

SECRETARIAT GENERAL

DIRECTORATE GENERAL
HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW

DIRECTORATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

DEPARTMENT OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 5 October 2016

MISSCEO(2016)7

**MUTUAL INFORMATION SYSTEM ON SOCIAL PROTECTION
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
(MISSCEO)**

18th Meeting

Strasbourg, 30 June -1 July 2016

MEETING REPORT

I. OPENING OF THE MEETING

Ms Hirschinger, coordinator of MISSCEO, opened the meeting and welcomed participants. She invited the following participants to briefly introduce themselves: the correspondents from Azerbaijan and Bosnia-Herzegovina who were new to the network, the correspondent from Turkey who had recently been re-appointed, and Mr Manuel Paolillo, Programme Adviser for the Turin Process in the Secretariat, who was working on secondment from the Belgian Government.

The list of participants and Secretariat appears in Appendix I.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

MISSCEO(2016)1rev
MISSCEO(2016)2

The agenda, which appears in Appendix II, was adopted.

III. INFORMATION FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Ms Hirschinger provided information on developments at the Council of Europe which were of relevance to the MISSCEO network. Conclusions 2015 of the European Committee of Social Rights on compliance by States Parties with the European Social Charter (“Charter”) were published and Conclusions 2016 were under preparation. In the context of the Turin Process, the following ‘Turin2’ events had taken place: an Interparliamentary Conference on the Charter and a public Forum on Social Rights, on 17 and 18 March 2016 in Turin. A ceremony had been held during the Forum for the deposit of the instrument of ratification of the Revised Charter by Greece. Further information was provided by Mr Paolillo who had taken part in the Turin2 events.

The Governmental Committee of the European Social Charter and the European Code of Social Security, at its meeting on 9-13 May 2016, adopted the draft Resolutions on application of the European Code of Social Security (“Code”), drawn up on the basis of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conclusions. The draft Resolutions would be submitted to the Committee of Ministers for adoption on 6 July 2016. Promotion Seminars on the Code, co-organised with the ILO, had taken place in Zagreb, Croatia on 22-23 September 2015 and Bucharest, Romania on 31 May 2016. Further information was provided by Mr Rakic, correspondent for Serbia, who had taken part in the Seminars on the Code.

The first meeting of the European Platform on Social Cohesion (PECS) was held in Strasbourg on 27-28 June 2016. The Platform had been set up with a view to reinforcing the intergovernmental component of work in the area of social cohesion. Activities would focus on social rights, as guaranteed by the Charter and other relevant instruments. Further information was provided by Mr Dateshidze, correspondent for Georgia, and Mr Paolillo, who had taken part in the PECS meeting.

Finally, Ms Hirschinger drew attention to the new Council of Europe website dedicated to the Charter (www.coe.int/socialcharter) which was launched in December 2015 and provided information on the reorganisation of work in the Department. Activities on MISSCEO and the Code belonged to Division III: “Turin Process, Cooperation and Intergovernmental Activities”, the current Head of which was Mr Brillat. Division 1 “Reporting procedure” and Division II “Collective Complaints” were headed by MM Bopp and Kristensen respectively.

IV. INFORMATION ON MISSCEO

Ms Hirschinger provided information on the work of MISSCEO carried out since the last meeting of the network. The comparative tables, in English and French, and appendices had been published on the website at the end of 2015 (www.coe.int/socialcharter/missceo). The “MISSCEO Info 2015” document on recent trends in national social protection systems, prepared by the Consultant, Professor Paul Schoukens, on the basis of contributions from correspondents, had also been published. With regard to the preparation of the 2016 Edition of MISSCEO, all the updated tables

had been received from correspondents and were undergoing revision by the Consultant. Ms Hirschinger thanked the correspondents and the Consultant for their excellent cooperation.

V. GENERAL COMMENTS ON COMPARABILITY

Mr Schoukens drew attention to the following aspects:

- it was important to follow the correct procedures when introducing updated information into the tables to ensure that corrections appeared in the database;
- when referring to a new law, a brief explanation using key words and principles would make it more meaningful to the external reader than a long quotation. A cross-reference could be made, if the law also appeared in another table;
- the words 'not applicable' should appear if a rule did not apply, to avoid leaving blank cells in the table;
- if flat-rate amounts applied, the amount should be specified and, possibly, the exchange rate to euros;
- all the elements and explanations involved for calculations for benefits should be provided, for example, the way in which capacity and needs are assessed to obtain a 'rating score', as well as the basic principles of the scheme;
- when describing categories, eg early retirement, rather than providing a full/extensive list, an alternative approach would be to indicate the types of groups and provide a summary explanation;
- relevant information should also be included in the appendices to the tables, ie. information on self-employed and the organisational chart.

