

# 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

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

*500 character(s) maximum*

Comité Européen de Coordination

**\* Respondent's first name:**

Eric

**\* Respondent's surname:**

Degimbe

**\* Respondent's email address:**

cecedbe@gmail.com

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

*500 character(s) maximum*

Chaussée de Boondael, 6 bte14 - 1050 Bruxelles - Belgique

**Country**

For individuals: country of residence.

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

Belgium

**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>

Comité Européen de Coordination ID number 052588323201-74

**\* 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- Cannot be published - keep it confidential** (The contribution will not be published, but will be used internally within the Commission)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*

The most pressing employment issue which is also a social issue is the growing division in the labour market. On the one hand we have an ever growing need of qualified, skilled and well-paid workers, and as well as a growing demand for, low skilled low paid work in logistics, care, catering and hospitality. People working in these last sectors will never be able to save for a pension, never pay off their education costs, never own their own home. Our members insist on the lack of stability in EU fundings. The calls for proposals and the provision of the fundings are currently not giving priority to the low skilled people.

The first priority of CEC is to create employment opportunities. CEC sees many challenges in the fields of employment and social priorities, especially about some sectors and some targets: re- industrialization of EU and employment of vulnerable groups (youngsters, women, long term employment, migrants). Many members of CEC are operating in the field of training, services towards people, companies and social economy. The most pressing theme is social and professional inclusion on the labour market for very low skilled people, paying special attention to disadvantaged groups (elderly people, migrants, people with special needs, long term unemployed), to promote an up-to-date qualification and vocational training.

For the time being, social innovation is not really on the agenda of EU. CEC is advocating for a new and different approach for education and vocational training. The idea is to invite the authorities and MS to rethink the programs on a more inclusive and coherent manner allowing everybody to find a job responding to the needs of labour markets.

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

*2000 character(s) maximum*

CEC deplores that there are too many different situations and visions across Europe, because of the lack of "European spirit" among the EU members. The feeling of European Citizenship is sinking. There is a strong feeling amongst youngsters that they have been 'let down' by their Governments and/or the EU. Cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, foundations are efficient social economy's actors acting in an environment gathering formal and informal elements.

Moreover there are, in Europe, several levels of organizations: market and nonmarket-oriented, production and valorisation of goods and services, monetary and non-monetary resources.

For the EU, a way to solve the problems coming from diversity is to take a political compulsory action to put social and solidary economy on the same foot as market economy. The job creation capacity of enterprises have to be developed as a priority, employers need to be involved in a harmonized manner. As already said social /cultural exclusion is one of the most serious problem. To try to solve these problems we need to work together, not only on national level but also on a territorial base where innovative initiatives will be defined. We have seen that the free market economy and the economic governance did not provide solutions. It is important to allow some exemptions to directives only based on the "market" ideology and to accept the fact that social enterprises applying market reservation, social quotes, and other social mechanisms have to be used.

The different employment and social situations across Europe exist because of the different attitudes towards enterprise in the Member states.

Where there is a long term, strategic approach of business towards education, training and skills development then industry is likely to prosper and develop new products and technologies because it has a large pool of talent (ie. Germany).

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

*2000 character(s) maximum*

Citizens' protection regarding adequate health, pension, employment, education and lifelong learning provided by the EU acquis have struck several MS, most notably in Greece and countries under pressure of the MoU imposed by the Troika. The economic crisis and indebtedness in many countries accelerated the abolishment of citizens' rights. The unprecedented unemployment led private sector employees being excluded from the protection of collective bargaining agreements, signing of individual contracts/ or no contracts at all, non-existent unemployment benefits after the first year of unemployment, pensions on a continuous downward slide & insufficient for even the mere essentials, retirement age pushed to 67 years of age when the high unemployment rates do not leave older unemployed people the hope of finding a sustainable and quality job.

Youngsters -and highly educated-workers emigrate by thousands as "youth guarantee policies" fail to provide even the promise of some form of sustainable employment. The EU "acquis" certainly needs to be updated and especially in view to repair the consequences of the extreme economic conditions resulting from the economic governance led by the Troika. The fundamental issues are not those proposed in the consultation's document but those explained in the answers of CEC to questions 1 and 2. There is a clear lack of ambitions in the consultation's paper of the Commission! The EU action could be more socially oriented. The third sector can support the economy and social economy has a role to play i.e. on the fields of active and healthy ageing, setting-up of a more inclusive labour market by reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and exclusion, easier access to employment for job seekers and inactive people, support to their mobility.

## 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*

Linked to such trends, CEC says that we will have a lot of problems if we don't know how to handle the trends. CEC does not accept to live in a society where people are left behind without any form of solidarity. Prime example is the migrant emergency. Many members of CEC denounce that the migration crisis is clearly not managed in Europe. In the same time, the social impact of such a crisis may not longer wait to voluntary and optional European policies. Social and Economic Integration of migrants in the host countries are at the same time a risk and an opportunity .

Introduction of digitalisation on the premises of enterprises is a challenge and low skilled people have to be prepared too.

