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**NOTE**

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From: Presidency  
To: Delegations

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Subject: The future of social protection and of the welfare state  
- Presidency steering note

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Delegations will find attached the Presidency steering note on the above subject, with a view to the lunch debate at the EPSCO Council on 6 December 2021.

# The future of social protection and of the welfare state

## *Lunch debate*

**The European Pillar of Social rights Action Plan**<sup>1</sup> announced that the Commission will “*launch a High-Level Expert Group to study the future of the welfare state, its financing and interconnections with the changing world of work and to present a report by end 2022*”.

The main aim of the high-level group is to reflect on how to make social protection systems and in broader terms the welfare state fit for the future, particularly in light of **megatrends such as: the demographic changes resulting in a shrinking workforce, an ageing population and changing family structures, transformations on the labour market, including the increase in non-standard forms of work, and the digital and green transitions.**

In this context, the high-level group should consider the interaction between social protection systems and other welfare policies with a view to reinforcing and modernising the European welfare states.

### ***Composition and tasks***

The high-level group consists of 12 experts appointed in an individual capacity and bringing wide-ranging expertise in the area of social protection and the welfare state. The group is chaired by **Anna Diamantopoulou**, former European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

In carrying out its tasks, the group will take into account the diversity of social protection systems and welfare states across the EU, while also reflecting on the role of the EU in addressing those common challenges. In particular, the group will:

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan_en)

1. Analyse the expected **impacts of megatrends**, such as **demographic changes, the changing world of work and the green and digital transitions**, on the needs for social protection and on the welfare systems and their financing.
2. Analyse their implications for the **design and scope of social protection systems and the financing of social protection**
3. **Develop key strategic recommendations** for the future of social protection to both national and EU level.

DG EMPL will also ensure exchanges between the group and its Chair and key players, including Member States, representatives of social partners and of stakeholders (including civil society, social protection institutions).

In its final report, to be prepared by the end of 2022, the group should develop a vision on how to reinforce social protection systems and welfare state in light of ongoing and new challenges, in a medium to long-term (looking ahead to 2030). The final report will inform debates at EU and national levels, involving Member States, social partners and key stakeholders, such as civil society organisations or social security organisations.

Against this background, Ministers are invited to present their views on the following questions:

- *How could the high-level group best contribute to the debate on the future of social protection systems and the welfare states in the EU?*
- *How would your country benefit most from the work of the high-level group?*