Mr Schoukens also referred to "Technical Notes" which had been prepared by the ILO to help governments prepare reports under ILO Convention 102 and the Code. As these and other documents contained references to MISSOC and MISSCEO data, it was important to ensure that correct information appeared in the tables and, where applicable, an indication given of minimum and maximum levels or periods.

A discussion was held on aspects which had been raised. The Secretariat would contact correspondents following the meeting to ensure that all the data appeared correctly in the database and check that procedures were properly followed.

VI. CHANGES TO MISSCEO TABLES AND CORRESPONDENTS' MANUAL

MISSCEO (2016) 4

Participants were invited to discuss proposed changes to the structure of MISSCEO table XII "Long-term care", as it appeared in doc MISSCEO (2016) 4, and changes indicated in the draft revised Manual prepared by the Secretariat in the light of modifications introduced by the MISSOC network.

The MISSCEO network found the proposed format for table XII to be an improvement and agreed to apply the new structure in the future. On the basis of the discussions, the Secretariat, in liaison with the Consultant, would prepare an updated version of the revised Manual which would be sent to participants following the meeting with a view to finalising it by the end of the year. The network agreed that the new structure and final version of the Manual would apply to the 2017 edition of MISSCEO.

VII. INFORMATION DOCUMENT ON COORDINATION INSTRUMENTS

MISSCEO (2016) 4

Following on from previous meetings, a model of an analysis table of existing coordination instruments (doc MISSCEO(2016)4) had been sent to correspondents for completion and the information provided was being reviewed by the Consultant. Correspondents who had not yet submitted the analysis table were asked to do so as soon as possible, with a view to finalising them by mid-October. The network agreed to publish the information on the MISSCEO webpage by the end of the year and hold an in-depth discussion on the tables, in working groups, during its next meeting.

VIII. EVOLUTION OF NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Correspondents provided a brief overview of the main developments in their national social protection systems. Themes arising from the presentations included pension reforms which aimed at improving benefits and reducing poverty. Other measures included the introduction of a point system, an increase in the retirement age and new administration methods with a view to improving sustainability of the system. A number of active employment measures aimed to provide sustainable jobs through diversification of the economy, improving opportunities for the self-employed and providing training programmes, particularly aimed at youth and vulnerable groups. Legislative amendments and targeted social assistance projects focused on providing better maternity care, improving the childcare system and promoting the rights of children and disabled persons. Specific allocations were also foreseen for persons who were internally displaced or involved in anti-terroristic operation. Reforms had also been carried out in the area of health care through legislative amendments, modernised systems and programmes in specific areas. Finally, there was a focus on improving the quality of services to the public through the introduction of online services, data exchange and access to E-governmental portals. In some instances, there were very few developments, due to budgetary constraints, and the Consultant observed that there were not so many major reforms in social protection due to political and economic crises.

The Secretariat thanked correspondents for the presentations and said that the Consultant would draw up a document on evolution of national social protection systems for publication on the website at the end of the year, based on the information which had been submitted.

IX. INFORMATION ON MISSOC

Mr Terry Ward, MISSOC Project Director and Ms Loredana Sementini, MISSOC Coordinator, gave a presentation on recent developments in the MISSOC network. With regard to the biannual updating of the MISSOC tables, the July 2015 version was available online, the January 2016 version would soon be published, and the July 2016 update was expected to be online in January 2017. The annual update of the Social Security Guides in English, French, German and the national language, reflecting the situation at 1 January 2016, would be online in the coming months. Information was also provided on methodological work which had the main aim of improving usability of information in the tables.

With regard to the review of Guidelines since July 2015, this concerned the following three areas:

Firstly, the review covered housing benefits, reflecting interest in this subject at the EU level. The aim was to include information on housing-related support in a more coherent, comparable and accessible way, possibly through a new table. A questionnaire, completed by MISSOC correspondents, showed that housing benefits existed in all countries and some were within the scope of social security. However, some difficulties had been identified and before taking further steps, the MISSOC network would await the results of a joint project between the OECD and European Commission on access to decent affordable housing and social policies for housing;

Secondly, the review concerned Table VII 'survivors' benefits' as well as Table VI 'old-age' due to the close link. A particular concern was to check whether sufficient information was included to identify the effect on the gender pension gap. The changes discussed included two new items in Table VII on

'Indexation' and 'Cumulation with earnings from work', as well as editing which applied to both tables with a view to improving clarity;

The third area under review concerned Table IX 'Family benefits', which led to reconsideration of Table IV 'Maternity/Paternity benefits'. The revision required a review of the structure of the tables and the division of items between them. A range of aspects had been discussed, such as the distinction between maternity/paternity leave and parental leave, the clarification of childcare allowances and the possible inclusion of additional summary information, for example, tax concessions and in-work benefits. The definition of categories and the level of detail to be included were important to ensure the completeness and comparability of the information. A future review would focus on information on social protection of self-employed, which appeared in a separate document.

