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NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations

Subject: Presidency conferences
- Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find attached information on the conferences and high-level meetings organised by the Presidency, with a view to the EPSCO Council on 12 June 2023 (AOB item).

Information on the conferences and high-level meetings organised by the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Conference on Economic perspectives on gender-based violence – paving paths to prevention, 1–2 February, Stockholm

On 1–2 February, the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union held a conference on gender equality in Stockholm. The main theme was the intersection of two key priority areas in the fight for gender equality: the need for women’s economic empowerment and the need to prevent and combat gender-based violence. The conference was attended by Swedish Minister for Gender Equality and Working Life Paulina Brandberg, European Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli and Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality Carlien Scheele.

High-Level Meeting on Active and Autonomous Ageing, 13–14 February 2023, Stockholm

On 13–14 February, the Swedish Presidency arranged a high-level meeting on active and autonomous ageing. The meeting was hosted by Swedish Minister for Older People and Social Security Anna Tenje. Other attendees included professionals and experts in this topic and representatives from Member States, European Commission, European agencies, the OECD, the WHO, the social partners and civil society.

The context for this meeting was twofold:

- 1) enabling a longer and more sustainable working life; and
- 2) improving long-term care systems.

Many factors influence why and when people exit the labour market, including personal health and finances, as well as institutional and societal aspects. Norms related to older workers and retirement ages still pose major obstacles to longer working lives. Promoting longer working lives thus requires a comprehensive approach and the involvement of several actors, not least governments, social partners and civil society. Work and later retirement should be rewarded, and policy-makers are particularly crucial in developing incentives specifically targeting older workers to affect the timing of their retirement.

A well-functioning long-term care (LTC) sector is essential for active and autonomous ageing. In addition to improving the cost-effectiveness of the sector, health promotion, preventive policies and high-quality care support autonomy, and promote more active and healthier ageing. If LTC coverage in Europe is to remain at the same level as today, the number of LTC workers needs to increase by more than 1.6 million by 2050.

At the meeting, participants shared ideas and practices on how the EU can respond to an ageing population, and attention was given to how to seize the opportunities that an ageing population presents. Discussions revolved around the need to better make use of older workers' capabilities and rich experiences, which are too often overlooked, and the need to address age discrimination. Furthermore, according to the Green Paper on Ageing, there is potential for creating 8 million jobs in the health and care sectors over the next ten years. However, ensuring that care workers are equipped with the right skills and good working conditions are challenges that need to be addressed in order to harness this potential, to recruit and retain personal with the right competence, while delivering high-quality care.

From Plan to Action – Conference on the implementation of national action plans against racism, 16-17 February, Stockholm

During this conference that was held on 16–17 February in Stockholm, the aim was to discuss how to move from development to implementation of national action plans against racism, by providing a venue for sharing experiences and gathering inspiration. Promising practices from Member States were presented as part of the newly published compendium of practices on antiracism in Member States, compiled by the European Commission. The conference was held in cooperation with the European Commission and was attended by Ms Brandberg and Ms Dalli.

High-level meeting: A gender-equal economy in a society free from gender-based violence, 27–28 February, Stockholm

A high-level meeting within the framework of the Swedish Presidency was held on 27–28 February, with the focus on gender budgeting as well as efforts to combat men's violence against women.

The aim of the meeting was to provide a forum for discussion and exchange of experiences. The first day focused on gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process and in order to provide a basis for Council conclusions. The second day focused on innovative and award-winning methods to prevent and combat men's violence against women. This included how to detect intimate partner violence among new parents and jobseekers, methods to prevent honour-related violence and oppression, and examples of how social services are working to combat intimate partner violence.

The Swedish Police Authority talked about the systematic method of Risk Reduction Intervention (RRI), which is designed to make suspected perpetrators stop using threats and violence against protected persons. RRI won the 2022 European Crime Prevention Award. The national helpline for violent perpetrators, *Välj att sluta* (Choose to stop), was presented, along with the latest treatment methods being used by the Swedish Prison and Probation Service to combat gender-based violence.

