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10698/25
PV CONS 33
SOC 448
EMPL 306
SAN 376
CONSOM 117
PARLNAT

DRAFT MINUTES

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
(Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs)
19 and 20 June 2025

MEETING ON THURSDAY 19 JUNE 2025 (09:30)

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Council adopted the agenda set out in document 10018/25.

2. Approval of "A" items

Non-legislative list

10174/25


The Council adopted all "A" items listed in the document above, including all linguistic COR and REV documents presented for adoption. Statements to these items are set out in the Addendum.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY

Legislative deliberations

(Public deliberation in accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union)

3. Directive on traineeships

 9936/25

General approach

The Council reached a general approach on the Directive on traineeships as set out in the document above.

Estonia and Spain presented statements, as set out in the Annex.

Non-legislative activities

4. European Semester 2025



a) From Principles to Progress: the new European Pillar for Social Rights Action Plan and the first anti-poverty strategy

9420/25 + ADD 1

Policy debate

The Council held a policy debate on ‘From Principles to Progress: the new European Pillar for Social Rights Action Plan and the first anti-poverty strategy’, on the basis of a Presidency steering note set out in the document above.

b) Spring package
Presentation by the Commission

The Council took note of the presentation by the Commission of the Spring package.

c) Horizontal note on Country-Specific Recommendations 9901/25
Approval

The Council approved the horizontal note on country-specific recommendations as regards the employment and social policy aspects, as set out in the document above.

d) Assessment of the country-specific recommendations for 2025 and implementation of the country-specific recommendations for 2024: Opinion of the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee 9595/25 + ADD 1-3
Endorsement

The Council endorsed the opinion of the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee on the assessment of the country-specific recommendations for 2025 and implementation of the country-specific recommendations for 2024 as set out in the document above.

e) Contribution on the employment and social policies aspects of the country-specific recommendations: Recommendations on the economic, social, employment, structural and budgetary policies of each Member State 9415/25
9903/25
9983/25
10374/25
Approval

The Council approved the contribution on the employment and social policies aspects of the country-specific recommendations on the 2025 economic, social, employment, structural and budgetary policies of each Member State as listed in document 9983/25 and approved the comply or explain note as set out in document 10374/25.

5. **Opinion of the Employment Committee on the dimensions of job quality** [2] 9417/25
Presentation by the Chair of the Employment Committee

The Council took note of the presentation by the Chair of the Employment Committee of the Opinion of the Employment Committee on the dimensions of job quality, as set out in the document above.

6. **Conclusions on supporting older people in reaching their full potential in the labour market and in society** [2] 9321/25
Approval

The Council approved the Conclusions on supporting older people in reaching their full potential in the labour market and in society, as set out in the document above.

Legislative deliberations

(Public deliberation in accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union)

7. **Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment (Article 19)** [S][C] 9573/25
Policy debate 9634/25
Progress report

The Council held a policy debate on the Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation in areas other than employment (Article 19), on the basis of a Presidency steering note set out in document 9634/25. The Council also took note of the progress report on the proposed Directive, as set out in document 9573/25.

Non-legislative activities

8. **Conclusions on advancing gender equality in the AI-driven digital age** [2] 9408/25
+ ADD 1 REV 2
+ ADD 2
Approval

The Council approved the Conclusions on advancing gender equality in the AI-driven digital age, as set out in the document above.

Bulgaria and Hungary presented statements, as set out in the Annex.

Any other business

9. a) **Presidency events** [2] 9664/25

i) **Informal meeting of Equality Ministers**
(Warsaw, 16 April 2025)

ii) **High level conferences**
Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on the Presidency events.

- b) **A Roadmap for Women's Rights** [2] 6756/25 + ADD 1
Information from the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Commission on the Roadmap for Women's Rights.

- c) **Work programme of the incoming Presidency**
Information from Denmark


- d) **Current legislative proposals (Public deliberation in accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union)** [1][C]

- i) **Revision of the Regulations on the coordination of social security systems (883/04 and 987/09)** 15642/16
+ ADD 1 REV 1
- ii) **Revision of the Directive on European Works Councils** 5837/24 + ADD 1
- iii) **Regulation on European statistics on population and housing** 5588/1/23 REV 1
+ ADD 1

- iv) **Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2021/691 as regards support to workers affected by imminent job displacement in enterprises undergoing restructuring** 7721/25

Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on the above legislative proposals.

- e) **Council Recommendation on a reinforced Quality Framework for Traineeships**  8155/24

Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on the Council Recommendation on a reinforced Quality Framework for Traineeships.

