



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 6 March 2024
(OR. en)

6999/24

SOC 141
EMPL 77
GENDER 28
ANTIDISCRIM 27
FREMP 107
JAI 334
ECOFIN 240

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 on 11 March 2024 (Any Other Business item).

Information on the events organised by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Informal meeting of Ministers of Employment and Social affairs, 11-12 January 2024, Namur

On 11-12 January 2024, the Ministers of Employment and Social affairs of the Member States of the European Union met informally in Namur. The meeting was dedicated to discussing the future of Social Europe. Representatives of the EFTA countries, Ukraine and Moldova, the social partners and civil society also participated in the discussion. On the first day, Ministers exchanged views on how social policies should be reflected in the next EU strategic agenda. On the second day, in the presence of Gilbert Hougbo, Director-General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the first session looked beyond EU borders and discussed the Global Coalition for Social Justice of the ILO and the challenges for employment and social policies in the EU enlargement process. The second session was dedicated to the interplay between social investments and reforms, economic growth, macro-economic stabilization, and upward social convergence.

High-level conferences

Investing in an inclusive and fair future for Europe: Minimum income, towards a safety net for all, 18 January 2024, Brussels

At this conference, participating Member States' representatives presented the progress made on minimum income systems in their countries one year after the adoption of the Council Recommendation on this topic. While progress has been made, participants stressed the importance of further improving certain aspects to guarantee inclusive and effective minimum income schemes. Furthermore, participants explored actions to be taken, at national and European level, to improve take-up of minimum income systems, foster access to inclusive labour markets, improve access to support services and promote individualised support for all those in need. The Belgian Presidency urged to continue the implementation of the 2023 Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion and to monitor its implementation. The need for indicators to evaluate the efficiency of the measures taken to overcome poverty within the EU has been highlighted. For the next legislative cycle, the Belgian Presidency encouraged the Minimum income network (MINET) working group to further reflect on how the digitalisation could reduce the non-take-up of minimum income.

Fair mobility in the EU and the role of the European Labour Authority, 25 January 2024, Brussels

The objective of the conference was to promote the work of the European Labour Authority (ELA) and contribute to the evaluation of its functioning. A report, prepared by the Belgian authorities and ELA, was handed to Commissioner Schmit, with a view to the ELA evaluation that the Commission must undertake by 1 August 2024.

Mental health and work, 30-31 January 2024, Brussels

During the conference held in Brussels on 30 and 31 January, EU Commissioners, Ministers, Secretaries of State, European social partners and occupational health and safety experts discussed how to support the mental health of workers and citizens by working on prevention at different levels. The first day focused on primary prevention: the measures that need to be taken upstream to prevent workers from being exposed to the psychosocial risks at work that are causing an ever-increasing number of disabilities. On the second day, participants explored how to adopt an integrated approach to preventing incapacity for work throughout an individual's career and how to make the labour market more inclusive at the European level in order to enable people with mental health problems to have lasting access to employment.

Gender pension gap and pension adequacy – Tackling gender inequality after retirement, 8 February 2024, Brussels

The conference promoted an exchange of views with multidisciplinary experts on possible innovative and effective multidisciplinary solutions to tackle the gender pension gap at national and EU level, as well as the importance of identifying the causes of the gender pension gap, assessing the design of pension systems and exchanging good practices. The Belgian Presidency conveyed that the Social Protection Committee could be invited to set up a Gender Pension Gap network, in order to continue exchanging experiences and good practices in the field of pensions and the gender pension gap and to facilitate mutual learning and cooperation between Member States' experts in this field. Concerning the monitoring of the phenomenon, the Belgian Presidency proposed that the gender pension gap and the gender coverage gap should be permanently monitored and analysed in the structuralised triannual Pension Adequacy Report of the Social Protection Committee. To increase the interlink between adequacy and financial sustainability, the working group on pension adequacy and the working group on ageing populations and sustainability of the Economic Policy Committee could pursue joint discussions. Finally, the Belgian Presidency suggested that the Social

Protection Committee’s Indicators Subgroup could include the gender pension gap in their 2024-2025 work programme, to continue the reflection on the monitoring of this phenomenon.

Towards zero homelessness: only 6 years to succeed, 8-9 February 2024, Brussels

This event brought together Member States’ representatives, experts and associations, all driven by a renewed commitment to a future without homelessness. The main aim of the conference was to assess the progress made at national and EU level since the 2021 Lisbon Declaration, the signatories of which pledged to work towards eradicating homelessness by 2030. Participants renewed their commitment to this goal, while expressing their support for the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness (EPOCH) and agreeing to call for greater political commitment and funding.

Conference of EU Ministers responsible for the social economy, 11-12 February 2024, Liège, and European social economy meeting, 12-13 February 2024, Liège

At the 11-12 February Ministerial conference, EU Ministers in charge of the social economy were invited to discuss and propose policy priorities in this field for the future EU social agenda. To this end, they adopted the Liège Roadmap for Social Economy in the European Union. The 25 commitments and key priorities proposed by the Liège Roadmap aim to address important issues facing the social economy and to ensure that the present positive momentum continues to thrive in the EU in the coming years. In addition, the Member States which are members of the Monitoring Committee of the 2015 Luxembourg Declaration “A roadmap towards a more comprehensive ecosystem for social economy enterprises” also met to welcome two new members and to adopt their first Rules of procedure.

In parallel, on 12 and 13 February, more than 600 practitioners, entrepreneurs, scientists, policymakers and other stakeholders attended the European social economy meeting “The social economy at the heart of inclusive, green and digital transitions”. This large-scale event gave participants the opportunity to share experiences and to discuss innovative, resilient and inspiring economic models for a more social and sustainable Europe. In this context, Ministers and Member States’ delegations attending the Ministerial conference were also able to exchange views directly with many representatives of the social economy sector. Finally, an overview of the Liège Roadmap was presented to all participants.