The Secretariat thanked Mr Ward and Ms Sementini for the very interesting presentation. A discussion was held on a number of aspects arising from the presentation and relating to changes in the MISSCEO tables in line with MISSOC.

X. COMPARATIVE EXERCISE

The comparative exercise concerned Chapters II "Health care", III "Sickness" and IV "Maternity/Paternity". Correspondents were split into groups and discussed information contained in these tables which had been extracted from the 2015 database, with a view to comparison.

The first group ('the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia', Turkey and Ukraine) referred to long lists of articles and laws which could possibly be summarised. Concerning basic principles of health care, some countries provided information on voluntary supplementary insurance and the type of remuneration of doctors, whilst others did not. Presentation of information also varied under 'waiting periods' and 'basic principles' under maternity, reflecting the different schemes. Furthermore, the inclusion of information on the entitlement of fathers to leave was not consistent.

The second group (Montenegro, the Russian Federation and Serbia) said that as the systems were similar, the differences could be relatively easily identified. It was noted with interest that the Russian Federation had long lists of laws and, in this respect, some information appeared to be missing with regard to maternity. The table for the Russian Federation also included a lump sum as a birth grant which could also appear under family benefit. Attention was drawn to maternity rights in cases of adoption which were not included in one table, and varying approaches to information on temporary disability benefit.

The third group (Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova) observed different characteristics of the systems. In Georgia, social protection was state financed and there were no social insurance schemes as in the other countries. In Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova, health care was covered by mandatory health insurance schemes. Temporary incapacity due to sickness was financed by the employer in Georgia and by insurance schemes, related to earnings, in the other countries. Moreover, in the case of Azerbaijan, it was subject to taxation. There were also differences in the financing of medical institutions, provision of medicine and maternity/paternity leave. The table for Republic of Moldova had a long list of statutory laws which could be presented in a slightly shorter way.

The fourth group (Albania, Armenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina) observed that the lists of legislation for Armenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina could possibly be summarised. Although the basic principles of the health schemes were similar, there were variations in qualifying periods/conditions and only Albania provided for the possibility of voluntary insurance. There were similar procedures with regard to the provision of pharmaceutical products, although differences in the items covered. Waiting periods and benefits varied with regard to sickness benefit and although the principles for maternity/paternity schemes were similar, different durations of leave and amounts of benefits applied.

A discussion was held on a number of aspects raised during the comparative exercise.

XI. PREPARATION OF THE 2016 EDITION

MISSCEO(2016)5

The preparation of the 2016 tables, including the deadlines for the various stages of production, was confirmed as follows:

- The information in the tables should reflect the situation on 1 January 2016.
- The MISSCEO correspondents would revise their national contributions in the light of the discussions held at the meeting and the consultant's comments, by 23 September 2016;
- The final version of national contributions following any further revision by the correspondents would be submitted by the consultant to the Secretariat by mid-October 2016;
- The data would be sent for translation into French in October 2016;
- The English version of the data would be entered by the Secretariat into the Council of Europe database in December 2016;
- The French version of the data would be entered into the database in December 2016/January 2017.

XII. PLANNING OF THE 2017 EDITION

MISSCEO(2016)6

The following time schedule for the preparation of the 2017 edition was agreed:

- The information in the tables should reflect the situation on 1 January 2017.
- The Secretariat would request the national contributions in January 2017;
- The MISSCEO correspondents would update their national contributions by 7 April 2017;
- The consultant's comments on the national contributions would be ready by 19 May 2017;
- The 19th MISSCEO meeting would take place on 6-7 July 2017;
- The MISSCEO correspondents would revise their national contributions in the light of the discussions held at the annual meeting and the comments of the consultant, by 22 September 2017;
- The final version of national contributions would be ready after supervision by the consultant and the Secretariat by mid-October 2017;
- The data would be sent for translation into French in October 2017;
- The English version of the data would be entered into the Council of Europe database by December 2017;
- The French data would be uploaded in December 2017/January 2018.

XIII. DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The 19th meeting of MISSCEO was scheduled for 6-7 July 2017 in Strasbourg.

APPENDIX I

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APPENDIX II

AGENDA

THURSDAY, 30 JUNE 2016

- I. OPENING OF THE MEETING
- II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA
- III. INFORMATION FROM THE SECRETARIAT
- IV. INFORMATION ON MISSCEO
- V. GENERAL COMMENTS ON COMPARABILITY
- VI. CHANGES TO THE MISSCEO TABLES AND CORRESPONDENTS' MANUAL
- VII. INFORMATION DOCUMENT ON COORDINATION INSTRUMENTS
- VIII. EVOLUTION OF NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

FRIDAY, 1 JULY 2016

- IX. INFORMATION ON MISSOC
- X. COMPARATIVE EXERCISE
- XI. PREPARATION OF THE 2016 EDITION
- XII. PLANNING OF THE 2017 EDITION
- XIII. ANY OTHER BUSINESS
- XIV. DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING