diversity in approaches across the Union this work would be further informed by a Commission Staff Working Paper for identifying challenges where policy coordination at EU level could add value to the efforts of Member States. These initial activities could be carried forward through Presidency conferences and peer reviews in 2012 and 2013. Further work in the ISG on possible common indicators on long-term care would be an integral part of the work in 2011-12. Conceivably the programme could also include a joint report with the Economic Policy Committee health and long-term care, for completion in early 2013. Where relevant, such work should also be oriented towards Europe 2020 and the poverty reduction target.

As regards **health**, the SPC will also continue its work on reducing *health inequalities* including on related indicators and by following results of the innovative projects supported by the PROGRESS programme in 2011.

- The SPC will continue in 2011 its work on **Social services of general interest (SSGI)**, through its informal working group on the application of EU rules to SSGI.

The SPC Informal Working Group on the application of EU rules to SSGI will focus in particular on an analysis of the new guide prepared by the Commission on State aid, internal market and public procurement rules as well as on the follow-up to the 3rd SSGI Forum and on the on-going assessment of State aid and public procurement rules. Following the reflection in the working group, the Committee will report, when appropriate, to the EPSCO Council.

While carrying its work on SSGI, as requested by the Council, the SPC will "ensure regular contacts with the European Parliament and the European Union advisory bodies, as well as with all relevant stakeholders (e.g. social partners and NGOs) ..." ¹⁰.

The SPC will hold a discussion in February on the organization of its work within the SPC Informal Working Group on the application of EU rules to SSGI.

The SPC, following up to the adoption of the voluntary European Quality Framework for social services, will discuss how this work could be further developed at sectoral level, possibly in the field of long-term care and homelessness. Moreover, simultaneous work with the OECD and the European Parliament on quality aspects of long-term care could feed into additional SPC work building on the Voluntary European Quality Framework for SSGI. This debate will be fuelled by a comprehensive report on the eight PROGRESS-financed projects on social services.

- In reflection of the 2011 European Year of **Volunteering**, the SPC will conduct a debate on the contribution of volunteering to social policy aims.
- The Committee will follow up its discussion on relevant *issues related to social policy in the EU external dimension*. This work will build on its on-going relations with international bodies and institutions, in particular the International Labour Organisation, and include the UN Social Protection Floor Initiative.
- The SPC will continue its mutual learning activities, including informal exchanges among Member States, as a key element of the Social OMC.

¹⁰ Council conclusions of 6/12/2010 "*Social Services of General Interest: at the heart of the European Social Model*" (Council doc. 16515/10).

IV. SUPPORTING WORK BY THE INDICATORS SUB-GROUP

The SPC will be supported by its **Indicators Sub-Group** in order to carry out its tasks.

In particular, in 2011 further work on indicators will aim to fully reflect the *multi-dimensional nature of poverty and social exclusion*. The ISG will continue to improve the measurement of poverty along the conclusions of the European Council (notably working on improved measures of material deprivation and exploring the potential of budget standard methods as well as on the inclusion of non-monetary incomes in the calculation of the at risk of poverty rate), labour market exclusion (notably working on the new variable of work intensity developed in 2010 to better understand the link between poverty and labour market exclusion at the individual level) and the redistributive impact of social protection systems. The ISG will continue the development of relevant indicators of active inclusion and of child poverty and well-being (notably child deprivation).

The ISG will review the overall framework for the development of indicators and of the related analytical framework to adapt it to the new context set by the Europe 2020 Strategy, taking account of the SPC work on the future of the Social OMC.

The ISG will also reflect on methods to improve the timeliness of underlying data and make proposals to the SPC.

The ISG should improve capacity to measure the situation of the most vulnerable groups. It should contribute to the reflection on the revision of the SILC legal base that will be launched this year.

Concerning the *monitoring of the social impacts of the economic crisis and ongoing fiscal consolidation*, the ISG will continue the regular collection of benefit reciprocity data with a view to feed into the crisis monitoring report scheduled for the second semester 2011.

The ISG will also continue to support the SPC in its work on the "*Joint COM-EMCO-SPC Assessment Framework to monitor the Employment Guidelines under Europe 2020*" and on tracking device for the EU headline poverty target in order to monitor growth-enhancing reforms under the employment and social policy strands of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Following on from indicators and data work related to the *EPC-SPC Joint Report on Pensions* and the requests for an intensification of work on the measurement of adequacy and sustainability in the Report and in Council Conclusions of June and December 2010, the ISG would in 2011 begin a multi-annual programme of methodological development in relation to these aspects of pensions. This would include collaboration with the Ageing Working Group of the Economic Policy Committee, notably with a view to strengthening the reflection of adequacy aspects in the pension parts of the 2012 Ageing Report. The work will be drawing on Member State projects on micro-simulation and other modelling of pension outcomes supported by PROGRESS. It will also entail further development of existing SPC indicators on pension adequacy and follow-up work with ESTAT on ESPROSS data.

