



2020 SPC Work Programme

The Social Protection Committee (SPC) is an advisory policy Committee, established in accordance with art. 160 of the TFEU, providing a representative forum for multilateral social policy coordination, dialogue and cooperation at EU level. It brings together senior policy makers from all EU Member States and the Commission in an effort to discuss and identify the most appropriate policy measures necessary to respond to the social policy challenges across the EU. The Committee actively participates, on behalf of the Council of the European Union for employment, social affairs and health, in the European Semester process of policy coordination as per Article 2 (2b) of Council Decision (EU) 2015/773 establishing the SPC.

The Treaty-based mandate of the SPC stipulates that the Committee monitors the social situation in the EU and the development of social protection policies.¹ SPC delivers on this mandate through the use of the social open method of coordination as the main policy framework, including all major social policy strands: social inclusion, pensions, health and long-term care.

The SPC may, if necessary, prepare additional reports, formulate opinions or undertake other work within its fields of competence, at the request of the Council, the Commission or its own initiative as per Article 2(1c) of the Council Decision 2015/773, establishing the Committee.

1. Priorities for SPC work in 2020

The 2020 SPC work programme takes into account the policy priorities of the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and forthcoming Croatian and German presidencies. It focuses on two main interlinked areas of policy work – one is related to the European Semester, including its newly added link to the **UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, and the Europe 2020 Strategy, while the second is focused on thematic in-depth work. In delivering on these areas of work, the Committee will continue to make full use of the opportunities provided by the social **open method of coordination** and mutual learning. It will uphold the principle of **gender equality** and will seek to integrate an **Economy of Well-being** approach across all Committee activities.

As 2020 might see an important **set of Commission proposals** put forward, the Committee will stand ready to engage in the discussions, notably but not exclusively related to the *Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights*; on *strengthening Social Protection Systems*; on *child poverty/child guarantee*; on *labour and social conditions of platform workers*; the *Green deal*; and on the *European Unemployment benefit reinsurance scheme*. The Committee will seek to align its activities with the forthcoming working programme of the European Commission.

The SPC would also follow the developments related to the Commission president's intentions for a **refocused Semester**, as well as to the next **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)**, 2021-2027, in particular the new regulations for the **ESF+**, as well as the proposals on the establishment of the

¹ Art. 160 TFEU

Reform Support Programme (RDT) and Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness (BICC). The SPC will seek cooperation with the Employment Committee (EMCO) and the Economic Policy Committee (EPC) where relevant on these matters.

The Committee will also follow up on the **findings from the joint EMCO-SPC Assessment of the Europe 2020 Strategy,**

2. The European Semester and Europe 2020 Strategy

2.1 Contribution to the EPSCO input for the Spring European Council

SPC will contribute to the preparation of the EPSCO input to the Spring European Council with its assessment of the social protection issues raised in the Commission **2020 Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy** and its accompanying documents, notably the **2020 Joint Employment Report**. It will, also take part in any negotiations on possible changes of the **Employment Guidelines**, and the monitoring framework(s), in particular **the Social Scoreboard** and/or to the **Joint Assessment Framework (JAF)**.

	Activities	Deliverables to the Council
1 st half 2020	Reaction to the 2020 Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy (ASGS) and Joint Employment Report, offering an analysis of the relevant social protection and social inclusion issues	Contribution to the drafting of the Council Conclusions on the 2020 ASGS and JER: political guidance on employment and social policies – March EPSCO
1 st half 2020	Examination and input into the Joint Employment Report and its key messages on issues related to social protection and social inclusion, including the analysis of key employment and social indicators.	

2.2 Multilateral implementation reviews

The SPC will continue its **multilateral surveillance on the implementation of policy reforms to address the Council country-specific recommendations (CSRs)**. It will inform the Council of its views on the social protection and social inclusion aspects of the Commission Country Reports, including the in-depth reviews provided for under art. 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011. In this context, Member States will have the opportunity to report on past measures but also on intentions for future measures as a form of ex-ante discussion of social policy reforms. It will also follow-up on the implementation of the **social protection aspects of the Eurozone recommendation** in cooperation with the Employment Committee (EMCO) and the advisory Committees of the ECOFIN Council.