Among the attendees were ministers and state secretaries: Swedish Minister for Gender Equality and Working Life Paulina Brandberg, Isabelle Lonvis-Rome from France, Igualdad. Irene Montero Gil from Spain, Zuzana Freitas Lopesova from Czechia, Sarah Schlitz from Belgium and Balázs Hankó from Hungary.

Conference on Social Inclusion and Access to Adequate Housing, 4 April 2023, Stockholm

To contribute to the important work on social inclusion and access to adequate housing throughout Europe, the Swedish Presidency held a conference on 4 April. The conference covered different perspectives in the field of social inclusion and access to adequate housing, including the rights of the child and the European Child Guarantee, rights for people with psychosocial disabilities, and women and children exposed to gender-based violence.

The meeting included attendees from academia and representatives from the Member States, EU institutions and civil society organisations.

Homelessness affects all Member States. Despite the Member States' diverse strategies for housing provision, vulnerable groups face similar social consequences. To address the social consequences of homelessness and strengthen social inclusion, the Swedish Presidency provided a platform for relevant stakeholders to learn from each other.

Innovative ideas and practices were shared on how the EU should respond to the expanding issues presented above. The exchange of experiences, good practices and inspiration, as well as the opportunity for joint learning, can promote the development and improvement of the work being carried out in the Member States.

High-level conference on LGBTIQ equality in the EU, 12 April, Stockholm

On 12 April, the Swedish Presidency organised a high-level conference on LGBTIQ equality in Stockholm. The main aim of this conference was to take stock of progress halfway through the implementation of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy. The Conference also aimed to create an opportunity to share experiences and good practices in order to strengthen – and identify room for improvement in – the work toward securing LGBTIQ equality and non-discrimination more effectively by 2025. The conference was held in cooperation with the European Commission and attended by Ms Brandberg, Ms Dalli, Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights Michael O’Flaherty and Secretary of State for Equality and against Gender Violence in Spain Ángela Rodríguez.

Occupational safety and health summit, 15–16 May, Stockholm

The European Commission and the Swedish Presidency jointly reviewed the progress of the Commission’s Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021–2027 at the Occupational safety and health summit in Stockholm on 15–16 May. The themes included mental health at work, the ‘vision zero’ approach to work-related deaths, and the impact of climate change on occupational safety and health (OSH).

The summit gathered around 300 delegates: politicians and officials from all Member States, representatives from EU institutions, and occupational safety and health experts. Ms Brandberg represented the Swedish Government and European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit represented the Commission. EU-OSHA Interim Executive Director William Cockburn was one of the keynote speakers.

High-Level Meeting on Protecting Children and support for reform and reconstruction of Ukraine's child protection system, 1-2 June 2023, Stockholm

This high-level meeting was hosted by Swedish Minister for Social Services Camilla Walthersson Grönvall, with attendance of Member State representatives, the European Commission – including the Vice-President Dubravka Šuica, UN representatives, including Executive Director Catherine Russell of UNICEF and the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Najat Maalla M'jid, civil servants, civil society as well as a delegation from Ukraine, led by Minister of Social Policy Oksana Ivanivna Zholnovych.

Children have paid an extremely high price for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. They have been killed and wounded, uprooted from their homes and, in many cases, separated from their families and caregivers. Russia's war of aggression has also exposed children from Ukraine, and girls in particular, to risks of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. As is often the case in war and humanitarian crises, children already in disadvantaged situations, such as those with disabilities, unaccompanied and separated children, and children evacuated from institutional care facilities, are at risk of suffering the most.

The immediate need to protect all children from violations of their rights as a consequence of Russia's war of aggression – as well as to prevent these violations – has been recognised by the EU Member States, through the adoption of the Council Conclusions on the EU Strategy for the Rights of the Child from June 2022. Beyond the immediate needs of children from Ukraine, it is important to also look towards the future and focus on how to rebuild and strengthen the long-term capacity to prevent and respond to child protection needs, risks and violations, including sexual and gender-based violence and the transition towards community- and family-based living. This includes the provision of rehabilitative social services, including mental health and psychosocial support, for children and families affected by Russia's war of aggression.

As a result, a declaration on protecting children in Ukraine and in the European Union, focusing on EU support for reforming the child protection system in Ukraine, was signed by many Member States.