

**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, 24 July 2018

MISSCEO(2018)4

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

**20<sup>th</sup> Meeting**  
Strasbourg, 21 June 2018

**MEETING REPORT**

## **I. OPENING OF THE MEETING**

The meeting was opened by Ms Hirschinger, Coordinator of MISSCEO, who welcomed participants. She invited Ms Cebotaru, Correspondent for the Republic of Moldova, who was new to the network, to introduce herself.

The list of participants appears in Appendix I.

## **II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

MISSCEO(2018)1 rev

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

## **III. INFORMATION FROM THE SECRETARIAT**

Ms Hirschinger provided information on recent developments at the Council of Europe which were of relevance to the MISSCEO network.

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe had participated in the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017, which was the occasion for the proclamation of the European Social Pillar by the Council of the EU, European Parliament and the Commission. During the discussions at the Summit, the SG highlighted the importance of the European Social Charter with regard to guaranteeing social rights. The Conclusions 2017 of the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) concerning the thematic group “Health, social security and social protection” of the European Social Charter were published in January 2018 and could be consulted on the website ([www.coe.int/socialcharter](http://www.coe.int/socialcharter)). The Governmental Committee of the European Social Charter and European Code of Social Security met on 23-27 April 2018, and adopted draft Resolutions on application of the Code by Contracting Parties which would be submitted for adoption by the Committee of Ministers, and discussed selected Conclusions of non-conformity with regard to the Charter.

Concerning changes in the Secretariat: Christos Giakoumopoulos had been appointed Director General of Human Rights and Rule of Law in 2017, taking over from Philippe Boillat who retired; Christophe Poirel was due to start in the function of Director of the Human Rights Directorate; Régis Brillat would soon start in his new function of Executive Secretary of the Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) and Head of the CPT Secretariat; and Jan Malinowski would be replacing R. Brillat as Executive Secretary of the ECSR and Head of the Department of the European Social Charter.

Regarding developments in the work of MISSCEO, the 2017 tables had been published online as well as the document providing an overview of trends in social protection systems in the MISSCEO countries, prepared by the consultant on the basis of information provided by correspondents. Concerning the 2018 edition of MISSCEO, most of the tables had been received and were undergoing revision by the consultant. Cooperation with the EU's Mutual Information on Social Protection (MISSOC) network had continued, and the MISSOC Secretariat would be present at the meeting to present information on recent developments.

Ms Hirschinger thanked all the participants for their excellent work for the MISSCEO network

## **IV. GENERAL COMMENTS ON COMPARABILITY**

Professor Paul Schoukens, Consultant, provided comments on the following aspects:

- a number of issues had arisen related to the structural changes to the tables in 2018 and problems of providing relevant information. Some difficulties were also encountered by new correspondents and attention was drawn to the importance, when updating the tables, to copy the whole text in the field concerned into the next column, and then indicate the changes to be made;

- correspondents were advised not to introduce an element of doubt into the text – either specify the provisions that exist or do not fill in the field, for example, by indicating that the information is not available;
- when information of an introductory nature was required, for example under “basic principles” or “personal scope”, it was important to be brief in order to give an overall picture, and provide the details in the subsequent categories;
- there were a number of challenges when reporting on “maternity/paternity”, “paternal” and “child care” benefits, as they were often linked, and attention was drawn to the importance of using cross-references, if the information appeared elsewhere;
- moreover, regarding “maternity/paternity” benefits, it was useful to explain the circumstances in which the benefit is paid, for example, if paternity benefits are only paid upon death of the mother;
- a number of problems had arisen when explaining care and services, such as “residential care”, and providing information on “cost-sharing” and “user-choice”, and correspondents were reminded of the importance of ensuring that the relevant details are provided;
- when reporting on new categories, for example “cumulation with other social security benefits and earnings from work” and “arduous work”, correspondents were asked to be particularly careful and provide precise information.

Mr Schoukens reminded participants that it was useful, when filling in the tables, to put themselves in the place of an external reader who did not have any knowledge of their social security systems.

