

Consultation on the European Pillar of Social Rights

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Welcome to the European Commission's online public consultation on the "European Pillar of Social Rights".

Are our social rights fit for the 21st century? The Pillar will identify a number of essential principles to address the challenges in the field of employment and social policies.

We want to involve everyone in shaping the European Pillar of Social Rights. We welcome contributions from citizens, social partners, organisations and public authorities, so have your say!

Please submit your contribution below until the end of 2016.

I. Questions for the identification of the respondent

*** Are you replying as an individual or as an organisation?**

- Individual
- Organisation

What is the type of your organisation?

- Business
- EU level organisation
- National level organisation

Your national level organisation is a(n)

- NGO
- Trade Union
- Employers organisation
- Think tank/academia
- National administration
- Regional/local administration
- Other

*** Name of your organisation or institution:**

500 character(s) maximum

Die Armutskonferenz, Austrian Anti Poverty Network

*** Respondent's first name:**

Martina

*** Respondent's surname:**

Brandstätter

*** Respondent's email address:**

office@armutskonferenz.at

*** Postal address of your organisation or institution:**

500 character(s) maximum

Die Armutskonferenz
Herklotzgasse 21/3
1150 Wien

Country

For individuals: country of residence.

For organisations: country where the organisation is based or country where the organisation's headquarters are.

Austria

Register ID number (if you/your organisation is registered in the Transparency register):

If you would like to register, please refer to the following webpage to see how to proceed : <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/info/homePage.do>

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*** Your reply:**

- Can be published with your personal information** (I consent to publication of all information in my contribution and I declare that none of it is under copyright restrictions that prevent publication)
- Can be published in an anonymous way** (I consent to publication of all information in my contribution except my name/the name of my organisation and I declare that none of it is under copyright restrictions that prevent publication)
- Cannot be published - keep it confidential** (The contribution will not be published, but will be used internally within the Commission)

II. Questions for the consultation

The Commission invites all interested parties to reply to the questions set out in the questionnaire below, together with any additional comments, by 31 December 2016. (*See also [Commission communication "Launching a consultation on a European Pillar of Social Rights", COM\(2016\) 127 final](#)*)

On the social situation and EU social "acquis"

1. What do you see as most pressing employment and social priorities?

2000 character(s) maximum

- legal and secure equality in access to social resources, education and work
- active combat against poverty and discrimination
- combat against unequal distribution of wealth (a fair income distribution with focus on the elimination of the growing massive gap we experience since the crisis - a very small group of people gain enormously high incomes parallel to the phenomenon that a great mass of people experience social precariousness and material descent, often caused by precarious work situations -working poor)
- social rights as a fundament of the EU: social rights are to ensure the full and active inclusion and participation of all throughout the lifecycle
- advancement of the member states through the EU parliament in strengthening and implementing social resources of high quality based on the human rights
- comprehensive elucidation of the society regarding legal rights, claims and duties, especially for young citizens
- view on work not only as an earned income but with a wider, social inclusive perspective. Lots of unpaid work is done by women, like in the care-sector, homework, educational and voluntary work. These diverse kinds of work must be reflected in public to increase the appreciation and acceptance of these fields as equal work, and to increase the equality between the genders.
- ensure adequate income through the life cycle, why not think about an EU minimum income and an EU unemployment insurance?
- combat negative activation like sanctions for people who are unemployed

2. How can we account for different employment and social situations across Europe?

2000 character(s) maximum

- people should have the highest priority in policies
- seek, prefer and promote economies that focus on equality and support of human capital
- legal social rights
- social inclusive policies
- (European) minimum income and/or unemployment insurance that ensures a dignified life and social protection
- European solutions for problems national states face
- the focus on employment as single solution for a social Europe is problematical. We are facing growing unemployment, the reduction of jobs, the increase of technological advancement, which again minimizes jobs. We must face this reality and overthink different models that ensure a life in dignity for people who don't and/or can't participate in the labour market. It's highly important to question activation-programms as a solution to these developments, especially if they are accompanied by sanctions.