It will explore ways of further strengthening its working methods and the multilateral nature of the reviews undertaken by the Committee. It will **engage in joint reviews** with other Council advisory committees and the Working Party on Public Health at Senior Level (WPPHSL), where relevant. The Committee will make use, where appropriate, of the results of the peer review programme and successful social policy innovation projects.

	Activities	Deliverables to the Council
1 st half 2020	Multilateral examination of the implementation of the 2019 Council country-specific recommendations in the area of social protection and social inclusion and the relevant issues in the 2020 Commission Country Reports	Horizontal opinion and country-specific conclusions – June EPSCO

2.3 Review of the proposals for Council country-specific recommendations and Eurozone recommendation

The Committee will prepare the Council's adoption of the **2020 country-specific recommendations** by reviewing all Commission proposals for country-specific recommendations falling under its Treaty-based competence on issues related to social protection and social inclusion. In its assessment, it will use the conclusions of the multilateral implementation reviews carried out in the first half of the year. The SPC will adopt joint opinions with other Committees on all recommendations falling under joint competence. It will examine in the second half of the year any social protection issues which may be included in the **Commission proposal for a Eurozone recommendation**, in cooperation with the Employment Committee (EMCO) and the advisory Committees of the ECOFIN Council, and contribute to the preparation of the EPSCO views.

	Activities	Deliverables to the Council
1 st half 2020	Country-specific opinions to the Council on the 2020 Commission proposals for Council recommendations on the National Reform Programmes	Country-specific opinions – June EPSCO
2 nd half 2020	Examine social protection issues included in the Commission proposal for a Eurozone recommendation	Contribution on social protection parts of Eurozone recommendation 2021 – December 2020 EPSCO

2.4 Monitoring of the social situation and developments in social protection policies

The SPC will continue its **monitoring of the social situation in the EU**, including the progress towards the Europe 2020 poverty and social exclusion target and the development of social protection policies as per its Treaty mandate. , Based on its annual report, the Committee will propose for endorsement by the **October EPSCO key messages** on the main policy priorities in the area of social protection and social inclusion in view of the Commission's preparatory work for the **2021 Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy**. An intermediate update of the SPPM dashboard will be produced by spring 2020, to take account of the availability of the full set of results from EU-SILC 2018.

	Activities	Deliverables to the Council
2 nd half 2020	Preparation of an annual report on the social situation in the EU and overview of social protection reforms on the basis of the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) and reporting by Member States	Report + Main messages on the social situation and key social policy priorities as input to the preparation of the 2021 Annual Growth Survey – October EPSCO

2.5 Follow-up from the joint SPC-EMCO assessment of the Europe 2020 Strategy

As a follow-up from its joint work with EMCO on the assessment of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the SPC will **reflect on how to adjust its working methods, reporting tools, and monitoring framework(s)** and how to achieve a wider dissemination of the Committee’s outputs, which should also be streamlined. In addition, the SPC will stand ready to **reflect on a possible successor strategy**, with a view to providing its contribution to the debate on the future of social Europe post-2020. This will entail *inter alia* taking part in the broad discussion aimed at building an Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and launched by the Commission in its Communication on building a strong social Europe for just transitions²

3. Social OMC

3.1 Thematic work

The SPC will continue its thematic work on relevant issues related to social inclusion, pensions, health and long-term care. This will include carrying out thematic reviews, policy debates and undertaking peer reviews on specific topics. In the selection of thematic areas for discussion, it will take into account the policy priorities of the Council, the Commission and the Croatian and German Presidencies, which include thematic work **on social policy responses to demographic change (HR), implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (HR) and minimum income in the context of upward convergence (DE)**, as well as **minimum standards for work in the platform economy (DE)**. Building on successful Committees' previous joint efforts, the SPC will continue its work in the field of **inequality** and will follow-up on the efforts to implement the **Access to Social Protection Recommendation** in ISG and in the related Mutual learning activities.

