



LATVIAN EU-PRESIDENCY WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE FIRST HALF OF 2015

On 6 January 2014, the Latvian EU-Presidency presented its work programme for the first half of 2015. The document is divided into two main parts. The first part entitled “A Europe for its People” gives a general overview indicating the 3 main priorities of the Presidency: Competitive Europe / Digital Europe / Engaged Europe. The second part gives a field-by-field description of the actions aimed to be carried out during the six-month period within the various Council configurations.

After an analysis of the work programme, it appears as mainly aligned to the Commission 2015 work programme (see the Secretariat note of 14th January 2015). This is partly due to the fact that the rotating EU-Presidency has to a large extent an organisational role, whose duties mostly consist in preparing and chairing the various Council meetings in its different compositions. Furthermore, it is a general practice that each EU-Presidency links its objectives closely to the Commission agenda.

EFCI members will find below a summary of the main initiatives of interest for our industry:

I. Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO-Council)

1.) Undeclared work (page 19, paragraph 5)

The Latvian EU-Presidency aims to attach priority to the Commission proposal for an EU Platform to fight against undeclared work. After its publication on 9 April 2014, the proposal was forwarded to the Parliament and Council in order to start the co-legislative procedure. Within the Parliament, the Employment and Social Affairs Committee (EMPL) is currently examining the proposal in view to adopt a position, and then start the trilogue negotiations with the Commission and the Council (probably in spring 2015). At Council level on 16 October, the Employment and Social Policy Council (EPSCO) reached a common approach based on two main principles: the participation of the Member States to the platform will be mandatory with a non-exhaustive list of future initiatives to be carried out, but the engagement in these activities will be voluntary (see our last Secretariat note of 15th December 2014). In this context, the Latvian EU-Presidency aims to reach a first reading agreement with the Parliament in order to establish this Platform before the summer.

2.) Health and Safety at Work (page 20, paragraph 2)

The Latvian EU-Presidency considers as essential to improve Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and to reduce the number of accidents in the workplace. It therefore stresses the need of implementing the new EU Strategic Framework on OSH for the period 2014-2020 (see the Secretariat note of 10th July 2014). Finally, it intends to organise a conference on OSH in April 2015 and a meeting of the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee in May 2015 in order to strengthen the efforts of the Member States in this area.

II. Competitiveness (COMPET-Council)

1.) Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (page 22, paragraph 4 and page 23, paragraph 1)

In June 2008, the Small Business Act (SBA) introduced the “Think Small First” principle and established an action plan to stimulate the growth of SME’s and to encourage them to create jobs. Since 2008, the Commission and the Member States implemented actions to reduce administrative burden and ease SMEs’ access to finance, and already reviewed the SBA in 2011 (see the Secretariat note of 4th March 2011). In September 2014, the Commission launched a consultation in view to revise again the SBA. Based on the results of this consultation, the Commission will present a proposal for a new SBA in the first half of 2015. In this context, the Latvian EU-Presidency aims to monitor the actions carried out during the SBA review by focusing on the access to funding for SME’s.

EFCI members will find herewith the work programme of the Latvian EU-Presidency, only available in English language. For further information, you are kindly invited to visit the dedicated website of this Presidency via this link: <https://eu2015.lv/the-presidency-and-eu/priorities-of-the-latvian-presidency>

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