3. Is the EU "acquis" up to date and do you see scope for further EU action?

2000 character(s) maximum

The EU acquis has been born from a merely economic perspective, that did not yet have the global scope of today's situation. The influence of globalized economies is rather underestimated still by the majority, but the impacts on people's lives, on employment and wages is more than just noticeable, it is grabbing the vital resources of people and endangering the existence of people, livelihoods and communities. The profitable global economy has reached and surpassed borders where the acquisition of profits for profit's sake is more important than peoples sake. Governments and politicians have a hands-off approach believing that economic growth alone will secure the well being of all. This has proven a big mistake and thus the social acquis within the EU is much too small, too weak and not a leading principle for securing human rights and economic and social wellbeing (please read "OBDS" response). There's definitely lots of scope for EU action. The EU has good basics to strengthen and work on like the EU Social Charta, the EU 2020 goals, the human rights.

The implementation of social rights as a basis, a fundament of the European Union is welcome and should have highest priority in prospective political decisions.

Important would be advancement of the member states through the EU parliament in strengthening and implementing social resources of high quality based on these basics for a successful combat against poverty and to achieve equality. The european idea could be supported by actions like an european minimum income and/or unemployment insurance. Strategies like that could strengthen the allegiance of the citizens and support solidarity between citizens in the single nations and also between the nations EUwide.

On the future of work and welfare systems

4. What trends would you see as most transformative? [Please select at most three from the list below]

between 1 and 3 choices

- Demographic trends (e.g. ageing, migration)
- Changes in family structures
- New skills requirements
- Technological change
- Increasing global competition
- Participation of women in the labour market
- New ways of work
- Inequalities
- Other

5. What would be the main risks and opportunities linked to such trends?

2000 character(s) maximum

The following points are just a small selection, it is not possible to give a quality statement in such a short way.

- demographic trends

risks: unknown situations for societies, reasons for inequality and the results of inequality (worldwide) produce dissatisfaction and support populism
opportunities: learning from historical experiences and faults, finding courageous solutions

- technological change

risks: decrease of jobs during parallel increase of productivity, fast development, social phenomenons like cybermobbing
opportunities: taxes on machines, social phenomenons, development

-inequalities:

risks: splitting of the society, inequality in power-structures (on the labour market, institutional, interpersonal), negative material and psychological effects on people

6. Are there policies, institutions or firm practices – existing or emerging – which you would recommend as references?

2000 character(s) maximum

The Poverty Programmes

The Europe 2020 target on reducing poverty

The European Charta of Fundamental Rights

The Active Inclusion Recommendation 2008

The Social Investment Package

the 20% of the ESF for fighting against poverty and social exclusion

On the European Pillar of Social Rights

7. Do you agree with the approach outlined here for the establishment of a European Pillar of Social Rights?

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree

Please specify:

2000 character(s) maximum

The implementation of social rights as a basis, a fundament of the European Union is welcome and should have highest priority in prospective political decisions.

Important would be advancement of the member states through the EU parliament in strengthening and implementing social resources of high quality based on these basics for a successful combat against poverty and to achieve equality. For more specification please read in EAPN's Survey.

8. Do you agree with the scope of the Pillar, domains and principles proposed here? (If you wish to provide detailed comments on any of the 20 domains, please see the section "Detailed comments by domain" below)

| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Skills, education and life-long learning | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Flexible and secure labour contracts | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Secure professional transitions | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Active support for employment | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Gender equality and work-life balance | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Equal opportunities | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Conditions of employment | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 8. Wages | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. Health and safety at work | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. Social dialogue and involvement of workers | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 11. Integrated social benefits and services | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 12. Health care and sickness benefits | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 13. Pensions | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 14. Unemployment benefits | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 15. Minimum income | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 16. Disability benefits | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 17. Long-term care | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 18. Childcare | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 19. Housing | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 20. Access to essential services | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Are there aspects which are not adequately expressed or covered so far?