## **V. EVOLUTION OF NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS**

Correspondents presented information on developments in social protection systems which covered a range of themes. With regard to pension reforms, the age of retirement had been increased in many countries and a number of improvements had been made including the introduction of a minimum pension, more efficient computerised systems and measures to ensure equity and sustainability. Moreover, the indexation of pensions had led to increases in benefits, and pension rights had been improved for particular categories, such as miners and the military. In the area of child protection, developments included more favourable conditions for child allowances, financial support to children in need, and the policy of moving orphan children out of institutional care into a family environment. Measures were also taken to extend the application of maternity benefit to cover self-employed women and those working with different types of contract. With regard to persons with disabilities, there were improvements in coverage, administrative procedures, rehabilitation and personal assistance. Measures were also aimed at alleviating poverty, through an increase in the minimum wage and improved IT systems to target vulnerable categories. Furthermore, support was provided for the integration of unemployed persons into the labour market, for example, through financial incentives to employers and improving employment opportunities for internally displaced persons. A number of developments were also reported with regard to bilateral coordination agreements in the field of social security.

The secretariat thanked the correspondents for their presentations and reminded them to send a written version of the texts in order for the consultant to prepare a document providing an overview of the evolution of national social protection systems which would be published on the website. The consultant underlined the importance of providing information on changes in the law, as the document would focus mainly on legislative developments.

## **VI. UPDATE OF THE INTRODUCTIONS TO THE TABLES SUMMARISING THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEMS**

The secretariat distributed the texts on “Introductions” to the tables, which provided a summary of the

principal characteristics of the social security system in each MISSCEO country and appeared on the website. She recalled that the texts had been finalised in 2013 and, at that time, the network had agreed to update the texts once every five years. The consultant underlined that the main objective of the texts is to provide an overall view of each social security system as an introduction for the reader, as the tables focused on more detailed information.

After discussion, the network agreed to aim to update the texts by the end of the year. The secretariat would send the texts to the correspondents, accompanied by the appendices which concerned the organisation of the social protection system and information on the self-employed. Correspondents were invited to indicate any changes required and provide the secretariat with updated versions for putting on the website.

## **VII. UPDATING OF THE MISSCEO TABLES AND CORRESPONDENTS' MANUAL**

The secretariat had prepared a revised draft version of the Correspondents' Manual, which reflected developments in the MISSOC network relating to Table X "Unemployment", and included a new category on "unemployment assistance". The secretariat recalled that, currently in MISSCEO, information is provided on both "unemployment insurance benefits" and "unemployment assistance" in the same category. New categories had also been introduced, in line with MISSOC, concerning specific arrangements for young unemployed, long-term unemployed and redundancy compensation. The draft version of the Manual also contained a number of other changes to better clarify the information to be provided in existing categories.

The network discussed whether it would be appropriate to adopt a similar approach as MISSOC, and reflected on whether the schemes mentioned in the new categories existed in the social security systems of the MISSCEO countries. The consultant pointed out that additional reporting would only make sense if specific schemes existed, otherwise there would be a risk of delineation with information that is not appropriate to the tables. The MISSOC secretariat, present at the meeting, also provided some further explanations of the introduction of the new categories.

The correspondents expressed the view that there were no specific schemes in MISSCEO countries which would justify the introduction of the new categories, and decided it would make more sense to continue to report following the current structure of the tables. The participants discussed a number of changes to the text of the draft Manual in the current structure, in line with MISSOC. The secretariat would prepare a revised draft version of the Manual and send it to the consultant and correspondents following the meeting.

## **VIII. INFORMATION ON MISSOC**

The MISSOC Secretariat, represented by Mr Terry Ward and Ms Loredana Sementini, provided an overview of work carried out since the last meeting of MISSCEO. The January 2018 update of the MISSOC tables was being finalised and would be online by mid-July. The update of the Social Security Guides (situation at 1 January 2018) was expected to be online by the end of July. Regarding methodological work on the Guidelines, Table X (Unemployment) had been finalised and the new Guidelines applied as from the January 2018 update. The revision to Guidelines for Table XI (Guaranteed minimum resources) would be implemented as from the July 2018 update, and draft versions of the Guidelines for Table V (Invalidity) were undergoing revision.

Mr Ward said that the aim of the revision of the Guidelines was to make the information required clearer and to ensure completeness as well as comparability. He explained the procedure for the revision, the different stages involved, and some general points. Concerning Table XI (Guaranteed minimum resources), the introduction to the table had been greatly extended, and a clear distinction drawn between general schemes applying to everyone and specific schemes applying to particular groups. He pointed out that the focus of Table XI was on general schemes. With regard to Table V (Invalidity), an introduction had been added, the terminology had been clarified regarding both incapacity/capacity for work, new questions had been introduced concerning assessment criteria/procedures, and a number of changes made to clarify the information under

“Return to active life”. Mr Ward also provided detailed information on a number of specific developments with regard to Tables XI and V.