	Activities	Deliverables to the Council
1 st half 2019	Thematic review on social policy responses to demographic change	Input for the June EPSCO meeting
2 nd half 2019	Thematic review on minimum income in the context of upward convergence	Input for the December EPSCO meeting

To deepen its work on ageing-related issues in social protection, the SPC in close cooperation with the European Commission will start the preparation of two major reports for publication in 2021. The **2021 Pension adequacy report (PAR)** will provide a continuity to the past SPC-EC work in

² <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1487&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9524>

pension policy surveillance. The **2021 Long-term care report (LTCR)** will follow up from the 2014 joint SPC-EC work on long-term care needs in an ageing society.

3.2 Thematic social reporting

By the end of June, SPC members will submit their inputs for the annual social reporting under the *thematic*³ module whose topic will be decided in March. The underlying questionnaire will be approved by the SPC in April. In order to ensure comparability and the possibility of comprehensive analysis, all Member States will be requested to contribute.

3.3 Use of benchmarking frameworks and indicators

The SPC will continue to work, through its indicator Subgroup (SPC ISG) and in cooperation with the European Commission, on the development of benchmarking frameworks in the area of social protection and social inclusion, in line with the common approach agreed as concerns the use of benchmarking in the context of EPSCO work. In 2020, the Committee will finalise its work on developing a benchmarking framework on *pension adequacy*, and start the development of a framework on *childcare and support to children*.

Outside of the development of benchmarking frameworks, the SPC will continue improving its indicator frameworks in the areas of *inequalities, access to healthcare, long-term care and work-life balance policies* (jointly with EMCO's Indicator Group). The SPC will also work on developing a *monitoring framework on Access to Social Protection*.

4. Input from the SPC working groups

The SPC ad hoc **Pensions Adequacy working group (WG PA)** and **Long-term Care working group (WG LTC)** will be active in 2020 and will work on the preparation of the 2021 Pension Adequacy and Long-term Care Reports. The groups will utilize the expertise of the SPC Indicators' Sub-Group (ISG) and coordinate, where appropriate, with the EPC Working Group on Ageing Populations and Sustainability (WG AGE).

The permanent **SPC Indicators' Sub-Group** will continue to provide its support to the SPC and will focus its work during 2020 on the following issues: follow-up to the assessment of the Europe 2020 Strategy as directed by the SPC - especially concerning the review of the monitoring framework(s), monitoring and analysis of the 2020 poverty and social exclusion headline target, following work on improving the timeliness of social indicators and producing the SPPM results and related analysis of the social situation in the EU for the SPC Annual Report.

The ISG will also continue working on the identification and development of indicators to assess inequality in its key dimensions and the reconciliation of private and professional lives (jointly with EMCO's indicator group). It will further develop its monitoring frameworks for health and long-term care, establish a monitoring framework for the Council Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed, and work on a benchmarking framework for childcare and support to children.

A full overview of ISG activities is presented in the 2020 ISG work programme.

³ On the SPC meeting from 1 December 2017, the SPC took a decision to discontinue the permanent module of the Social Reporting, as of 2018. Member States are invited to report on the social policy aspects in their respective National Reform Programmes

5. Working methods and relations with other Committees

In its cooperation with other policy Committees (EMCO, EPC, EFC, Education Committee) and with the Working Party on Public Health at Senior Level (WPPHSL), the SPC will be guided by Council Decision (EU) 2015/773 establishing the SPC, the European Council Conclusions of 24-15 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, as well as by the EPSCO Council Conclusions on Economy of Well-being, which call on the SPC to continue fostering a close cooperation with other Council Committees and preparatory bodies. This may include joint meetings, preparation of joint papers, as well as coordination of the views on cross-cutting policy issues.

6. Cooperation with the EU social partners' organizations and social NGOs

SPC will continue its practice, consolidated in previous years, on consultation with social partners and social NGOs at key moments in the European Semester and in relation to the Committee's thematic work.