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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Presidency events *- Information from the Presidency*

Delegations will find attached information on the events organised by the Presidency, with a view to the EPSCO Council of 19 October 2026 (Any Other Business item).

ANNEX

Informal Meeting of EPSCO Ministers

On 5 and 6 July the Irish Presidency hosted the Informal meeting of Employment and Social Affairs Ministers in Ballina, Co. Mayo.

'The first plenary session focussed on '*Addressing and preventing poverty across the lifecycle from child poverty to poverty in older people'* within the framework of the first European Anti-poverty strategy. Member States spoke on the challenges faced and different approaches they have taken to prevent social exclusion. Access to social services as well as income supports and intervention at earliest opportunity was the consensus view for breaking the cycle of poverty.

'*How the EU's implementation and enforcement agendas support real protections for workers' was* the second session. It highlighted a shared commitment to maintaining high labour standards while supporting competitiveness, productivity and a well-functioning Single Market. The key message was that clear, proportionate and enforceable rules can help deliver both fair labour markets and stronger economic outcomes.

The third plenary session '*Improving Labour Market Outcomes of Persons with Disabilities: Policy Tools for Engaging Employers'* addressed the disability employment gap, particularly identifying those policy levers for engaging employers to see the skills and talents of disabled people leading to a more inclusive and competitive EU. There was broad convergence on the need to reduce the disability employment gap through rights-based approaches, accessible recruitment, practical supports to employers which allow them to employ people with disabilities and active labour market policies.

The cultural event was held in what was founded as a social enterprise in 1892 to provide local employment in an area devastated by famine and poverty at that time. Today, Foxford Woolen Mills is one of the last working mills in Ireland and set the tone for an interesting couple of days of discussions.

High-Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming

On 7 and 8 September, the Irish Presidency co-hosted with the European Commission a meeting of the High-Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming in Dublin, bringing together senior officials from Member States and the European Commission to discuss progress in embedding gender equality across all areas of policymaking.

The meeting welcomed the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), with discussions focused on the Commission's Gender Equality Strategy, initiatives to support women's economic leadership, and a presentation on Care and Competitiveness by EIGE.

High-Level Conference on Equality and Competitiveness

On 9 September, The Irish Presidency hosted the High-Level Conference on Equality and Competitiveness in Dublin, bringing together Ministers, senior policymakers, social partners, academics, civil society organisations, business leaders and international experts. The conference explored the relationship between equality, inclusion and economic performance, examining how reducing barriers to participation can contribute to sustainable competitiveness, innovation and resilience across the European Union.

The opening session featured contributions from Minister Norma Foley, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Commission and the OECD. Discussions focused on the economic and social case for equality and highlighted how greater participation in education, employment and public life can strengthen productivity, innovation and sustainable growth. The conference also saw the launch of the European Institute for Gender Equality's campaign on Gender Equality and Competitiveness. A plenary panel on "*Women's Equality, Europe's Advantage*" brought together representatives from EIGE, the World Bank, the private sector and civil society to explore how gender equality can contribute to Europe's economic and social development.

The afternoon programme consisted of three parallel thematic discussions. The first, *Who Cares? Why the Care Economy Matters for Competitiveness*, considered the contribution of care services to labour market participation, economic growth and social cohesion. The second, *Unlocking the Algorithm: Inclusive Innovation in the AI Age*, explored the opportunities and risks associated with artificial intelligence and the importance of ensuring that technological development is inclusive and free from bias. The third, *The Leadership Advantage: Diversity, Innovation and Competitiveness*, examined the benefits of diverse leadership in driving innovation, improving organisational performance and strengthening economic resilience. Bringing together perspectives from governments, international organisations, social partners, business and equality advocates, the discussions reinforced the central message that equality and competitiveness are mutually reinforcing objectives and that inclusive societies are better positioned to meet Europe's future economic and demographic challenges.

Launch of Financing of Social Protection report

On 9 September, the Irish Presidency hosted the launch of the EU/OECD report on the *financing of Social Protection* in Brussels. The report charts financing mixes of social security across OECD and EU countries. It examines the role of social insurance contributions and general revenue collection over time, and looks at the contributions of employers, employees and the self-employed as well as how new forms of work will affect funding of social protection.

The gathering brought together leading international experts and policy makers and provided an opportunity to discuss the main findings of the report and engage in a forward-looking discussion on the future of social protection and its financing.

