

Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth

Conference Report 2018

THE EUROPEAN PILLAR of SOCIAL RIGHTS: on the road to implementation



EU PILLAR IS ABOUT REAL PEOPLE Streir Lives

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Context



Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth

The European Pillar of Social Rights:

on the road to implementation

If we want to be credible.

we have to deliver."

Jean-Claude Juncker President European Commission



Putting the Social Pillar into action

With the European Pillar of Social Rights now in its implementation stage, the European Commission's Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth (ACIG) has an even stronger remit as an action-oriented platform for civil dialogue on social and employment issues.

The Convention brought together EU and national civil society representatives, national authorities, a smattering of trade unions, and academics from 30 countries. The richness of the programme was reflected in the delegates' diverse backgrounds and contributions. This edition focused on the principles upon which Europe's future prosperity and wellbeing rest: The European Social Pillar of Rights - on the road to implementation.

Adopted on 26 April 2017 and officially proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017, the Social Pillar is the EU's biggest initiative in the social sphere since the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights of 2009, preceded by the Maastricht Treaty and the Social Protocol of 1992. It marks the transition from market-based economic growth models to a fully inclusive "growth approach" embodied in modern and global economies. Here, inclusive growth means no one gets left behind and everyone has a say in plural, open societies.

"The European Pillar of Social Rights is not a poem. It is... a programme of principles but also an action plan... If we want to be credible, we have to deliver,"

remarked European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in connection to the Pillar's proclamation ceremony. It is about delivering new and more effective rights for citizens, from equal opportunities and access to the labour market, to fair working conditions and social protection and inclusion.

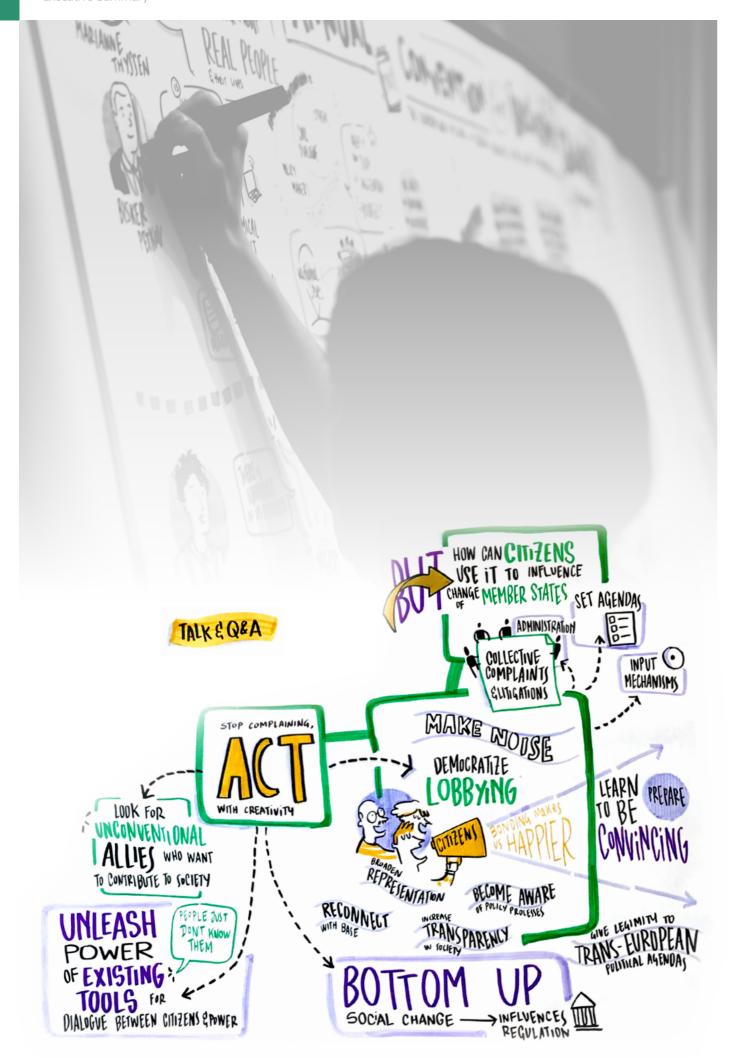
With nearly 119 million people, or 23.7% of the EU population, still at risk of poverty or social exclusion a major theme of last year's event - there is no time to lose. Now in its third year, ACIG was able to draw on the experience and lessons learned to explore six of the core challenges facing the Social Pillar at this crucial stage.



Parallel workshops

- How can EU funding support the implementation of the Pillar at national and EU levels?
- 'No one left behind': How can the Sustainable Development Goals ensure inclusive implementation of the Pillar?
- Implementing the Pillar through the European Semester
- Adult learning and skills: a key contribution to the Pillar
- The enabling and supporting role of social services
- Social economy and social enterprises: A boost for implementing the Pillar?