2000 character(s) maximum

poverty
social inclusion
inequalities
youth
refugees
gender aspects

9. What domains and principles would be most important as part of a renewed convergence for the euro area? (Please select maximum 5)

between 1 and 5 choices

- 1. Skills, education and life-long learning
- 2. Flexible and secure labour contracts
- 3. Secure professional transitions
- 4. Active support for employment
- 5. Gender equality and work-life balance
- 6. Equal opportunities
- 7. Conditions of employment
- 8. Wages
- 9. Health and safety at work
- 10. Social dialogue and involvement of workers
- 11. Integrated social benefits and services
- 12. Health care and sickness benefits
- 13. Pensions
- 14. Unemployment benefits
- 15. Minimum income
- 16. Disability benefits
- 17. Long-term care
- 18. Childcare
- 19. Housing
- 20. Access to essential services

Comments:

2000 character(s) maximum

It is not wise to pick just five of so many important domains. Most of them are linked to one another and not to be seen as single principles. Social systems are challenging because of their complexity. But that should not lead to a view that segregates and prioritizes single fields. They should be analyzed in their complexity to focus the best and well-grounded solutions for social questions.

10. How should these be expressed and made operational? In particular, do you see the scope and added value of minimum standards or reference benchmarks in certain areas and if so, which ones?

2000 character(s) maximum

The implementation of social rights as a basis, a fundament of the European Union is welcome and should have highest priority in prospective political decisions.

Important would be advancement of the member states through the EU parliament in strengthening and implementing social resources of high quality based on these basics for a successful combat against poverty and to achieve equality. An adequate minimum income should be discussed and could be a great chance to ensure the possibility for participation.

Detailed comments by domain

If you wish to provide detailed comments on any of the domains, please select one or more from the list below and fill the table(s) and comment box(es) underneath. (A detailed description of the domains and principles is available in the [Annex "A European Pillar of Social Rights - Preliminary Outline"](#) to the [Commission communication "Launching a consultation on a European Pillar of Social Rights"](#), COM(2016) 127 final).

- 1. Skills, education and life-long learning
- 2. Flexible and secure labour contracts
- 3. Secure professional transitions
- 4. Active support for employment
- 5. Gender equality and work-life balance
- 6. Equal opportunities
- 7. Conditions of employment
- 8. Wages
- 9. Health and safety at work
- 10. Social dialogue and involvement of workers
- 11. Integrated social benefits and services
- 12. Health care and sickness benefits
- 13. Pensions
- 14. Unemployment benefits
- 15. Minimum income
- 16. Disability benefits
- 17. Long-term care
- 18. Childcare
- 19. Housing
- 20. Access to essential services

1. Skills, education and life-long learning

| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Do you agree with the challenges described? | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way? | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Should the EU act to put in reality this principle? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum

Compared to the rest of the Survey the education-chapter severely lacks elaboration.

Inclusive Education, especially institutional education, is responsible for the upgrowth of society. The idea of democracy and solidarity, the possibilities for participation, the impression of a diverse society and also the allegiance in being part of the EU are transported through educational systems.

In the draft education is mentioned a lot in connection to labour market and employment strategies.

This approach is to question and to criticize, our recommendation is to integrate all educational aspects in the draft to the chapter where they belong to: Chapter 1 "skills, education and life-long learning". Regarding labour market strategies educational points should be discussed and pointed out, but the main discussion should belong to the educational-district. Access to high quality education should be free and accessible for every citizen any ages, independent of earned income and/or activation programs. Our educational systems are still forming inequalities and the chances of children regarding their future life. The combat against reproduction of inequalities through educational systems and against institutional discrimination must have highest priority.

2. Flexible and secure labour contracts

| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Do you agree with the challenges described? | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Should the EU act to put in reality this principle? | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum

Long phases of unemployment impede the access to the labour market. For prevention "early interventions" would be important. The draft of the pillar is not enough, it would need much more resources to work on prevention. The pillar should draft braver suggestions regarding income work and securing existence. For people who can't participate in the labour market there should be development in implementing a "second labour market".
For more specification please read "arbeit - plus. Soziale Unternehmen Österreich" response.

