

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2016/2095(INI)	Procedure completed
European pillar of social rights		
Subject		
4.10.10 Social protection, social security		
4.15.04 Workforce, occupational mobility, job conversion, working conditions		
4.15.08 Work, employment, wages and salaries: equal opportunities women and men, and for all		

Key players				
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed	
	EMPL Employment and Social Affairs		03/05/2016	
		 RODRIGUES Maria João		
		Shadow rapporteur		
		 VANDENKENDELAERE Tom		
		 GERICKE Arne		
		 CALVET CHAMBON Enrique		
	 MESZERICs Tamás			
	 AGEA Laura			
	 MÉLIN Joëlle			
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed	
	ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.		
	FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality		19/09/2016	
		 ARENA Maria		
European Commission	Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	Commissioner THYSSEN Marianne		

Key events			
08/03/2016	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2016)0127	Summary
09/06/2016	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
08/12/2016	Vote in committee		

20/12/2016	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0391/2016	Summary
19/01/2017	Results of vote in Parliament		
19/01/2017	Debate in Parliament		
19/01/2017	Decision by Parliament	T8-0010/2017	Summary
19/01/2017	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2016/2095(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	EMPL/8/06338

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(2016)0127	08/03/2016	EC	Summary
Committee draft report		PE589.146	13/09/2016	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE592.174	18/10/2016	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE592.175	18/10/2016	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE592.173	20/10/2016	EP	
Committee opinion	FEMM	PE589.333	30/11/2016	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE595.578	07/12/2016	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0391/2016	20/12/2016	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0010/2017	19/01/2017	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2017)205	16/06/2017	EC	

European pillar of social rights

PURPOSE: to launch a consultation on a European pillar of social rights.

BACKGROUND: President Juncker announced the establishment of a European Pillar of Social Rights in his State of the Union address in the European Parliament on 9 September 2015. This initiative is part of the work undertaken by the Commission for a deeper and fairer Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and part of the Commission 2016 Work Programme.

President Juncker stressed in his speech that a European Pillar of Social Rights should take account of the changing realities of Europe's societies and the world of work. And which can serve as a compass for the renewed convergence within the euro area.

This Communication outlines a way forward for the European Pillar of Social Rights. It sets out the rationale behind the initiative, discusses its role, scope and nature, and launches a broad consultation aimed at gathering feedback.

A first, preliminary outline of the Pillar is annexed to this Communication to facilitate the discussion.

CONTENT: the establishment of the Pillar is an opportunity to steer the thinking on:

- existing social rights,
- the particular needs of the euro area,

- the changing realities of the world of work, as well as on the reforms needed at all levels.

The consultation process should therefore be as far-reaching as possible

Suggested outcomes: the consultation process has three main aims:

1. make an assessment of the present EU "acquis". In particular, the consultation should help to determine the extent to which existing rights are practiced and remain relevant for today's and tomorrow's challenges, and/or whether new ways to deliver on these rights should be considered;
2. reflect on new trends in work patterns and societies, due to the impact of demographic trends, new technologies and other factors of importance for working life and social conditions. The identification of best practices and lessons from social innovation should be actively encouraged;
3. gather views and get feedback on the outline of the European Pillar of Social Rights itself. The consultation should serve to discuss its scope and content, as well as its role as part of the social dimension of the EMU, to reflect on the particular needs of the euro area, to discuss the specificity of the principles proposed here and to explore the related challenges linked to these. The consultation should also help Member States not in the euro area to determine whether to participate in the Pillar.

The European Pillar of Social Rights: the purpose of the Pillar is to express a number of essential principles to support well functioning and fair labour markets and welfare systems. The Pillar will thus build on, and complement, the existing EU-level social "acquis", and the principles it contains will have a specific focus on addressing the needs and challenges confronting the euro area. Once established, the Pillar should become a reference framework to screen the employment and social performance of participating Member States, to drive reforms at national level and, more specifically, to serve as a compass for renewed convergence within the euro area.

The outline of the Pillar is structured around three main headings:

1. equal opportunities and access to the labour market, including skills development and life-long learning and active support for employment, to increase employment opportunities, facilitate transitions between different statuses and improve the employability of individuals;
2. fair working conditions, to set an adequate and reliable balance of rights and obligations between workers and employers, as well as between flexibility and security elements, to facilitate job creation, job take-up and the adaptability of firms, and promoting social dialogue;
3. adequate and sustainable social protection, as well as access to high quality essential services, including childcare, healthcare and long-term care, to ensure dignified living and protection against risks, and to enable individuals to participate fully in employment and more generally in society.

A number of policy domains are identified, to which different principles are attached. These principles take as a starting point a number of rights already inscribed in EU and other relevant sources of law, and set out in greater detail possible ways to operationalise them. These formulations also draw inspiration from existing guidance at EU level, for instance in the context of the coordination of economic policy, while seeking to capture latest trends.

The Pillar should help to modernise, broaden and deepen social rights, at work and in society, by facilitating their actual take-up and by promoting practices that can be beneficial from an individual, firms and societal point of view.