6 Executive Summary



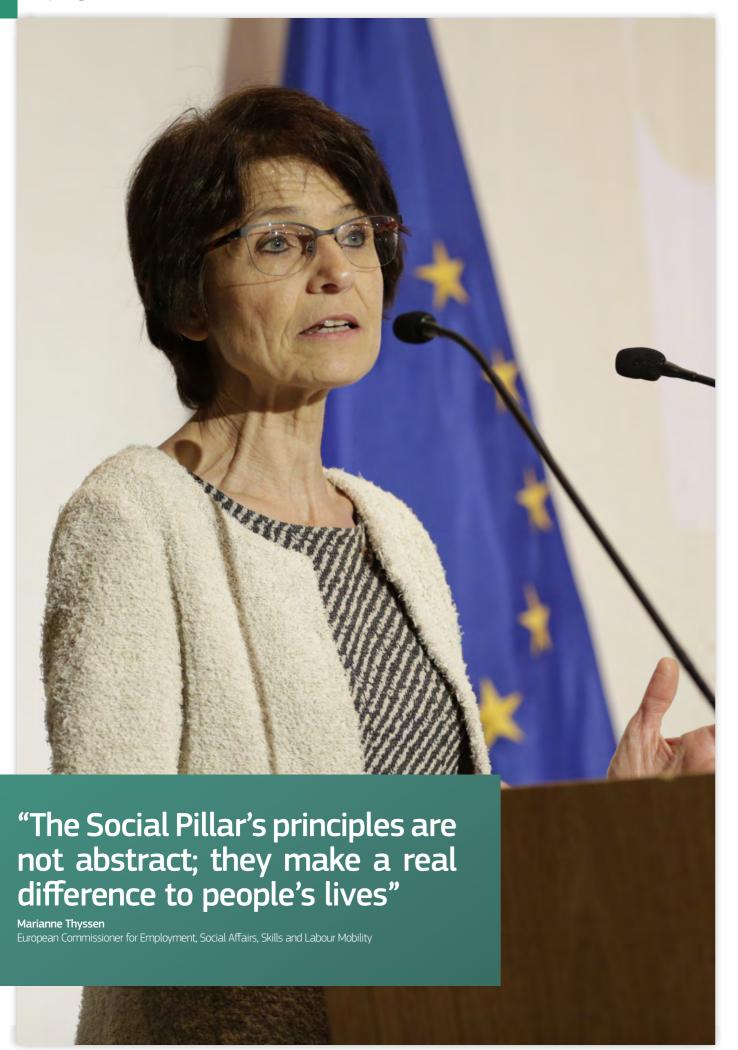
► EXECUTIVE SUMMARY Putting the Social Pillar into action

- ➤ ACIG2018 in numbers: 1 event, 6 workshops, 35 countries represented, 30 invited speakers, 450 participants, 100s of ideas, 1000s of on-line mentions and moments.
- ➤ ACIG 2018 focused squarely on the European Pillar of Social Rights on the road to implementation, which may be rocky for stakeholders at all levels, and Brussels has its own obstacle course to thread.
- ➤ Competition for funding through the Multi-annual Financial Framework under negotiation is tough, and keeping the Social Pillar at the top of the political agenda in the next EU Semester takes great driving skill.
- ➤ Civil society have been down this road before, so they know its tricky turns, but with the Pillar as a "compass and rule book" and the Commission pushing for "not a cent less" for Social Europe, they should have the tools to cover the terrain with more confidence and ambition.
- ➤ The Pillar's political commitment marks the transition from market-based economic growth models to a fully inclusive "growth approach" embodied in modern and global economies.
- ➤ The 20 principles of the Social Pillar are vital to tackling the full range of concerns equal opportunities, labour market access, fair working conditions, social protection and inclusion, etc. that impact on people's lives, today and tomorrow.
- ➤ The European Commission, ACIG's host, relies on NGO experience and advocacy to contribute to implementing the Pillar; providing feedback when things "go well" and alarm bells when things "go badly"; ACIG dialogue is an "excellent platform" for this.
- ➤ There is strong hope among civil society that the Pillar will help to better balance EU policies and that this will be visible also in the European Semester, which is a key monitoring tool.
- ➤ Investment in skills and infrastructure, cross-sectoral partnerships, long-term approaches, strategic public procurement, synergies between sectors including health, data-gathering, European Semester, is key for implementing the Pillar.

➤ Some good news, according to Plenary speaker Alberto Alemanno, is that EU Institutions are "more responsive and accountable than the average Member State" which means they are a potential ally or facilitator for a new breed of citizen-led activism or advocacy; the key is to demystify the act of lobbying and reinvent it as citizen activism, or like-minded people with allies, resources and time pushing for change and applying underutilised tools like Petitions, European Citizens' Initiative and the European Ombudsman service.