3. Secure professional transitions

| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Do you agree with the challenges described? | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Should the EU act to put in reality this principle? | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum

It is important to support people who are searching for employment and activity, especially the youth.
Phases between employment are common but are stigmatized. Breaks can also be seen with potential. People can use them for recreation, families and social life, orientation and participation. To support people who are experiencing unemployment their health, potentials and perspectives must have highest priority.

4. Active support for employment

| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Do you agree with the challenges described? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Should the EU act to put in reality this principle? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum

A great risk is to be seen in activation programs with sanctions. While unemployment is increasing it is to question if activation programs provide new jobs (or just have influence in statistics). Highest priority must have the dignity, individuality and objectives of participants. Activation programs should not be linked to sanctions that influence governmental support and financial/material existence. Highly problematical are heteronomous activation-programs. People who are unemployed because of disabilities or health problems must not be put under pressure by sanctions, but rather be supported through professional social services.

6. Equal opportunities

| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Do you agree with the challenges described? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Should the EU act to put in reality this principle? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum

The scope as outlined is much too small! The scope must include all kinds of areas of life, not only occupation. This begins during pregnancy, kindergarten and school, this can be influenced by housing conditions, access to health and social programs. Demotivation in early stages of life can severely influence the success in learning and career besides disabling people and youth through health, mental health and massive social problems. Priority is to close several gaps within the societies of EU member states, payment gap women and men, inequality of rising number of poor people and increase of number of extremely rich people, gap between average income scales and wealth, gap between the individuals paying their taxes and big companies granted low taxes or even avoiding taxes at all, the gaps of access to goods and services for all. The gap between the pronounced Fundamental Rights of the EU and the implementation into reality is growing still. Priority must be to combat numerous kinds and areas of discrimination, just naming a few - women, disabled people, migrants, refugees, people with health problems, LGBTI people, discrimination by racism, access to rights, to human rights.

- legal and secure equality in access to social resources, education and work
- active combat against poverty and discrimination
- combat against unequal distribution of wealth (a fair income distribution with focus on the elimination of the growing massive gap we experience since the crisis - a very small group of people gain enormously high incomes parallel to the phenomenon that a great mass of people experience social precariousness and material descent, often caused by precarious work situations -working poor)
- social rights as a fundament of the EU: social rights are to ensure the full and active inclusion and participation of all throughout the lifecycle

20. Access to essential services

| | I strongly agree | I agree | I disagree | I strongly disagree |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Do you agree with the challenges described? | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Should the EU act to put in reality this principle? | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum

Financial inclusion and well-being are necessary conditions for a good life for all in a socially inclusive Europe. It also has to be recognized as preconditions to efficiently fight poverty and social exclusion.

In order to promote financial inclusion and well-being, it is necessary to adopt a balanced approach of strengthening the individual's capabilities, guaranteeing access to rights and resources through appropriate legal regulations and policy instruments such as: minimum social standards and income, consumer protection policies, legal debt settlement acts and credit directives. Also providing high quality social goods and services such as housing, education, health care, including access to financial services and independent advice services.

Challenges

- A growing number of over-indebted and financially excluded people.
- Rapid development of the financial service market
- Debt settlement regulations needs to be further developed and expanded
- Protect youth from over-indebtedness - Financial education must be anchored in school and education programs.

Policy objectives

- More financial education programs - Financial skills are a basic instrument for full participation in society, economics and politics and as such strengthen citizenship.
- Better regulations to guarantee access to adequate financial services
- Debtors facing an attachment of earnings must be guaranteed a sufficient survival income -Reference budgets for poverty measurement and setting adequate standards.
- Quick and free of quotas liquidation of debts - for people with a risk of poverty it is important to get the chance to make a fresh start.
- Reference budgets as expenditure patterns for different types of households to live on a designated level of well-being, should be used for loan to income-ratios.

For further information contact: asb Schuldnerberatungen GmbH- Umbrella organisation of the officially recognised debt advice centres in Austria

Contact

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