- a) **(continuation) Presidency events**  9664/25

- iii) **Informal meeting of Employment and Social affairs Ministers (Warsaw, 14-15 April 2025)**

Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on the Presidency events.

- f) **Ensuring rapid pension protection for persons who have exercised their freedom of movement within the EU (Czech initiative)**  9702/1/25 REV 1

Information from the Presidency and the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency and the Commission on ensuring rapid pension protection for persons who have exercised their freedom of movement within the EU.

- g) **Evaluation report of the European Labour Authority**  9644/25 + ADD 2

Information from the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Commission on the Evaluation report of the European Labour Authority.

MEETING ON FRIDAY 20 JUNE 2025 (10:00)

HEALTH

Legislative deliberations

(Public deliberation in accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union)

10. Critical Medicines Act
Policy debate

1C 9066/25

The Council held a policy debate on the Critical Medicines Act on the basis of a Presidency steering note set out in the document above.

Non-legislative activities

**11. Conclusions on promoting and protecting the mental health
of children and adolescents in the digital era**
Approval

2J 9069/25

The Council approved the Conclusions on promoting and protecting the mental health of children and adolescents in the digital era.

**12. EU measures on prevention, including reduction of tobacco
and alcohol consumption**
Exchange of views

2J 9072/25

The Council held an exchange of views on EU measures on prevention, including reduction of tobacco and alcohol consumption based on a steering note provided by the Presidency.

Any other business

**13. a) Current legislative proposals (Public deliberation in
accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on
European Union)**

Pharmaceutical package:

1C

**a) Directive on the Union code relating to
medicinal products for human use**

8759/23 + ADD 1


b) Regulation laying down Union procedures for the authorisation and supervision of medicinal products for human use and establishing rules governing the European Medicines Agency

8758/23 + ADD 1

Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on the pharmaceutical package.


b) International limits on the number of children per sperm or egg donor

 9548/1/25 REV 1

Information from Sweden, supported by Belgium, Finland, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Romania and Spain

The Council took note of the information provided by Sweden, supported by Belgium, Finland, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Romania and Spain on international limits on the number of children per sperm or egg donor.


c) The fight against disinformation on health issues

 9620/1/25 REV 1

Information from Croatia, Estonia, France, Germany, Lithuania, Slovenia and Spain

The Council took note of the information provided by Croatia, Estonia, France, Germany, Lithuania, Slovenia and Spain, on the fight against disinformation on health issues.

d) A continued and urgent call for action at EU level to protect young people from harm caused by novel tobacco and nicotine products

 10129/2/25 REV 2

Information from Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain

The Council took note of the information provided by Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain on a continued and urgent call for action at EU level to protect young people from harm caused by novel tobacco and nicotine products.

e) Impact of the extended producer responsibility under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive on the supply of medicinal products

[2] 10153/1/25 REV1

Information from Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia

The Council took note of the information provided by Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia on the impact of the extended producer responsibility under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive on the supply of medicinal products.

f) Presidency Conferences

[2] 9540/25

Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on Presidency conferences.

g) Negotiations for an international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, as well as complementary amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005)

9541/25

Information from the Presidency and the Commission

h) Work programme of the incoming Presidency

Information from Denmark



First reading



Special legislative procedure



Public debate proposed by the Presidency (Article 8(2) of the Council's Rules of Procedure)



Item based on a Commission proposal

Statements to the legislative "B" items set out in doc. 10018/25**Ad "B" item 3:****Directive on traineeships***General approach***STATEMENT BY ESTONIA**

“Estonia supports the overall aim of the Traineeships Directive to improve the quality of and access to traineeships. However, we express a concern regarding the questionable added value of the Traineeships Directive as well as the additional administrative burden.

The Directive may encourage employers to create traineeships at the expense of employment relationships and reduce access to traineeships for young people. Estonian legal system does not recognise trainees working under an employment contract. Trainees working under an employment contract are defined as employees with full employment rights. Therefore, Estonia believes that the Directive hardly improves the situation of trainees. Rather opposite, we may encourage treating trainees less favourably than over workers.

Furthermore, Estonia still has a concern about the legal clarity of Article 8 of the Directive regarding the role of workers’ representatives in the judicial procedure. According to the text of Article 8, Member States should ensure compliance with two different situations. Member States shall ensure that workers' representatives:

1) *are able to engage* [...] in any relevant judicial or administrative procedure to enforce the rights and obligations arising from this Directive;

and

2) *are able to act* [...] on behalf or in support of one or several trainees in case of an infringement of any right or obligation arising from this Directive [...].