Executive Summary

- ➤ Diverse topics covered in the afternoon: fundamental transformations in modern working norms, digital developments and migration challenges, life-long learning, coordinated social indicators, and the role of EU legislation, political accountability, the Semester and its budget in maintaining and promoting a truly Social Europe.
- ➤ The European Parliament plays a vital role in ensuring the Pillar is capable of delivering a welfare system for all Europeans; not just the eurozone, one that is fit for the 21st century.
- ➤ The Committee of the Regions is on the front line of the Pillar, as a channel for communicating and transferring the European message to local authorities, making sure it filters from the higher to lower levels.
- ➤ For many civil society organisations, the principles of the Pillar have been their bread and butter for years; now they have "greater political will" and a "firm framework to move the agenda forward". One way to implement the Pillar and its policies is to engage more with cities, to use their rich experience.
- The Director-General of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion summed up the European Commission's actions in terms of legislation, the European Semester and EU budget; and underlined that it will NOT accept less money for social projects, services and welfare in the coming MFF; the final result "will not be for lack of ambition".





Time to roll up your sleeves!

In many ways, the Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth and the European Pillar of Social Rights have grown up together, so it was only right that the 2018 edition was devoted to implementing the Pillar.



From a bold idea to a concrete proposal to a political commitment, the Social Pillar quickly gained momentum and now it is time to capitalise on that and transform it into a "living and breathing reality for all Europeans", according **Marianne Thyssen**, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and

Labour Mobility, who welcomed the 450 ACIG delegates at Brussels Crowne Plaza hotel. "Let's roll up our sleeves, let's get to work!" she challenged.

The road to implementation may be rocky for stakeholders at all levels. Meanwhile, the European Commission, which hosts ACIG, has its own obstacle course to thread. Competition for funding through the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) currently being negotiated is tough, and keeping social issues and the Pillar at the top of the political agenda in the next EU Semester will take great driving skill.

"We rely on the advocacy of the NGOs, the community in Brussels, and probably even more in the Member States," remarked **Joost Korte**, Director-General of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion in his warm-up. Working with those most affected by rapid and profound changes to the social fabric is critical: "It's in your hands to [tell] us when things go well and sound the alarm bell when they go badly." Dialogues like ACIG are an excellent platform for that, he suggested, helping to keep the Pillar at top of agenda across Europe.

European societies are largely prosperous with the highest levels of social protection in the world. Europeans generally say they are happy and satisfied with their lives, but many are still anxious about the future, pensions, job security and new forms of work, and about the wider impact of globalisation and urbanisation, according to a recent European Commission reflection paper on the 'Social Dimension of Europe'.

This is where the 20 principles of the Social Pillar are so important, tackling the full range of concerns equal opportunities, labour market access, fair working conditions, social protection and inclusion, etc. - which clearly impact on people's lives, today and tomorrow. Commissioner Thyssen brought home this message with examples from the rolling exhibit on what EU social action means to Europeans from all over.

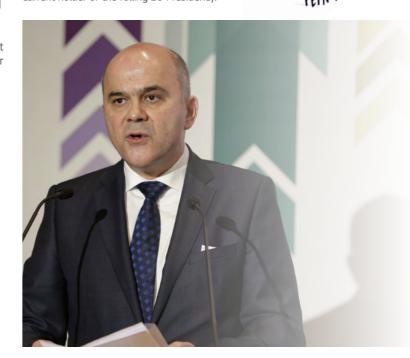
"The Social Pillar's principles are not abstract; they make a real difference to people's lives," she said.

ACIG has helped to shape many proposals at the core of this ambitious social initiative, she added, as a "compass for upward social convergence in Europe, and our rule book for the world of work".

Participants have lobbied for better access to quality social services, work-life balance, more inclusive social protection, and more. "Now it's time to put it all into practice at our own level and competence," she said, calling for Member States to take up the mantle and for ACIG participants to do their part and help the Commission keep track of the Pillar as it rolls out, and to promote it during EU budgetary negotiations. "So, go home and make your voice heard! And I'll do my best to get a budget that invests not only in bricks and steel, but also for people."

Shared responsibility ...

ACIG was honoured to invite **Biser Petkov**, Bulgaria's Minister of Labour and Social Policy, to speak on his country's social priorities as the current holder of the rolling EU Presidency.



More effective instruments for strengthening the social dimension can only have a positive impact on people's lives in the short and medium term, and this is one of the Bulgarian Presidency's priorities, he said, singling out the important role of stakeholders and Member States in now implementing the principles.

"Today, more than ever, the EU must guarantee the prosperity of all its citizens and must overcome the socio-economic inequalities in a rapidly changing world," he said. Things like adapting labour markets, better education and training, and stronger social security systems capable of responding to demographic changes, and the challenges of increasingly mobile communities and digital developments.

He underlined the need for accurate data and adequate funding to tackle these challenges. "Investing in people is a top priority, starting from early childhood development," he continued, and education is again critical to reaching those most in need of it. "There is no alternative!"