Saving for Retirement through Auto-enrolment and Supplementary Pensions - Mutual Learning Workshop on Coverage, Incentives, and Adequacy

On 10 September the Irish Presidency in conjunction with DG FISMA hosted ‘Saving for Retirement through Auto-enrolment and Supplementary Pensions - Mutual Learning Workshop on Coverage, Incentives, and Adequacy’ in Brussels. The event provided a platform for the exchange of views and experiences between officials from Member States on implementing reforms in supplementary pensions and the use of auto-enrolment to improve participation and effectiveness in the EU’s pension systems.

Informal Social Protection Committee meeting

The Irish Presidency hosted the Social Protection Committee on 22-23 September. The two-day agenda included updates on social and employment developments across the European Economic Area, the Social Protection Committee's 2026 Annual Report, activities of SPC’s working groups, and the Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The thematic discussion centred around the European Anti-Poverty Strategy with comments from the European Anti-Poverty Network members and an address from author Katriona O’Sullivan, who spoke on her lived experience of overcoming poverty. On day two, delegates visited three community and voluntary sector organisations: the offices of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul; Lourdes Youth and Community Service and Crosscare’s Portland Row Café. Meeting with these community workers, delegates gained more knowledge about these capacity-building projects.

EPIC ATM and Equal Pay Day 17th and 18th September

On 17th and 18th September, the Irish Presidency hosted events aimed towards highlighting both the persistent gender pay gap and the need to actively reduce this gap. On 17th September the Irish Presidency hosted the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) which is led by the ILO, OECD and UN Women, for their annual technical meeting. The meeting invited EPIC members including governments, social partners, businesses, academia, worker and employer organisations both inside and outside the EU, to analyse and discuss policy objectives and share practical solutions to reducing the gender pay gap.

On 18th September the Irish Presidency hosted an event in Farmleigh House to mark International Equal Pay Day which represents the longstanding efforts towards the achievement of equal pay for work of equal value. The event brought together international organisations including UN, ILO, and OECD with international Governments, EU Member States, trade unions, employer organisations, civil society, and academia, to collaborate and exchange ideas specifically targeting this policy area for future protection against inequality and disparity.

The event in Farmleigh House was opened by Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, Peter Burke, T.D. High level attendees included the Director General of the ILO, Gilbert F. Houngbo who also made an address in Farmleigh House, as well as the Chair of EPIC Maíra Lacerda, Head of Special Advisory Office for International Affairs for Brazil's Ministry of Labour and Employment, and EPIC Vice-Chair Rakesh Patry, Director General of International and Intergovernmental Labour Affairs for Canada's Department of Employment and Social Development.

Also announced at this event was the accession of the Irish Business Employers Confederation (Ibec) to EPIC. In joining the coalition, Ibec stands alongside the Irish Government and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, representing the full breadth of Ireland's social partnership model, strengthening relationships and drive toward our policy goals.

Informal Employment Committee meeting

The Irish Presidency hosted the Informal meeting of the Employment Committee (EMCO) on 24 and 25 September. The two-day agenda included the 2026 Employment Guidelines, updates on the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Fair Labour Mobility Package, details from the Annual Employment Performance Report and the Employment Performance Monitor, and updates on employment developments across the EEA.

The thematic discussion centred around quality jobs. Eurofound, Ireland's only EU Agency, presented EU-wide trends in job quality, while Professor John Geary of University College Dublin presented findings from the Working in Ireland Survey. The survey brings new evidence on workplace experiences across the island of Ireland into the EU-level discussion. Delegates examined recent developments in working conditions and evidence to support effective policymaking.

Meeting of Senior Officials on the European Child Guarantee

On 24 and 25 September, the Irish Presidency hosted the Meeting of European Child Guarantee Coordinators in Dublin, bringing together national coordinators, representatives of the European Commission and key stakeholders involved in implementing the European Child Guarantee. The meeting focused on prevention and early intervention as key approaches to supporting children and families.

Participants heard presentations on Ireland's approach to prevention and early intervention, alongside practical examples including ESF+-supported programmes and the Let's Grow Together home visiting initiative. Delegates also received an update from the European Commission on the implementation of the Communication Breaking the Cycle of Child Poverty: Strengthening the European Child Guarantee and heard examples of family support and early intervention programmes from Austria and Slovenia.