The secretariat thanked Mr Ward and Ms Sementini for the very interesting powerpoint presentation which would be sent to the correspondents, and the network held a discussion on various aspects of the information provided.

## **IX. COMPARATIVE EXERCISE**

The comparative exercise concerned Table XII (Long-term care) and correspondents were split into groups to discuss the information extracted from the 2017 database, with a view to comparison.

The first group (Albania, Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova) observed similarities in the information provided under “basic principles” and “risk covered”, although the table for Albania provided more extensive information in these categories. With regard to the benefits for dependent persons, generally speaking the information was of a similar nature and relatively easy to compare. Some differences were pointed out in the organisation of the services provided, as one table indicated the responsibility of the relevant Ministry, whilst the others mentioned the key role of the municipalities. With regard to cash benefits, differences were observed between the schemes although, in all three countries, the benefits were not subject to taxation.

The second group (Montenegro, Russian Federation and Serbia) mentioned some difficulties in comparison of the systems, given the size and scale of social protection schemes in the Russian Federation compared with the other two countries, which necessitated long lists of federal laws as well as more detailed bi-laws. Apart from this main difference, the tables were generally clear and provided the information required. Some issues were identified with regard to providing information in the right place, and the need to further clarify some text in order to provide a fuller picture. Discussion had taken place between the correspondents with regard to the information to be provided on informal carers and the relevant differences between the legal systems.

The third group (“the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Turkey and Ukraine) observed difficulties in comparison due to differences in the amounts of information provided, in particular certain categories where the level of detail varied greatly. Moreover, due to the different schemes, the approach to providing information was not always consistent. A number of issues had been identified with regard to providing information in line with the explanations provided in the correspondents’ Manual. Moreover, some of the information provided concerning informal carers would be reviewed by the competent authorities.

A discussion was held on a number of aspects raised.

## **X. PLANNING OF THE 2018 AND 2019 EDITIONS**

MISSCEO(2018)3

1. The following time schedule for the preparation of the 2018 edition was agreed:
  - The MISSCEO correspondents would aim to revise their national contributions in the light of the discussions held at the meeting and the consultant’s comments, by 21 September 2018;
  - The final version of national contributions would be submitted by the consultant to the secretariat by 12 October 2018;
  - The MISSCEO 2018 data would be sent for translation into French in October 2018;
  - The English version of the data would be entered by the secretariat into the Council of Europe database by December 2018;

- The French version of the data would be entered into the database in December 2018/January 2019.
2. The following time schedule for the preparation of the 2019 edition was proposed. The information in the tables should reflect the situation on 1 January 2019:
- The secretariat would request the national contributions in January 2019;
  - The MISSCEO correspondents would update their national contributions by mid-April 2019;
  - The comments on the national contributions would be ready by mid-June 2019;
  - The 21<sup>th</sup> MISSCEO meeting would take place on 4 July 2019 (tbc);
  - 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 mid-September 2019
  - The final version of national contributions would be ready after supervision by the consultant and the secretariat by mid-October 2019;
  - The data would be sent for translation into French in October 2019;
  - The English version of the data would be entered into the Council of Europe database by December 2019;
  - The French data would be uploaded in December 2019/January 2020.

## **XII. DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of MISSCEO was scheduled for 4 July 2019 (date and venue tbc).

## **APPENDIX I**

### **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS/ LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS**

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## **APPENDIX II**

### **AGENDA**

#### **Morning** (9:30-12:30)

- I. OPENING OF THE MEETING
- II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (MISSCEO(2018)1rev)
- III. INFORMATION FROM THE SECRETARIAT
- IV. GENERAL COMMENTS ON COMPARABILITY
- V. EVOLUTION OF NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS
- VI. UPDATE OF THE INTRODUCTIONS TO THE TABLES SUMMARISING THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEMS
- VII. UPDATING OF THE MISSCEO TABLES AND CORRESPONDENTS' MANUAL

#### **Afternoon** (14:00-17:30)

- VII. UPDATING OF THE MISSCEO TABLES AND CORRESPONDENTS' MANUAL (cont.)
- VIII. INFORMATION ON MISSOC
- IX. COMPARATIVE EXERCISE
- X. PLANNING OF 2018 AND 2019 EDITIONS OF MSSCEO
- XI. ANY OTHER BUSINESS
- XII. DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING