



Research and Information Service: European Commission Work Programme 2016 - NIAR 568 - 2015

Table 1: Legislative and Non-Legislative Proposals

| Title | Current stage of progress | Description | Perceived Relevance to Northern Ireland | Current Prioritisation | Indicative date of when Committee can become involved | Any Identified Subsidiarity Issues? | NI Executive Priority (2014/15) |
|-------------------------------|--|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| New Skills Agenda for Europe | No information has been found regarding the proposal which suggests that work is still underway. Estimated date of adoption unknown. | The Agenda aims at promoting skills development through, including the mutual recognition of qualifications, supporting vocational training and higher education and reaping the full potential of digital jobs. The New Skills Agenda will promote life-long investment in people, from vocational training and higher education through to digital and high-tech expertise and the life skills needed for citizens' active engagement in changing workplaces and societies. Following a search of the available information it has not been possible to identify what actions the Agenda will take. | What form the actions under the Agenda will take are not yet known. However, skills development is an important matter for the Northern Ireland (NI) economy, especially in the area of vocational training (such as DEL's ongoing reform of Apprenticeships), Higher Education (particularly following the launch of the 'Big Conversation'). Increased skills development in NI would help tackle a number of issues including the productivity gap. As such any actions arising from this agenda, especially if legislative, would be of importance to NI. The Commission Work Programme (CWP) was only adopted on the 27 October, with searches on the New Skills Agenda for Europe providing no additional information. | Medium to High: However, this may be subject to change as a result of the lack of information currently available on the proposal. | Unknown at this stage - the EU CWP was only adopted on the 27 October, with searches on the New Skills Agenda for Europe providing no additional information. | Not at this time. | C1: Provide timely and accurate advice to Ministers and the Assembly on European policy and funding programmes. |
| New Start for Working Parents | Public consultation launched on the 18 November 2015 on how to improve work-life balance and reduce obstacles to women's participation in the labour market. The consultation will be open until 17 February 2016. Estimated date of adoption unknown. | This proposal involves a set of measures to better address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working parents and support the participation of women in the labour market. The main reason behind the initiative is to address the low participation of women in the labour market by modernising and adapting the current EU legal and policy framework to allow for parents with children or those with dependent relatives to better balance caring and professional responsibilities. The Commission will invite the Social Partners to assess the current directives on Parental Leave, Fixed-term and Part-time work to see if they can be updated. A public consultation will be also be carried out. In addition, the Women on Boards Directive should be adopted in 2016. | The EU Commission states that reducing the pay gap and increasing the number of women in employment would increase women's economic independence and reducing their exposure to risk of poverty and social exclusion, help employers by the attraction and retention of workers with care responsibilities, reduction of absenteeism, and increase productivity of workers and boost the economy. All of these would be of significant benefit to Northern Ireland. In addition, women form the majority of lone parents and carers, two of the three groups being targeted by the NI Economic Inactivity strategy. As such these initiatives could help the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) meet its targets on economic inactivity and support women both into, and in, work. | Medium: The introduction of more women to the labour market would have a positive impact on the NI economy. | No deadline date is listed in the associated roadmap. However, consultations are currently ongoing. | None identified. The EU Commission found that actions was necessary at the EU level as: " <i>without a common framework guaranteeing a competitive level playing field, individual Member States may hesitate to regulate in this area on their own, as it could influence their relative competitiveness compared to other Member States.</i> " | C1: Provide timely and accurate advice to Ministers and the Assembly on European policy and funding programmes. |