The meeting concluded with a discussion on parenting supports, family services and inclusion in the early years, providing an opportunity for Member States to share experiences, challenges and good practices. Coordinators also visited The Ark, Europe's first purpose-built arts centre for children, where a collaborative sculpture developed with children and young people to reflect the principles of the European Child Guarantee was unveiled.

High-Level Roundtable on Equality Data

On 30 September and 1 October, the Irish Presidency supported Commission with the High-Level Roundtable on Equality Data in Brussels, bringing together policymakers, equality bodies, national statistical offices, academics, civil society organisations and EU institutions. The event examined how robust equality data can help identify discrimination and inequality, support evidence-based policymaking and strengthen the implementation of EU equality frameworks.

The first day focused on strengthening equality data collection and use across the EU. Participants heard contributions from the European Commission, Eurostat, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, the European Institute for Gender Equality, Eurofound, equality bodies and civil society organisations. Discussions explored responsible data collection, cooperation between institutions and communities, and the development of a future EU Recommendation on Equality Data.

The second day examined how effective national equality data ecosystems can be developed and sustained. Through plenary discussions and roundtable sessions, participants exchanged good practices and considered the practical challenges involved in collecting, analysing and using equality data to inform policy, monitor outcomes and advance equality across the European Union.

High-Level Conference on Non-Discrimination (LGBTQ+ rights)

On 6 October, the Irish Presidency hosted a High-Level Conference on Anti-Discrimination and LGBTIQ+ Rights in Dublin Castle, bringing together Ministers, European Commission representatives, international organisations, civil society leaders, academics and equality advocates from across the European Union. Under the theme *"Advancing LGBTIQ+ Equality in the EU: Emerging Practices for Equal Rights and Safe Environments",* the conference examined current challenges and opportunities in advancing equality, inclusion and protection for LGBTIQ+ people throughout Europe.

The morning session focused on LGBTIQ+ equality across the lifecycle, with discussions on supporting LGBTIQ+ youth and families in the digital era, including online safety, misinformation and wellbeing. Participants also explored the experiences of older LGBTIQ+ people, highlighting emerging good practices in promoting inclusion, access to services and dignity in later life. Contributions were provided by representatives of the European Commission, international LGBTIQ+ organisations, academia and national stakeholders.

The afternoon programme examined approaches to advancing equal rights for intersex persons and creating safer environments for LGBTIQ+ communities. Discussions drew on expertise from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, the Council of Europe, the United Nations, civil society organisations and Member States, focusing on legal protections, community-based engagement and responses to violence and discrimination. The conference provided a valuable forum for sharing emerging practices and strengthening cooperation across Europe in support of equality, inclusion and fundamental rights for LGBTIQ+ people.

The conference was followed on 7 October by a meeting of the Commission's Expert group on LGBTIQ+ equality, also hosted by the Irish Presidency in Dublin.

Upcoming Roadmap on Carcinogens 3.0 Conference

The conference is hosted by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) as part of the EU Roadmap on Carcinogens 3.0. The EU Roadmap on Carcinogens is an EU action plan aimed at preventing work-related cancer caused by exposure to carcinogenic substances. The HSA is a partner organisation to the Roadmap. The conference is open to employers, OSH Professionals, OH Professionals and Representative Bodies.

Since the launch of the Roadmap on Carcinogens in 2016, Europe has made significant progress in strengthening protections for workers through legislation, research and practical workplace support. Ireland is proud to play its part through the work of the Health and Safety Authority, our participation in the Workers' Exposure Survey and our implementation of strengthened protections in national law. The Roadmap demonstrates the value of cooperation between governments, employers, workers and European institutions in preventing occupational disease and saving lives.

Upcoming Senior Labour Inspectors Committee Plenary and Thematic Day

The Senior Labour Inspectors' Committee (SLIC) is the body within the European Union that aims to enhance cooperation and coordination between national labour inspection services across EU member states and has the mandate to give its opinion on all matters relating to the enforcement of EU legislation on health and safety at work. SLIC consists of high-level representatives of the labour inspection services of all 27 Member States and is chaired by the European Commission.

The Plenary Meeting on 21 October in Dublin is the formal business session of SLIC. It brings together senior representatives of Member States' labour inspection services, the European Commission and partner organisations to consider the Committee's current and emerging priorities, exchange expertise, review work under way, and strengthen cooperation and coordination in the enforcement of EU occupational safety and health legislation. These discussions will take place against the backdrop of wider European efforts to ensure that technological and economic change delivers better outcomes for workers.