Mobilising for the debate: in the framework of this consultation, the Commission will actively engage with other EU institutions, national authorities and parliaments, trade unions and business associations, NGOs, social service providers, experts from academia, as well as the public. At national level, the Commission will facilitate discussions through its Representations in the Member States.

EU social partners will be invited to play an active role in shaping the Pillar: the Commission will also request the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee and of the Committee of the Regions.

The consultation process should be concluded by 31 December 2016, as the basis for the Commission to put forward a final proposal for the Pillar early in 2017.

In addition to the public consultation, three work streams will be organised to feed into the discussion. The Commission will hold a European conference by the end of 2016 to gather feedback.

Questions for the consultation: the questions for which the European Commission seeks views are the following:

On the social situation and EU social "acquis"

- What do you see as most pressing employment and social priorities?
- How can we account for different employment and social situations across Europe?
- Is the EU "acquis" up to date and do you see scope for further EU action?

On the future of work and welfare systems

- What trends would you see as most transformative?
- What would be the main risks and opportunities linked to such trends?
- Are there policies, institutions or firm practices existing or emerging which you would recommend as references?

On the European Pillar of Social Rights

- Do you agree with the approach outlined here for the establishment of a European Pillar of Social Rights?
- Do you agree with the proposals contained in the annex to the Commission on the scope of the [Pillar, domains and principles proposed here](#)?
- Are there aspects that are not adequately expressed or covered so far?
- What domains and principles would be most important as part of a renewed convergence for the euro area?
- 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?

European pillar of social rights

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Maria João RODRIGUES (S&D, PT) on a European Pillar of Social Rights.

The report noted that the European Social Model has contributed to important productivity gains and to Europe's competitiveness, based on a healthy and skilled workforce with a decent purchasing power to sustain a sophisticated internal market. However, European welfare states need to be updated and strengthened to catch up with demographic change, technology, globalisation and a significant recent increase in social inequalities.

Proposals for a solid European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR): the report called on the Commission to build on the review of the social acquis and of EU employment and social policies as well as on the outcomes of the 2016 public consultation on the EPSR by making proposals for a solid European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) which seeks to reinforce social rights through concrete and specific tools (legislation, policy-making mechanisms and financial instruments).

The report recalled that the Commission committed itself to achieving a social AAA rating for the EU and is expected to come forward in the spring of 2017 with a proposal for a European Pillar of Social Rights that will promote well-functioning and inclusive labour markets and welfare systems in participating Member States and serve as a compass for renewed upward convergence by (i) updating existing EU legislation, (ii) improving the EU's framework for economic and social policy coordination, (iii) ensuring relevant financial support at national and European levels.

Members are of the view that standards to be articulated by the European Pillar of Social Rights should apply to all countries participating in the single market in order to maintain a level playing field.

Moreover, the EPSR should:

- equip people living in the EU with stronger means of keeping control over their lives, enabling them to live a dignified life;
- make markets work for shared prosperity, wellbeing and sustainable development in the context of a highly competitive social market economy and making use also of an industrial policy at the EU level;
- promote relevant social standards and by empowering national welfare states to maintain social cohesion and equality across the EU;
- facilitate free movement of workers in a deeper and fairer European labour market.

Updating existing labour and social standards: Members called on the social partners and the Commission to work together to present a proposal for a framework directive on decent working conditions in all forms of employment, extending existing minimum standards to new kinds of employment relationships. This framework directive should improve enforcement of EU law, increase legal certainty across the single market and prevent discrimination by complementing existing EU law. It should apply to employees and all workers in non-standard forms of employment, without necessarily amending already existing directives.

Calls are also made for more effective and efficient implementation and control of existing labour standards in order to improve the enforceability of rights and tackle undeclared work.

The report recalled the right to healthy and safe working conditions also involves protection against workplace risks as well as limitations on working time and provisions on minimum rest periods and annual leave. Members urged the Member States to fully implement the relevant legislation and they await Commission proposals for concrete measures to uphold this right effectively for all workers, including seasonal and contract workers, and comprising also measures to prevent violence against women or harassment.

Building up the means to achieve results in practice: the report called on the Commission to build on the outcomes of the public consultation and on the EU institutions' views by putting forward a clear roadmap of concrete measures for full practical implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and full pursuit of the Treaties' social objectives.

Member States are called on to sign and ratify the revised European Social Charter and the European Convention on Social Security (ETS No 78).

The report drew attention to the two-way link between social conditions and economic performance and called for the Europe 2020 targets to be directly and transparently taken into account in formulating country-specific recommendations and the euro area recommendation, as well as in the utilisation of EU instruments.

Adequate financing: the report stated that the European Pillar of Social Rights can only be credible if accompanied by adequate financing at national and European level. It reiterated its call for accelerated implementation of relevant operational programmes and revision of the MFF 2014-2020 where needed in order to cope with the increased needs.

The Commission and the EIB Group are called upon to develop further the Investment Plan for Europe in order to strengthen investment in economic recovery, quality job creation, sustainable development and social investment in people's current and future capacities to engage in the labour market.