The launch of the Social Pillar, he stressed, is the starting point and an important benchmark of common efforts. and social progress to ensure better lives for citizens.

A dose of social reality

What's the story with convergence? Is Europe destined to a two-speed solution; a greater Union only for the willing and able? How will future European Semesters, or political cycles, reconcile evidence of a growing poverty gap despite Europe's economic recovery?

These and other issues played in the background of ACIG 2018. Eurozone unemployment is at its lowest in a decade at 8.5%, according to Eurostat. But a recent Eurofound¹ report on 'In-work poverty in the EU' indicates that the number of European workers at risk of poverty has increased, from 8% in 2007 to 10% today.

Europe's 2010 commitment to reducing the number of people at risk of poverty by 20 million by 2020 is going in the wrong direction; there are some 1.7 million more people at risk. How Member States deal with this reality becomes ever more critical. Whilst still in the grip of the economic crisis, government spending on social protection in the EU accounted for nearly one fifth of GDP. "Today, Europe is home to the most equal societies in the world, although significant disparities still exist," notes the 2017 Commission Reflection Paper, 'Social Dimensions of Europe'.

Europe has prided itself on its **social construct driven by convergence** towards higher living standards, with social protection – supported by taxation - helping to narrow income inequality. For decades, enlargement of the Union, backed by Structural and Cohesion funding and initiatives targeting regions most in need, has helped to narrow the gaps between Member States, but cracks in the model appeared as the economic crisis and issues with the Common Market and currency hit some countries harder than others.

"Where convergence in economic performance over time is accompanied by convergence of social conditions, fears of 'social dumping' diminish and support for the single market is nourished," the Reflection Paper points out. Here, the words 'over time' ring loud. For the benefits of convergence to be felt 'inclusively' (even universally) across the EU, Member States, people and businesses need a "reasonable period" to adjust.

Inclusive in spirit and deed!

ACIG takes this idea to heart in its programme but also in its organisation, with interpretation including sign language – and velotype available throughout the day. ACIG encourages participants to get involved before, during and after the event. The exhibit and message board on site attracted attention, and delegates were active online using the #SocialRights and #ACIG2018 hashtags.





Enter the 'enforcers'... or should we say, 'enablers'?

This year's plenary speaker was introduced as a "rock star in civic engagement and activism" who could challenge perceptions of effective advocacy and lobbying as corporate weapons beyond the reach of civil society. The room was split on that, but it certainly made for lively debate.



Alberto Alemanno, Professor of Law at HEC Paris and author of Lobbying for change, sparked controversy by saying that the Social Pillar stands little chance of life beyond fine words unless civil society and Member States rally together and 'advocate' for change.

He brought the challenges Europe faces to life through four real stories that test the limits of Europe's social model, touching on issues such as disparities in pre-natal care, growing homeless populations in European cities, the barriers faced by disabled workers and political activism for marginalised groups.

"What does Europe do for these people? "Not much!" he challenged, because these issues mostly fall under the national remit. "Can the Pillar make a difference, then?" Again, some doubts about its teeth beyond the legal rights enshrined in the social aquis. With little leverage to change anything, this could dampen enthusiasm for it, he suggested (the "chill effect").

But the challenge is to turn that on its head. Instead of questioning what Europe is doing for these people, he said, we should be asking how citizens can use the Pillar in the social arena to fix Europe and overcome the gaps. "Stop complaining and act!", he urged, calling on the audience to be creative and use the power of advocacy or lobbying – a topic he knows very well through his own experience advocating for issues such as whistleblower protection.

He spoke about the need to direct the term 'lobbying' away from its moorings as a tool of influence wielded by the "usual suspects" (only 25% of meetings with the EU take place without corporates). And the good news, he said, is that EU Institutions are "more responsive and accountable than the average Member State", which means they are potential allies or facilitators for a new breed of citizen-led activism or advocacy.

Plenary

Ten tips on citizen lobbying

Professor Alemanno introduced ten tips on how civil society can approach lobbying:

- ➤ Pick your battle
- **>** Do your homework
- ➤ Map the lobbying environment
- ➤ Make a plan
- ➤ Pick your allies
- ➤ Raise money
- ➤ Plan communications
- ➤ Meet face-to-face
- Monitor and implement
- Stick to the lobbying rules

There are many underused tools out there for building campaigns, including engaging independent experts (amicus curiae), and using PETI and the European Ombudsman services. The important thing is to set the agenda (European Citizens Initiative, or ECI, informal petitions, etc.), frame the inputs and deliver on it, he suggested.

Demystifying lobbying

Citizen lobbying does not have to be a dirty word; it just needs to be demystified by seeing the different ways it can work, and not letting the usual suspects "hijack" the conversations. Professor Alemanno shared some successful examples, including how the European Youth Forum rediscovered collective mechanisms (within the Social Charter) to lodge complaints against Belgium on unpaid internships (60-70% of young people were working free for around six months before getting a job). And how the ECI filed for a motion to stop international roaming in 2012, which gathered momentum and resulted in the 'roam like you're at home' rules that EU citizens have enjoyed since 2017.

