



Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth

21 March 2016, Brussels

Workshop 3: Upward Social Convergence and Fighting poverty

Description of the workshop

Europe today is facing far-reaching social challenges, including high levels of poverty and social exclusion, long-term unemployment, and rising inequalities. We are further away today from reaching our Europe 2020 target to reduce poverty than when the target was first set. High levels of divergence in terms of social outcomes, between and within Member States, raise further concern, especially in EMU Member States where these divergences are most acute and where imbalances also pose the risk of spill-overs.

Over the years, the EU has undertaken substantial efforts to address poverty, reduce inequalities and improve social outcomes. These efforts include the Commission's Social Investment Package and accompanying Recommendation on Investing in Children, a Council Recommendation for establishing a Youth Guarantee, and a Council Recommendation to address long-term unemployment. Poverty and other social challenges have also been monitored in the European Semester, and country-specific recommendations have been issued to those Member States with the greatest challenges. The EU has stepped up its financial support to Member States, through earmarking 20% of the ESF for efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion. A new Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived was also created, providing material support to those in greatest need.

While these efforts represent an improvement, there is still more to be done in order to effectively address the social challenges at hand. A European Pillar of Social Rights would support greater upward social convergence and address poverty and inequalities. Such a Pillar would set out key principles for better functioning labour markets and social policies, which EMU Member States can use as a framework for policy reform. The Commission issued a Communication and published a draft outline of the Pillar on 8 March.

This workshop will discuss the function of the Pillar and whether the principles included in its draft outline would effectively address the social challenges at hand.



Expected outcomes

This workshop would be expected to feed into the ongoing public consultation on a European Pillar of Social Rights, through:

- Reviewing the domains and principles to be presented in the Pillar and identifying aspects that are not adequately expressed or covered so far;
- Identifying possible EU-level instruments that could be used to operationalise the Pillar.

Panellists

- **Rapporteur**

Belgian Anti Poverty Network: **Elke Vandermeerschen**

- **Facilitator**

Stien Michiels

The workshop will be organised entirely following a participatory approach, without formal speakers.

Questions

Question 1: Do you agree with the scope of the Pillar of Social Rights and the principles proposed? In your view, is there anything missing in the Pillar would help to address poverty and inequalities, and if so, what?

Question 2: In your view, how should the EU make the principles in the pillar operational? Please give one or two examples.