We have understood that the second situation (*are able to act* [...] *on behalf or in support of*) means representation or advising in court proceedings (such use of the term *in support of* has been negotiated within the framework of civil law instruments, e.g. anti-SLAPP directive). However, it is not clear to us what the first situation means, if it does not mean representation or advising in court proceedings and is regulated as a separate obligation.

According to the wording of the provision, the Member State should ensure that workers' representatives, who do not act as representatives or advisors in court proceedings, should be able to participate in judicial proceedings. Estonian civil procedural law does not provide for such a possibility, and such a new sector-specific obligation would interfere with the procedural autonomy of a Member State and cannot be the goal of EU law.

During the negotiations in the Council of the European Union, we have asked for clarifications on what is meant by *are able to engage in [...] judicial [...] procedure to enforce the rights and obligations arising from this Directive*, if it means something other than representation or advising in court proceedings; we have offered wording proposals for the Article 8, as well as a proposal for the wording of the recital.

We have understood the Commission in such a way that, in order to correspond to the first situation stipulated in Article 8 (*Member States shall ensure that workers' representatives are able to engage [...] in any relevant judicial [...] procedure to enforce the rights and obligations arising from this Directive*), Member States do not have to change their civil procedural law.

Given that the text of the Directive allows for a different interpretation, we note that Estonia interprets the first situation regulated in Article 8 in such a way that Estonia does not have to change its procedural law in order to meet the requirements of Article 8. It would be sufficient that, according to Estonian procedural law, the trainee can use workers' representatives as a representative or an advisor in court proceedings (the second situation of Article 8).

Based on the above, Estonia is not able to support the Directive.”

STATEMENT BY SPAIN

Spain welcomed the proposal for a Directive presented by the European Commission in March 2024. That proposal responded to a clear diagnosis: too often, traineeships are being fraudulently used to disguise regular employment relationships that lack rights and protection.

The proposal being submitted for approval today does not meet the minimum standards necessary to constitute a genuine European regulatory framework for quality traineeships. It falls short of the original objectives and risks entrenching the same abusive practices it seeks to eradicate.

The text presents an excessively narrow scope of application and weakens or removes key provisions on supervision, enforcement, and employer obligations. These were key pillars of the initial approach. Furthermore, it does not guarantee that non-employment traineeships are free from exploitation, nor does it fully prevent discriminatory treatment.

European regulation of traineeships must contribute meaningfully to the integration of young people into the labour market. This early stage of their professional career should lead to quality training, rights, and real opportunities for stable employment – not to not precarious work.

Spain will continue working to ensure that this legislation becomes a tool that is useful, ambitious and consistent with the principles of social Europe and the European Pillar of Social Rights.

STATEMENT BY BULGARIA

“The Republic of Bulgaria attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of human rights and reaffirms its commitment to ensuring equality and combating discrimination as fundamental values of the European Union.

In 2018, the Bulgarian Constitutional Court adopted a decision stating that the Council of Europe’s Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (‘Istanbul Convention’) promotes legal concepts related to the notion of ‘gender’ that are incompatible with the fundamental principles of the Bulgarian Constitution. Moreover, in 2021 the Constitutional Court further clarified that the notion of ‘sex’ used in the Constitution, should, in the context of the national legal order, be understood in its biological sense only (men and women).

Recognising the importance of the topic and the opportunities and challenges of using artificial intelligence to promote gender equality, Bulgaria supports the adoption of the Conclusions, declaring that it interprets all gender-related terminology in them strictly within the binary concept of sex. In addition, it will interpret the term ‘intersectional approach’ exclusively in the context of the discriminatory grounds recognised by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.”

STATEMENT BY HUNGARY

“Hungary recognises and promotes equality between men and women in accordance with the Fundamental Law of Hungary and the primary law, principles and values of the European Union, as well as commitments and principles stemming from international law. Equality between women and men is enshrined in the Treaties of the European Union as a fundamental value. In line with these and its national legislation, Hungary interprets the term ‘gender’ as a reference to ‘sex’ in the *Council Conclusions on Advancing Gender Equality in the AI-Driven Digital Age: 6th horizontal review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the Member States and the EU institutions*.

Hungary declares that the Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (COM (2020) 152 final) mentioned in the *Council Conclusions on Advancing Gender Equality in the AI-Driven Digital Age: 6th horizontal review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the Member States and the EU institutions* should be interpreted with due regard to national competences and the specific circumstances in each Member State.

Furthermore, Hungary declares that the Commission's LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (COM (2020) 698 final) referred to in the *Council Conclusions on Advancing Gender Equality in the AI-Driven Digital Age: 6th horizontal review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the Member States and the EU institutions* should be interpreted with due regard to the national competences and the specific circumstances in each Member State."