Gather like-minded individuals, make some noise and effect change, urged Professor Alemanno, explaining how lobbying benefits social dialogue because "European Institutions want to hear many more voices". He suggested it can legitimise causes, mobilise and broaden membership, and level the playing field for advocacy (an equaliser). It is also good for democracy, transparency and accountability, and makes people more humble, involved and happy because it promotes connections and bonds, according to a Swiss study.

"Social Europe is up for grabs," he said. "It's time to mainstream the approaches, pick the battles, and make it happen!"

Question time

Several representatives from civil society in the audience questioned the use of the term 'enforcers' in relation to implementing the Social Pillar, saying they naturally do their best on the ground, but Member States and EU Institutions need to make laws and policies in line with social rights, their obligations, and of course budgetary constraints.

Professor Alemanno offered the term 'enablers' as a replacement for 'enforcers', but stressed that the question people should be asking is not what Europe can do for them, but what NGOs can do to bring more affected citizens into the conversation. Right now, this is not happening enough because they "can't professionalise" and somehow pierce the bubbles and scale the ivory towers. He said there are untapped voices and talents out there, people like students and retirees with time and energy to invest in the cause.

Another delegate found the idea of giving citizens the responsibility of leveraging the EU a bit rich. But, the speaker's experience of applying the ten tips and professionalising citizen advocacy showed that there is a change happening, with increasingly active and engaged citizens. Like-minded people and allies with the tools, resources and time to join the fight, raise awareness and draft complaints can unleash collective power that has impact, he suggested. "Find people who want to give back to society, to make it a better place to live in!"A delegate representing poverty networks across Europe said they had direct experience on the ground, fighting for minimum income and social rights as key principles of the Pillar, but the little funding they have is jeopardised when they do advocacy or lobbying in the strict sense of the words.

The professor conceded the challenge in the semantic interpretation of the terms and spoke of the general funding, political and democratic struggles currently at play in the "trans-national space". He wondered out loud about the role of private philanthropy in funding social projects to fill public shortfalls in the event of political extremes "chilling" the enthusiasm for the Social Pillar, concluding with the question: How comfortable would we be with one or several families or foundations paying for it?

A representative of a European network for equality bodies distinguished between the European Social Charter (as legally binding) and the Social Pillar (as a proclamation only). She also asked how the professor's approach works in reactive versus proactive situations (i.e. How it stands up when things have already gone wrong and parties seek redress?).

The speaker argued that too many instruments like collective complaints are still underutilised. People are now starting to appreciate the power of the ECI, and its major added value for the Social Pillar (and Charter) as a framework for mobilising changes to the "social norm". In the end, new regulations or directives only make a difference when well implemented, he added as a nod to the ACIG 2018 theme

"We have come a long way in 60 years. From the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, there is now a strong European and international commitment to uphold fundamental values, rights and social objectives."

> Reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe, 2017



One delegate offered a work around on using (or not using) the term "lobbying" is to call it "transparency" actions. And the fact remains that it is hard to communicate consistently throughout the hundreds of European regions and "penetrate higher echelons". The professor applauded the approach and acknowledged that road blocks and opaque aspects across the EU are ever-present, but the more "transparency" or communication on the needs and issues, the better. His advice: Europeanisation and integration is now so profound that it could be time to stop thinking in terms of EU level and Member State level. To penetrate the bubbles, he suggested stakeholders need to develop soft skills and put their feet in the shoes of their interlocutor. They also need to push hard, secure meetings and prepare for them carefully - using common language and personal stories to show how people are really affected.

"It is up to us to ensure that the handwriting of the European Social Model is clearly visible in everything we do."

> President Juncker. Strasbourg, 22 October 2014

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№ WORKSHOPS

Rapporteurs assigned to each of the six parallel workshops had just a few hours to assemble a set of cogent messages and recommendations to be presented in the afternoon to the whole conference.



- 'No one left behind': How can the Sustainable Development 2 Goals ensure inclusive implementation of the Pillar?
- Implementing the Pillar through the European Semester
- Adult learning and skills: a key contribution to the Pillar
- The enabling and supporting role of social services



Workshops Workshops



WORKSHOP 1

How can EU funding support the implementation of the Pillar at national and EU levels?

The Social Pillar strives to reaffirm and further strengthen relevant rights and principles in support of equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions and social protection, as well as enhanced social inclusion.

It will be implemented through the European Semester and a reference for the design of the post-2020 EU financial programming period. All four funding instruments managed by DG EMPL – European Social Fund (ESF), Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) and Employment and Social Innovation programme (EaSI) - play a key role in delivering on the Social Pillar and the social and employment priorities endorsed in the context of the European Semester.

