



parleu2018bg.bg

Parliamentary Dimension  
Bulgarian Presidency of the Council  
of the European Union

## Meeting of the LIX COSAC 17 – 19 June 2018, Sofia

### Background Information

#### Session III: European Pillar of Social Rights – building a more inclusive and fairer Europe

**Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union** states that one of the aims of the Union is to promote the well-being of its peoples. It also calls for sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment.

**According to Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union**, the EU, in defining and implementing its policies and activities, shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion and a high level of education, training and protection of human health.

**The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**, first proclaimed at the Nice European Council on 7 December 2000, safeguards and promotes a number of fundamental principles that are essential for the European social model.

In his State of the Union Address on 9 September 2015, the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker proposed the establishment of a European Pillar of Social Rights<sup>1</sup>, which would take account of the changing realities and latest developments in Europe's societies. Following a broad public consultation in 2016, involving citizens, social partners, civil society, Member States and EU Institutions,<sup>2</sup> the Commission put forward its proposal for a European Pillar of Social Rights on 26 April 2017. At the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council of 23 October in Luxembourg, EU Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs came to an

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-15-5614\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-15-5614_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> On 8 March 2016, the Commission presented a first outline of the European Pillar of Social Rights and launched a public consultation. The Commission received more than 16,500 online replies and nearly 200 position papers. The consultation culminated in a concluding Conference "Going Forward Together" on 23 January 2017. As part of the consultation, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on the Pillar on 19 January 2017 (2016/2095(INI)). The European Economic and Social Committee adopted an opinion on 25 January 2017 (SOC/542-01902-00-01-ac). The Committee of the Regions adopted an Opinion on 11 October 2016 (CDR 2868/2016)



parleu2018bg.bg

Parliamentary Dimension  
Bulgarian Presidency of the Council  
of the European Union

agreement to sign the Proclamation of the Pillar during the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth on 17 November 2017 in Gothenburg.<sup>3</sup>

The European Parliament also called for a solid European Pillar of Social Rights to reinforce social rights and deliver a positive impact on people's lives in the short and medium term and enable support for European construction in the 21st century.<sup>4</sup> Leaders of 27 Member States have stressed that economic and social insecurity needed to be addressed as a matter of priority and called for the creation of a promising economic future for all, safeguards for our way of life and the provision of better opportunities for youth.<sup>5</sup> Together with the leaders of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission, they made a commitment to work towards a social Europe in the Rome agenda. That commitment was based on the principles of sustainable growth and the promotion of economic and social progress, cohesion and convergence, while upholding the internal market integrity. The leaders also called for a Union taking into account the diversity of national systems and the key role of social partners; a Union which would promote equality between women and men as well as rights and equal opportunities for all; a Union which would fight unemployment, discrimination, social exclusion and poverty; a Union where young people received the best education and training and could study and find jobs across the continent; a Union which would preserve our cultural heritage and promote cultural diversity.<sup>6</sup>

The establishment of the European Pillar of Social Rights was part of the broader debate about the future of Europe, launched by the Commission's White Paper of 1 March 2017.<sup>7</sup> The question of how to strengthen and modernise the European social model in the face of fundamental changes – such as new technologies, globalisation and demographic ageing – is one of the key questions put forward by the White Paper, as well as in the Commission's Reflection Papers on the social dimension of Europe<sup>8</sup> and on harnessing globalisation.<sup>9</sup>

The European Pillar of Social Rights can be regarded both as a milestone in building and consolidating social Europe, and as a reference point on the road to Sibiu, where EU Leaders will meet in May 2019 to draw conclusions on the EU's future, ahead of the next European Parliament elections.

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.government.se/government-policy/social-summit-for-fair-jobs-and-growth/>

<sup>4</sup> European Parliament resolution of 19 January 2017 on a European Pillar of Social Rights (2016/2095(INI)).

<sup>5</sup> The Bratislava Declaration of 16 September 2016

<sup>6</sup> The Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017

<sup>7</sup> COM(2017) 2025

<sup>8</sup> COM(2017) 206.

<sup>9</sup> COM(2017)240



parleu2018bg.bg

Parliamentary Dimension  
Bulgarian Presidency of the Council  
of the European Union

The European Pillar of Social Rights<sup>10</sup> was designed as a compass for a renewed process of upward convergence towards better working and living conditions in the European Union. It sets out twenty essential principles and rights in the areas of equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; and social protection and inclusion. The European Council of 14 December 2017 endorsed the conclusions of the Social Summit and underlined that the European Pillar of Social Rights should be implemented at both Union and Member State level, with due regard to their respective competences, taking due account of different socio-economic environments and the diversity of national systems, including the role of social partners, and in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. It also invited the Commission to propose appropriate monitoring.<sup>11</sup>

On the 13 March 2018, the European Commission published a Communication “Monitoring the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights”<sup>12</sup> as a response to that request and also outlined the way forward.

According to the Commission Communication from 13 March 2018, *“the European Semester of policy coordination provides an appropriate tool for monitoring progress in key areas covered by the European Pillar of Social Rights.”* As part of the European Semester, three new elements will be added to help monitoring the implementation of the Pillar: 1) mainstreaming the priorities of the Pillar in the European Semester while selecting themes for detailed reporting on an annual basis: the principles and rights enshrined in the Pillar will be taken into account throughout the European Semester in monitoring, comparing and assessing the progress made; 2) providing technical assistance, promoting benchmarking and exchanging good practices: the European Semester offers a forum for dialogue with stakeholders, exchanging experience and strengthening mutual learning among Member States with a view to supporting upward convergence towards the best performers; 3) assessing and monitoring performances with the help of the new Social Scoreboard.<sup>13</sup> Its role is to help screen the performances of Member States in the employment and social field along the various dimensions of the Pillar. It was used, for the first time, to help inform and deepen the analysis in the 2018 Joint Employment Report.

---

<sup>10</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32204/14-final-conclusions-rev1-en.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-monitoring-implementation-european-pillar-social-rights-march2018\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-monitoring-implementation-european-pillar-social-rights-march2018_en.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/social-scoreboard-european-semester-monitoring-eu-member-states-performance-under-european-pillar-social-rights\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/social-scoreboard-european-semester-monitoring-eu-member-states-performance-under-european-pillar-social-rights_en)



parleu2018bg.bg

Parliamentary Dimension  
Bulgarian Presidency of the Council  
of the European Union

**According to the findings in the 29<sup>th</sup> Bi – Annual COSAC Report**, the vast majority of Parliaments/Chambers have discussed the European Pillar of Social Rights. When it comes to pointing out the principles of the Pillar, which are deemed most important in achieving its goals, the access to education, training and life-long learning, together with equal opportunities, social protection and unemployment benefits are considered most essential. As for the rating of the most pressing issue that the Pillar could address, the social consequences of the financial crisis: poverty, social exclusion, inequalities and unemployment come first. The overwhelming majority of respondents have agreed that there was a need for more coordination of Member States' social policies at EU-level.