The population is ageing which creates new employment opportunities. However no one is prepared to pay the full cost of care for elderly people and this is creating an in-work underclass.

Action needs to be taken to improve minimum employment standards but there has to be supported by Member States and EU funding.

A faith and sustainable system of social security is very important: for instance all seniors should be able to retire with dignity, not just a privileged few.

New technology takes jobs away. In response there is a need to a strong mix of new employment opportunities offering well-paid skilled opportunities from tourism to 'heritage' industries such a regional foods and 'hand crafted' products.

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

*2000 character(s) maximum*

We recommend a synergy between enterprises, public ( in particular in education and training sectors at all levels ) and private sector. We think that the only payment support is not enough. We need active support for employment.

## 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*

CEC disagrees. There are a lot of others instruments coming from Europe or from international instances having the same aim and trying to protect the same rights as mentioned in the pillar. They need to be fully and effectively applied before thinking to a new instrument.

**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 type="radio"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Wages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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



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

*2000 character(s) maximum*

3 comments on the issue of skills and LLL.

1 Make better use of skills of senior citizens. As working life is prolonged, older workers may not be expected to acquire new technical skills, but may very well become contributors to on-the-job training schemes for younger and less experienced employees. Highly trained professionals can become mentors for recent college graduates and people ending their training pathways entering the workforce for the first time and share their knowledge and expertise in seminars and workshops for the benefit of younger workers. Such programs could also be extended to regional and national/ or even transnational level for entire economic sectors (energy, environment, food processing, agriculture etc.).

2. Immigrants from third countries will continue to come to Europe in increasing numbers. This trend is unlikely to be reversed and the sooner it is accepted by the EU MS political leaderships the better. Integration of new comers can only be achieved through education and equality of opportunities. In the case of educated, professional immigrants it makes no sense to receive them in the EU without also giving them a chance to exercise their profession or to keep them in occupations far below their true educational achievement and experience. In the case of immigrants with lower qualifications and depending on a number of factors (i.e. age, interests, existing skills,...) regular vocational education/apprenticeship programs in conjunction with language training programs would be the most appropriate introduction to the receiving country's labor market.

3. There should be more emphasis and funding for member states to provide for adults to 'catch up' on learning when they miss out in younger years. Ultimately this will save Governments money in the longer term.

**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*

EU should design some active and preventive measures to support secure professional transition. Professional transitions become more numerous during the working lives of EU citizens. While private sector employees live with job insecurity and learn from experience to remain more flexible throughout their careers, a job loss often means a tremendous dislocation in people's lives and dire consequences for their families. The stigma that accompanies mid-career unemployment, not only adds insult to injury, but is often detrimental to the workers' and professionals' efforts to make a transition to a new job or reshape their career path. Special attention should be paid when structuring re-training programs for such professionals and workers. Effective networking opportunities should supplement them; focus should be in understanding the transitioning professionals' true skills, competences, knowledge and desire/ or lack of to use them in a new but rewarding way in a different industry/location/setting.

Some psychological or other support may also be necessary.

CEC members coming from countries under pressure from the Troika, are afraid that this point has become mute. They have to denounce that they cannot offer any constructive comments or suggestions on how to act on the principle, especially under conditions of a prolonged recession, economic failure and unprecedented unemployment rates. It is time to begin re-thinking growth in conjunction with job creation-not jobless economic recoveries-and in this framework find appropriate ways to actively support job seekers.

Despite the overall bleak employment picture and the continuous disappointment of job seekers some glimpse of hope is offered by programs supporting employers for hiring and retaining employees. If benefits' programs currently fully paid by employers, employees and more absurdly the unemployed could be subsidized, employers would be in position to create more jobs.

**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*

CEC fears that the pillar will define new norms seen as maximum standards to achieve for the social rights in Europe instead of being the minimum standards to get in each member State . The Pillar could be a new governance 's instrument designed to support the European semester and the economic governance and restoring the balance between economic and social fields as defined in the Lisbon's strategy.

**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 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*

Make better use of skills of senior citizens. As working life is prolonged, older workers may not be expected to acquire new technical skills, but may very well become contributors to on-the-job training schemes for younger and less experienced employees. Highly trained professionals can become mentors for recent college graduates entering the workforce for the first time and share their knowledge and expertise in seminars and workshops for the benefit of younger workers. Such programs could also be extended to regional and national/ or even transnational level for entire economic sectors (i.e. energy, environment, food processing, agriculture etc.)

## 6. Equal opportunities

	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*

EU should design some active and preventive measures to support gender equality and work-life balance. Improve social services and benefits for working mothers/ unemployed women seeking employment. We are still far from integrating social services or making it simple for the people eligible for benefits to access them. Their role could be extended in integrating social services and benefits at least at the information/ dissemination level (on i. e. eligibility, processes, documentation, points of contact, etc.) provided adequate funding can be found for such service.

## Contact

EMPL-EUROPEAN-PILLAR-OF-SOCIAL-RIGHTS@ec.europa.eu