Claude Cahn (United Nations Human Rights Office) argued that links should be established or strengthened between the human rights frameworks and standards and the European Social Pillar and European Semester processes. The MFF post 2020 should embed the principle "nothing about us without us".

Luk Zelderloo (EASPD and Social Services Europe) confirmed that the MFF post 2020 should be based on key values and principles of the European Union, accessible to all social stakeholders and comprehensive enough to cover the different needs of the social services sector. He urged the EU to maintain high on its agenda its leading role in pushing forward the reform of social care systems (i.e. deinstitutionalisation and transition to community-based case).

Following these impulse statements, participants reflected on how the funding instruments should be used to help implement the principles enshrined in the Social Pillar. Discussions revolved around how to align funding to the Pillar's 20 principles, improve synergies between EU funds for implementing it, simplify the process (i.e. results-based management, streamlining of rules), and strengthen partnerships (identify partners, capacity-building, monitoring).

> Need stronger participation, more secure funding and the big unknown... What happens to the Social Pillar after the next budget?

Take-homes from the session, reported during the afternoon plenary by Freek Spinnewijn (European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless)

More participation of stakeholders

- Local stakeholders. NGOs. social service providers, target groups are key
- Monitoring committees, pooling similar projects, and co-production are tools to enhance involvement of stakeholders
- Stronger/binding code of conduct on partnership covering all EMPL funds
- ▶ Bureaucracy stands in the way
- Stronger EU guidelines to avoid goldplating at national level; coordinated audits at EU and national levels
- ➤ Alignment of rules across funds to simplify the process

More/secure money... an ever-present challenge

- → 30% ESF+ for social inclusion
- ➤ Capture all groups also most vulnerable
- ➤ All 20 principles must be covered
- Human rights as a tool to set priorities

The big unknown: What happens to the Social Pillar after the next budget?

➤ How will EU investment Fund – the current EFSI (loans) relate to other funds (grants)?



NORKSHOP 2

'No one left behind': How can the Sustainable Development Goals ensure inclusive implementation of the Pillar?

There are clear and strong links between the implementation of the Social Pillar and achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The workshop provided participants an opportunity to share examples of transferable actions, initiatives and practices to implement the SDGs and Social Pillar in a coherent manner, ensuring that no one is left behind.

How can implementing the Pillar's principles contribute to achieving the SDGs, and vice versa? What obstacles could potentially hamper successful implementation? How can civil society organisations working at various levels in Member States contribute to the Pillar's success?

How can implementation include all socially excluded groups? These and other questions were tackled in the session. The answers to which inform how national administrations and European and national civil society organisations foresee their contribution to the upcoming reflection paper, 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030'. They also feed into the Commission's multi-stakeholder platform, created to follow up and exchange best practices on SDG implementation with all actors.

Chaired by Inmaculada Placencia-Porrero, senior expert in the Disability and Inclusion Unit of DG EMPL, a panel of experts gave impulse statements before the room broke into group discussions. The experts included **Susanne Bosman**, Programme Associate at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Catherine **Naughton**, Director of the European Disability Forum and **Dejan Bojanic**, Vice President of the European Youth Forum.

> Need to identify the problem, align instruments (a two-way street), gather better data, and improve accountability (in words, deeds and funds)

Take-homes from the session, reported during the afternoon plenary by **Danielle van Kalmthout** (Gezinsbond and COFACE):

Vulnerable groups

- ▶ Break down into 'groups in vulnerable situations' and identify their needs
- Ensure participation of rights holders
- Collect and provide data (disaggregated, open, comparable, cross-national) on vulnerable groups for common monitoring
- ➤ Social scoreboard should also reflect the 20 principles

Contribution of SDGs in implementing the Pillar, and vice versa?

- Document and align the different instruments (stop duplication of work)
- ➤ Overcome silos
- ➤ SDGs and the Pillar as vehicles for implementing human rights on the ground

Civil society and EU/Member States to achieve targets

- Commitment and accountability to a longterm vision; political will for implementation and avoid delays
- ➤ Financial structural investment (Structural Funds, ESF, etc.)
- ➤ Indicators on impact, also on beneficiaries
- ➤ Civil society; remind authorities of their political commitments and legal obligations
- + help to facilitate national implementation

Workshops

Workshops



▶ WORKSHOP 3

Implementing the Pillar through the European Semester

Participants analysed what has already been done this year to incorporate the Social Pillar in the European Semester and discussed ways to further support its implementation.

Questions during the workshops included: What role does the European Semester play in implementing the Pillar? What are the possible benefits of further boosting interaction with civil society stakeholders on the European Semester process? How can civil society contribute to the analytical side and help to implement the Semester's recommendations?

