

Brussels, 23 March 2026
(OR. en)

7165/26
PV CONS 15
SOC 143
EMPL 60
SAN 136
CONSOM 73
PARLNAT

DRAFT MINUTES
COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
(Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs)
9 March 2026

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Council adopted the agenda set out in document 6863/26.

2. Approval of "A" items

Non-legislative list

6888/26

The Council adopted all "A" items listed in the document above, including all linguistic COR and REV documents presented for adoption.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY

Non-legislative activities

3. **Conclusions on Investing in children: Strengthening child well-being, social inclusion and combating child poverty in the Union** ☐ 6665/26
Approval

The Council approved the above Conclusions.

4. **Breaking the Poverty Cycle: Developing person-centred enabling and activation services** ☐ 6343/26
Exchange of views

The Council held an exchange of views on the above topic, guided by the Presidency note set out in the document above.

5. **European Semester 2026** ☐
- a) **Employment and social aspects of the 2026 Recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area** 6172/26
Approval

The Council approved the employment and social aspects of the above Recommendation.

- b) **2026 Joint Employment Report** 6076/26
Adoption

The Council adopted the above Report.

- c) **Conclusions on the 2026 Joint Employment Report** 6605/26
Approval

The Council approved the above Conclusions.

- d) **Recommendation on human capital in the European Union** 6081/1/26 REV 1
Adoption + ADD 1
6583/26

The Council adopted the above Recommendation. Hungary presented a statement, as set out in the Annex.

5. **(continuation) European Semester 2026** [2] 6171/26
From Innovation to Quality Jobs: using AI to strengthen quality employment and workers' rights¹
Exchange of views

The Council held an exchange of views on the above topic, guided by the Presidency note set out in the document above.

6. **Employment Committee review of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee: key messages** [2] 6184/26
Endorsement

The Council endorsed the above key messages.

Any other business

7. a) **Recent EU Equality Strategies:** [2]
- i) **Gender equality strategy 2026-2030** 6668/26
6832/26
- ii) **Anti-Racism Strategy** 5626/26
Information from the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Commission.

- b) **Presidency events** [2] 6678/26
Information from the Presidency

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

¹ In the presence of a Professor of Economics and European Studies at the London School of Economics and the University of Cyprus.

- c) **Employment Committee and Social Protection Committee work programmes for 2026** ☐ 6189/26
6205/26
Information from the respective chairs

The Council took note of the information provided by the Chairs of the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee.

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

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.

- e) **Tripartite Social Summit** ☐ 6784/26
Information from the Presidency and the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency and the Commission.

- f) **Proposal to provide legal clarity on the posting of third-country nationals in the context of the Fair Labour Mobility Package** ☐ 6783/26
Information from the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg

The Council took note of the information provided by the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg.

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- ① First reading
S Special legislative procedure
C Item based on a Commission proposal
☐ Public debate proposed by the Presidency (Article 8(2) of the Council's Rules of Procedure)
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Statement to the non-legislative "B" item set out in doc. 6863/26

Ad "B" item 5d): **European Semester 2026**
Recommendation on human capital in the European Union
Adoption

STATEMENT BY HUNGARY

“Hungary recognises the importance of addressing skills shortages, particularly in sectors that are strategically important to the EU economy. Therefore, Hungary generally supports the Recommendation's objectives. At the same time, we maintain the following legal and procedural concerns about the Recommendation and the process leading to its adoption. The text of the Recommendation — particularly the section inviting Member States — focuses predominantly on education and training, despite its legal basis (Article 148 (4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union), which belongs to employment policy. While Hungary acknowledges that education and training are important tools for achieving employment and labour market objectives, these are different policy areas to employment. The main challenges and elements of the Recommendation, such as strengthening vocational education and training, improving tertiary education outcomes in STEM subjects, and investing in education, training, and skills, fall under Article 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Consequently, Hungary is not convinced that the content of the Recommendation fully reflects its legal basis and that the principle of centre of gravity justifies its choice. In any case, we believe that given the aforementioned circumstances the draft Recommendation should have been at least discussed and approved by the education ministers as well before its adoption at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council.

Furthermore, Hungary does not support the strengthening of the role of education and training within the European Semester, particularly given that those areas are not completely encompassed by the legal basis of Article 148 (4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which concerns employment policy. Hungary does not agree with the introduction of annual Council Recommendations on education and training within the European Semester, based on the model of the annual conclusions on the Joint Employment Report. There has been no precedent for such a new annual proposal and EU law has not changed in a way that justifies it. Moreover, education and training are already part of the annual European Semester framework, as evidenced by the country reports and country-specific recommendations, which include the annual challenges and progress made in education, training and skills. Overall, Hungary believes that the European Semester process should be simplified, not extended.”