Building on work with the pension departments of the OECD, the ISG would also in the second semester be returning to indicators on private pensions.

In *health care* further work on indicators will be related to the suggestion for Health Inequality Indicators developed with ESTAT for the 2012 Reporting on progress in reducing health inequalities in the EU.

V. COOPERATION WITH OTHER COMMITTEES AND BODIES

The Committee will pursue its coordination with **other committees and high level groups**, in particular with the *Employment Committee* and the *Economic Policy Committee* in view of the social inclusion and social protection dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy (*see above, section II*).

The cooperation with the EPC will continue to address areas of mutual interest. In 2011, it would be a priority for the SPC to cover the following areas:

- Methodological work in follow-up to the EPC-SPC Joint Report on Pensions (see section III).
- Pensions, health and long-term care in relation to the 2012 Ageing Report.

- Joint reflections on beyond GDP indicators.

The Committee will consider synergies with the *Expert Group on Demographic Issues* on aspects of common concern, and will continue the dialogue with the *Council Working Party on Public Health at Senior Level*.

The Employment and social affairs committee of the **European Parliament** will be informed of the Committee's activities.

In fulfilling its mandate, the SPC establishes appropriate contacts with the **social partners** and **social non-governmental organizations**. In 2011 it is proposed to conduct a more structured dialogue with the Social Partners and the Social NGOs, considering the social goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the role of the SPC in the context of its implementation. The bureau of the SPC will explore with them the timing and subject for this structured dialogue leading to more focused exchanges on the ongoing work of the SPC and will report on this aspect to the Committee in early 2011.

SPC Meetings in 2011

Provisional agenda items

Informal EPSCO Council: 17 – 18 January
January 20-21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Europe 2020 –Annual Growth Survey - <i>Presentation</i> • Draft outline SPC Report 2011 – <i>Discussion</i> • Platform against poverty and social exclusion–<i>Presentation and discussion</i> • SPC orientation note on Cohesion Report and Budgetary review – <i>Debate</i> • Work programme for 2011 – <i>Adoption</i>
February 10-11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPC Report 2011 - <i>Adoption</i> • SPC contribution to the Joint Employment Report through EMCO - <i>Adoption</i> • Platform against poverty and social exclusion – <i>Adoption of SPC opinion</i> • • Future of Social OMC in the context of Europe 2020 – <i>Adoption of mandate for ad hoc group within SPC</i> • Application of EU rules to SSGI – <i>Adoption of mandate to working group</i>
EPSCO Council: 7 March
European Council: 24 – 25 March
March 29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPC contribution to May EPSCO on Roma integration issues – <i>Discussion</i> • SPC opinion on Cohesion Report and Budgetary review – <i>Adoption</i> • Health Inequalities – <i>State of play</i> • Preparation of timely contribution to 2012 Ageing Report, including working arrangements
April 27 – 28 (informal meeting in Hungary) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The social OMC in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy - <i>Discussion</i> • Debate on the implementation of the social dimension of Europe 2020 • SPC contribution to May EPSCO on Roma integration issues
May 12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPC Opinion on the social OMC in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy – <i>Adoption and transmission to June EPSCO</i> • SPC Input to EMCO Country examination on the Employment Guidelines • Cooperation with the EPC on pensions – <i>Progress report</i> • Follow-up to European Quality Framework for social services - <i>Discussion</i>

EPSCO Council: 19 May (<i>ad hoc</i> meeting on Roma)
EPSCO Council: 6 – 7 June
European Council: 24 June
June 30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of work on active, healthy and dignified ageing • Strategic priorities for 2012 for the PROGRESS programme- <i>Adoption of SPC input</i>
Informal EPSCO Council: 7-8 July
September 26-27 (informal meeting in Poland) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Monitoring of the crisis • European Year 2011 of Volunteering – <i>Exchange of information</i>
EPSCO Council: 3-4 October
October 27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation mapping diversity in LTC provisions across the EU • Social Monitoring of the Crisis • European Year 2012 on Active Ageing – <i>SPC input</i> • SPC inputs to EPC on pensions for the 2012 Ageing Report • Private pensions – <i>Discussion on ongoing work</i>
November 23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPC Report on the social dimension of Europe 2020 – <i>draft outline</i> • Presentation of Commission Staff Working Paper on long-term care • Updated EC-SPC crisis monitoring report – <i>Adoption</i> • State of play of work on Social Services of General Interest • Health Inequalities – <i>State of play</i> • Cooperation with the EPC – <i>Progress report</i>
EPSCO Council: 1-2 December
European Council: 9 December
December 15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPC Report on the social dimension of Europe 2020 – <i>first discussion</i>