Chaired by Jeroen Jutte. Head of Unit for Employment and social aspects of the European Semester at DG EMPL, a panel of experts kicked off the discussion by sharing their views and experiences. The panel included **Peter Verhaeghe** (Caritas Europa), Gilberto Pelosi (the Social Platform), Mariana Trigo Pereira (Cabinet of the Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security of Portugal) and Eha Lannes (Minister of Social Protection, Estonia).

This was followed by an interactive and open debate between civil society organisations with first-hand experience of the social issues at stake, and representatives of European and national institutions responsible for designing and implementing policy responses, which generated several valuable takehomes. Conclusions of the workshop were scheduled to be shared in June at the high-level Bulgarian Presidency conference on the implementation of the Pillar.

> Need to mainstream social indicators, better balance social and economic concerns (transversal approaches). capitalise on the window of opportunity, promote greater transparency and encourage bottom up monitoring

Take-homes from the session, reported during the afternoon plenary by **Conny Reuter** (Solidar)

General agreement: The European Semester should be used to support Pillar implementation

- Transversal approaches advised
- Mainstreaming and developing further social indicators is necessary
- Social and economic concerns should be better balanced

The Pillar provides a window of opportunity for promoting social dimension

➤ In the longer term, the anti-cyclical approach to recovery is crucial

Civil dialogue is complementary to social dialogue

Need for empowerment of civil society at local, regional and national levels

Financial support to implementation through all Structural Funds Role of the European Semester

- Implementation of all Pillar principles and monitoring it in Members States
- ➤ The Semester process needs to be transparent at all stages

The analytical side of the Semester is very important but civil society has limited capacities to contribute to it

- The social indicators need to be developed and improved
- Capacity-building and networking with all stakeholders

Civil society support to implementation (watchdog role)

The civil society's commitment to implementation depends on content of CSRs



Adult learning and skills: a key contribution to the Pillar

The way we live and work, the skills we need to thrive in our lives and the trajectories of our careers are rapidly evolving.

These changes, driven by technological innovation, demographics, shifting business models and the rapidly changing nature of work itself, significantly alter the skills required to succeed in the labour market. By investing in adult learning and skills, companies and societies can reap the benefits of productive, innovative and experienced citizens who continue to adapt and deliver over time.

Dana Bachmann. Head of Unit for VET. Apprenticeships and Adult Learning at DG EMPL and Niamh O'Reilly, CEO of AONTAS, Ireland's national adult learning organisation, presented a few concepts to kick off discussions. Workshop participants were introduced to the European Agenda for Adult Learning and the Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways, and provided examples of EU measures that support Member States in developing adult learning systems and, in doing so, supporting implementation of key Social Pillar principles.

The concept of adult learning, the EU policies that promote it, and its role in the implementation of the Pillar were discussed. Participants identified how civil society can support this. Questions raised included: Which aspects of the European Agenda for Adult Learning and the Upskilling Pathways initiative are particularly relevant to your organisation? How could your organisation support regional or local authorities in implementing the initiative, and by extension the Social Pillar?

Take-homes from the session, reported during the afternoon plenary by Gina Ebner (European Association for the Education of Adults)

- ➤ Awareness for adult learning we do it when we share experiences and raise awareness (benefits!)
- ➤ Understanding the needs from the individual learner to communities, companies, countries ... (for the best provision)
- Reaching out, informing, empowering ... (for access and participation)
- ➤ Dialogue, partnership and transfer of knowledge: across countries, sectors, civil society, ... (for the quality, governance and implementation)

Need to establish who/where/ when/how, then reach out, inform and empower through dialogue, partnerships and knowledge transfer



Workshops

Workshops



№ WORKSHOP 5

The enabling and supporting role of social services

The workshop explored ways in which social services can help to implement the Pillar at national and EU level. The Pillar emphasises the right to quality social services, helping people to participate in society, while at the same time managing transition into the labour market.

In the context of the changing world of work, demographic and societal changes, social services need to not only deal with increasing and more complex demands, but also enable people to integrate into society and the labour market.

Participants delved into the strategies and ways of achieving these objectives. But how can European and national civil society organisations as well as public administrations contribute? The discussion covered ways to increase outreach, ensure quality, improve enabling functions, and prepare for the future. This workshop also sought to secure participants' buy-in and commitment to implementing and promoting the Pillar's respective principles.

The workshop opened with impulse statements from **Quinta Ansem** (EAPN Netherlands), Ana Rădulescu (Romanian Centre for Training and Evaluation in Social Work and International Federation of Social Workers), Matthias Schulze-Böing (MainArbeit Kommunales Jobcenter Offenbach) and **Thomas Bignal** (Federation of European Social Employers).

