



23/01/2017

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

The members of the Public Services Employers' Forum (PSEF), representing Public Services and Services of General Interest (SGIs) employers and providers, welcome the intention of the European Commission to bring more balance between the economic and social dimensions of the European Union through its initiative on a "European Pillar of Social Rights"

SGIs are a **cornerstone of the EU Social Model** and have a central role to play in the Pillar's process to ensure the citizen's quality of life and support the development of European businesses.

PSEF members believe that, in order to better support the EU social dimension, the Pillar should aim at fostering a better understanding of the differences between the national social systems and to define possible common reference principles to foster upward convergence.

The way forward is **not for the Pillar to produce new EU social legislation, but to contribute to making sure that the existing regulations are still fit for purpose**. The EU Social Acquis already encompasses 70 directives providing workers with protection and rights, therefore the problems existing with the EU social Acquis are not about quantity but quality and enforcement. Moreover, any initiative undertaken in the framework of the Pillar in the social policy area should be subject to the standard consultation procedure enshrined in the EU Treaties, and consequently foresee the involvement of social partners. The Pillar should serve as a reference document pointing out gaps in existing social legislation to assess and address. Amongst the existing social regulation, a **modernisation of the Working Time Directive** should be pursued to provide legal certainty to enterprises, organisations, employers and workers across Europe and ensure that this legal tool is still fit for purpose.

The European Pillar of Social Rights could inspire the development of **new benchmarks** to compare and measure **social policy developments** within the framework of the **European Semester**. Therefore, the Pillar should not be limited to the euro area Members, but cover all Member States of the EU. PSEF members believe that such benchmarking could make the reform agenda simpler and more specific in nature by recognising the differences between Member States, thereby **increasing transparency and ownership regarding the implementation and enforcement of reforms**. The EU should promote reforms which allow Member States to thrive autonomously within the European Union. This would require reforms that increase sustainable growth, competitiveness and productivity, facilitate the

efficiency of SGIs, and ultimately reduce vulnerabilities and inequalities as experienced in the existing social infrastructure at national level.

The significant divergences across Europe are strongly related to the EU Member States' structural weaknesses and in existing hindrances to the provision of sufficient, sustainable and predictable investments in physical and social infrastructures in key services such as transport, energy, communication, water, waste management, healthcare and education.

In order to change this situation by **promoting and supporting the necessary forms of investment**, the Pillar may serve as a basis for adapting the European fiscal rules to secure growth-friendly fiscal consolidation and to foster key forms of public investment such as in education, health and social services, contributing most to productivity gains in the economy. In this context, a **comprehensive and non-dogmatic review of the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) needs to be considered**.

The ways and means of pursuing the principles of the Pillar should be developed, decided upon and implemented by the Member States. **Respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality will be key for the success** and widespread acceptance of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**. In this regard PSEF members consciously point out that the existing legal competencies of the EU should not be extended by the Pillar and the proven balance between regulations at national level and EU level should remain unchanged. The Pillar should instead provide a **set of principles and objectives to be shared by the Member States making the best use of the European Semester**.

CEEP

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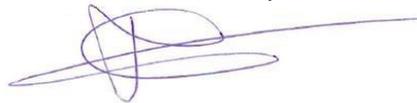
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