Lastly, Members considered that the EPSR should be adopted in 2017 as an agreement between Parliament, the Commission and the European Council, involving the social partners and civil society at the highest level. The Commission is invited to propose mechanisms for adequate involvement of all the relevant stakeholders at all relevant levels in the implementation of the EPSR.

European pillar of social rights

The European Parliament adopted by 396 votes to 180, with 68 abstentions, a resolution on a European Pillar of Social Rights.

Members recognised that the EU needs to develop further a European social model and respond swiftly and visibly to increasing frustration and worry among many people about uncertain life prospects, unemployment, growing inequalities and lack of opportunities, in particular for young people.

This debate can help to draw attention to the EU's basic values and the fact that Europe has, in a worldwide comparison, advanced labour and

social standards and social protection systems. The debate can also help to place the European project on stronger foundations.

Proposals for a solid European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR): Parliament called on the Commission to build on the review of the social acquis as well as on the outcomes of the 2016 public consultation by making proposals for a solid European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) that is not limited to a declaration of principles or good intentions but reinforces social rights through concrete and specific tools (legislation, policy-making mechanisms and financial instruments).

The resolution recalled that the Commission committed itself to achieving a social AAA rating for the EU and is expected to come forward in the spring of 2017 with a proposal for a European Pillar of Social Rights that will promote well-functioning and inclusive labour markets and welfare systems in participating Member States and serve as a compass for renewed upward convergence by (i) updating existing EU legislation, (ii) improving the EU's framework for economic and social policy coordination, (iii) ensuring relevant financial support at national and European levels.

Members are of the view that standards to be articulated by the European Pillar of Social Rights should apply to all countries participating in the single market in order to maintain a level playing field.

In addition, the Pillar should:

- equip people living in the EU with stronger means of keeping control over their lives, enabling them to live a dignified life and realise their aspirations by mitigating various social risks arising over the course of their entire life ;
- make markets work for shared prosperity, well-being and sustainable development in the context of a highly competitive social market economy, aimed at full employment and social progress and making use also of an industrial policy at the EU level;
- promote relevant social standards and by empowering national welfare states to maintain social cohesion and equality across the EU through adequate, accessible and financially sustainable social protection systems and social inclusion policies;
- facilitate free movement of workers in a deeper and fairer European labour market.

Updating existing labour and social standards: Parliament called on the social partners and the Commission to work together to present a proposal for a framework directive on decent working conditions in all forms of employment, extending existing minimum standards to new kinds of employment relationships. This framework directive should improve enforcement of EU law, increase legal certainty across the single market and prevent discrimination by complementing existing EU law.

It should apply to employees and all workers in non-standard forms of employment, without necessarily amending already existing directives.

Working conditions: Members called for the framework directive on decent working conditions also to include relevant existing minimum standards to be ensured in certain specific relationships, in particular:

- proper learning and training content and decent working conditions for internships, traineeships and apprenticeships;
- a clear distinction between those genuinely self-employed and those in an employment relationship;
- limits regarding on-demand work: zero-hour contracts should not be allowed, in view of the extreme uncertainty which they involve.

The resolution also stressed the need to for the gender pay gap to be closed throughout the EU and recalled the right to healthy and safe working conditions also involves protection against workplace risks as well as limitations on working time and provisions on minimum rest periods and annual leave. Members urged the Member States to fully implement the relevant legislation and they await Commission proposals for concrete measures to uphold this right effectively for all workers, including seasonal and contract workers, and comprising also measures to prevent violence against women or harassment.

Social protection: Parliament insisted on the need for:

- adequate social protection and social investment throughout peoples lives;
- universal access to timely, good-quality and affordable preventative and curative health care and to medicines;
- investments in active ageing and of arrangements enabling people who have reached their pensionable age to have the option to continue working at their desired level of intensity while being able to draw partially on their pension if they work less than full-time;
- providing an adequate minimum income in all Member States and to consider further steps in support of social convergence across the European Union, taking into account the economic and social circumstances of each Member State, as well as national practices and traditions.

Building up the means to achieve results in practice: Parliament called on the Commission to put forward a clear roadmap of concrete measures for full practical implementation of the EPSR. It called for a social protocol to be introduced in the Treaties when they are revised, in order to strengthen fundamental social rights in relation to economic freedoms.

The resolution drew attention to the two-way link between social conditions and economic performance and called for the Europe 2020 targets to be directly and transparently taken into account in formulating country-specific recommendations and the euro area recommendation, as well as in the utilisation of EU instruments.

Adequate financing: Parliament declared that the European Pillar of Social Rights can only be credible if accompanied by adequate financing at national and European level. It reiterated its call for accelerated implementation of relevant operational programmes and revision of the MFF 2014-2020 where needed in order to cope with the increased needs, whilst calling for further strengthening of the Youth Employment Initiative.

The Commission and the EIB Group are called upon to develop further the investment plan for Europe in order to strengthen investment in economic recovery and quality job creation.

Lastly, Members considered that the EPSR should be adopted in 2017 as an agreement between Parliament, the Commission and the European Council, involving the social partners and civil society at the highest level.