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| Labour Mobility Package | No information has been found regarding the proposal which suggests that work is still underway. | This initiative consists of: <i>A Communication on labour mobility</i> : This will be designed to support mobility across the EU; <i>A targeted revision of the Directive on the posting of workers</i> : The Posting of Workers Directive (Directive 96/71/EC) covers a wide range of issues such as maximum work periods and minimum rest periods, minimum paid annual leave, minimum rates of pay, and equal treatment between men and women; and, <i>The revision of Regulations on social security coordination</i> : Based on previous CWP data, the purpose of the initiative is to increase the chances of jobseekers to reintegrate in the labour market and ensure that mobility does not have a negative impact on their social security rights, namely long-term care and unemployment guarantee. | Labour mobility is a key aspect of EU integration. As NI shares a land border with another EU state the communication may have an impact such as making it easier for NI domiciled workers to work across the EU. To what extent it will impact is not known at this stage. As the only UK region to share a land border with another EU State, the Posting of Workers Directive may have some additional impact in NI. To what extent, however, is not known at this stage. The Coordination of social security systems in has been legislated for by the EU since 1971. However, due to changes made to Member States Social Security Systems and court judgments which have established precedent the Regulations are in need of revision. The impact in NI could be expected to be minor. To what extent, however, is not known at this stage. | Medium: However, this may be subject to change as a result of the lack of information currently available on the proposal. | The proposal appears to still be at an early stage of the development. | Not at this time. | R2: Raise the region's positive profile by transferring knowledge and learning through participation in formal and informal European networks and partnerships. R8: Implement the European Employment Service reform programme in conjunction with the European Commission and the Department for Work and Pensions. |
| Follow-up to Single Market Strategy | No information has been found regarding the proposal which suggests that work is still underway. Estimated date of adoption unknown. | The Single Market Strategy will be taken forward through a number of proposals. Of note to DEL are the initiatives on the regulation of professions. A regulated profession is when access to a profession and exercise of it is subject to the possession of a specific professional qualification. In the 2015 Work Programme the Commission took steps to increase the cross-border mobility of professions, with a number of professions initially added to a database which included equivalencies in different jurisdictions. | On the 28 October 2015 the European Commission published "Upgrading the Single Market: more opportunities for people and business", which seeks to develop targeted actions in a number of areas. Included within this are actions targeted at the Regulated Professions with the Commission proposing specific actions to improve access to, and the exercise of, regulated professions at national level and across the EU. These actions will identify concrete reform needs for specific Member States. This exercise will consider all issues relating to access to and the exercise of, regulated professions. As these actions do not appear to have been published yet, it is not possible to state what the impact will be on NI. | Low to Medium: The Single Market is an important aspect of the EU and as such any alterations to it could have an impact in NI. However, this may be subject to change as a result of the lack of information currently available on the proposal. | Unknown at this stage - the EU CWP was only adopted on the 27 October, with searches on relevant initiatives providing no additional information. | Not at this time. | R2: Raise the region's positive profile by transferring knowledge and learning through participation in formal and informal European networks and partnerships. |
| Pillar of Social Rights | This is still at an early stage of development. The CWP states that there will be an EU wide consultation and a High Level Expert Group appointed in Summer 2016. Estimated date of adoption unknown. | The initiative will address gaps in existing legislation and identify common principles and reference benchmarks with a view to a greater convergence of employment and social performance over time. The Commission will pursue two complementary work strands: Modernising and addressing the gaps in existing social policy legislation to take account of today's work environment and to ensure that new models of work maintain a fair balance in the relationship between employers and workers; and, Identifying social benchmarks, notably as concerns the flexicurity concept, built on best practices in the Member States with a view to upwards convergence, in particular in the euro area, as regards the functioning of the labour market, skills and social protection. | This initiative is still at a very early stage of development. As such it is not possible to state what the impact will be on Northern Ireland. However, it covers a broad area regarding employment including the functioning of the labour market, skills and social protection, all of which are areas of importance to the future well-being of the NI economy | Medium: This could include changes to the labour market. However, the prioritisation may be subject to change as a result of the lack of information currently available on the proposal. | Unknown at this stage - however consultations have yet to take place suggesting it is still at a very early stage of development. | Not at this time. | C1: Provide timely and accurate advice to Ministers and the Assembly on European policy and funding programmes. |