Initiatives such as the European Commission's Quality Jobs agenda recognise that competitiveness and worker wellbeing must go hand in hand. Safe and healthy workplaces, meaningful worker engagement, good working conditions and effective prevention of occupational risks are all essential elements of quality employment. Labour inspectorates have a key role in helping to translate these ambitions into practical outcomes in workplaces across Europe.

The Thematic Day on 22 October will have a different and more focused purpose. The theme - "Beyond physical safety: Addressing the hidden risks of work, focusing on work-related psychosocial risks" - is both timely and important. A particular strength of the Thematic Day is its focus on peer learning, providing a forum for labour inspectorates and experts from across Europe to share case studies, exchange good practice and identify practical solutions to common challenges

Upcoming High-Level Conference on Assistive Technology and Accessible Digital Technology: Empowering Participation

The Irish Presidency will host a High-Level Conference on Assistive Technology and Accessible Digital Technology: Empowering Participation at the Convention Centre Dublin on 22-23 October 2026. Bringing together Ministers, European institutions, disability organisations, international experts and industry representatives, the conference will explore how assistive technology can support independence, inclusion and participation for persons with disabilities.

The first day will focus on assistive technology as a tool for advancing disability rights, with discussions on accessibility, universal design, mainstream technology and the role of assistive technology in employment, education and independent living. Participants will also examine barriers to access and share examples of good practice from across Europe.

The second day will consider the role of the EU Single Market in improving access to assistive technology and supporting innovation. The conference will conclude with a strategic roundtable on a European vision for assistive technology to 2030, identifying priorities for improving access and strengthening cooperation across the European Union.

Upcoming meeting of the Mutual Information System on Social Protection (MISSOC)

The Irish Presidency will host the MISSOC network meeting in Dublin 29 -30 October. The MISSOC network meetings are biannual events that bring together experts to exchange information on social protection systems across the European Economic Area and Switzerland. MISSOC's primary goal is to provide comparable and up-to-date information on national social protection systems across Europe.

Upcoming Informal meeting of Equality Ministers, Tralee

The Irish Presidency will host an Informal Meeting of Equality Ministers in Kerry to discuss some of the most pressing equality challenges facing Europe. The meeting will focus on how equality policies can contribute to stronger participation, inclusion and resilience at a time of demographic change, labour and skills shortages, technological transformation and growing global competition.

The first two sessions will examine the contribution of equality to Europe's economic and social objectives. Ministers will discuss how removing barriers to participation can help unlock talent, strengthen competitiveness and support sustainable economic growth. They will also consider the role of the care economy in advancing gender equality, recognising care as essential social and economic infrastructure and exploring how investment in care services and the care workforce can support both equality and labour-market participation.

The final session will mark the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Ministers will reflect on progress since the Convention's adoption and consider priorities for its third decade, including accessibility, independent living, participation and the challenges arising from digital transformation and demographic change. The discussion will focus on how Member States and EU institutions can work together to bridge the gap between rights recognised in law and equality experienced in everyday life, while ensuring the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes.

Upcoming High-Level Conference on Empowering Journeys: Local Innovation, National Systems, and European Collaboration

The Irish Presidency will host a High-Level Conference to share best practices for breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty in Galway on 19 November. Tackling the transmission of intergenerational poverty is a challenge throughout Europe. This means turning attention to each age group, children, working age and older people as the triggers can occur at various life stages.

The conference will focus on what works and sharing best practice within the framework of the European anti-poverty strategy.

Upcoming High-Level Conference on The Future of Work

The High-Level Conference on the Future of Work will take place in the Royal College of Physicians Ireland, Dublin City Centre on 01 December 2026. The HLC will focus on trends that are driving our future of work and their impacts on labour markets.

Taking place during Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the EU, the conference will also delve into the impacts on employment rights, how regulatory frameworks are continuously adapting to protect workers' privacy, well-being, and job security and how we navigate evolving standards. Approximately 120 guests will be invited ranging from ministerial, academia and high-level representatives from the EU institutions and international organisations such as the European Commission, social partners and NGOs.

Upcoming Public Employment Services Network (PES)

The Irish Presidency will host the DGs of Public Employment Services in Dublin 10 -11 December. This meeting will bring the Public Employment Services network together to improve performance, share best practice and foster mutual learning, promote modernisation and support the implementation of employment policies.