Take-homes from the session, reported during the afternoon plenary by **Heather Roy** (Eurodiaconia)

- > A virtuous circle: planning, design, investment, capacity building strategies through partnerships, co-production and integrated approach, monitoring and measurement
- ➤ Outreach: establishing human resource strategies – diversity of staff and the right attitude - empowering the users, coproducing - engaging the users, tapping into modern technologies,
- Quality: sharpening up monitoring and measurement, focusing on the outcomes, co-producing, moving from cost to investment, building partnerships with relevant actors
- ➤ Enabling function: putting in place integrated strategies and services, empowering outcomes, staff training, partnerships for learning, integrated approach
- > Forward looking: investing in skills and infrastructure, cross-sectoral partnerships, long-term approaches, strategic commissioning and public procurement. synergies between sectors including health, data gathering, using the European Semester

Need to consider crosscutting issues, attitudes to outreach and an enabling environment; quality issues and 'integrated services' not well covered in the Pillar; invest now to futureproof services for 20 years



№ WORKSHOP 6

Social economy and social enterprises: A boost for implementing the Pillar?

The workshop explored the competitive advantages of the social economy and social enterprises in putting certain aspects of the Pillar into practice. Things like equal access to labour markets, fair working conditions, access to care and essential services, as well as skills and lifelong learning.



Workshop participants were directed to focus on messages that highlight how the social economy can make implementing the Pillar more effective.

On each table, discussions were organised around key questions: What can the social economy and social enterprises deliver that others cannot, and/ or under what conditions can they deliver better than others? What evidence and examples are there of the social economy delivering a better price, thereby contributing to the sustainability of welfare systems? What are the advantages of the social economy and social enterprises in terms of service quality? What is the broader added value to society of an active social economy?

Denis Stokkink (Pour la Solidarité), acting as Chair, opened the workshop by reminding participants that this session was an opportunity to discuss in depth the role of social economy and social enterprises in putting the European Pillar of social rights into practice. It would build on previous discussions during the Social Summit side event in Gothenburg and the Bulgarian presidency conference in Sofia.

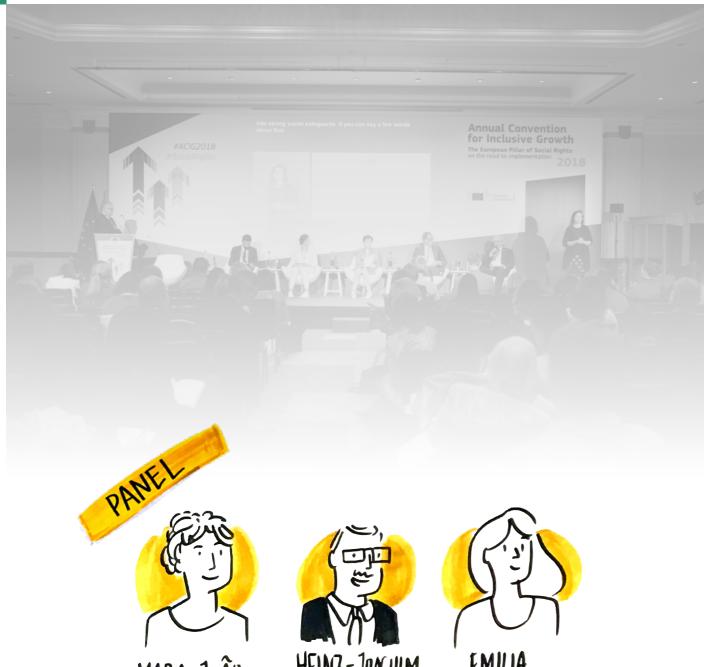
Professor Marthe Nyssens (Catholic University of Louvain) then explained how recent international research points clearly to a dynamism, where social enterprises are emerging from different backgrounds. Some emerge from traditional social economy, some come from the non-profit sector and some have roots in for-profit businesses. It is important for policy making to recognise this diversity, and both the challenges and opportunities it brings.

Take-homes from the session, reported during the afternoon plenary by **Stephen Barnett** (EUCLID network)

- Social economy involves real people: it is the place where citizens meet
- Pay attention to its direct impact (what) and indirect value (how)
- Strengthen each other's capacity to: Innovate <> Deliver <> Engage <> Advocate
- > Keep the heart of who we are (remain true to the spirit of the social economy)
- Co-creation with all and through all stages

Recognise direct impact (the what) and indirect value (the how); strategic procurement is an opportunity for social enterprises, entrepreneurship, and co-creation; empower and build capacity from start-up to scale-up at the national level

Reflections Reflections



MARIA JOÂU RODRIGUEZ



HEINZ-JOACHIM HÖFER







LARA MONTERO



№ REFLECTIONS

A truly Social Europe ... it's in the balance

Reflecting on the ideas and messages explored during the plenaries, parallel workshops, side events and informal exchanges, the panel covered diverse topics, from fundamental transformations in modern working norms, digital developments and migration challenges, to lifelong learning, coordinated social indicators, and the role of EU legislation, political accountability, the Semester and the EU budget in maintaining and promoting a truly Social Europe.

Here, the European Parliament (EP) plays a vital role in ensuring the Pillar can deliver a welfare system fit for the 21st century with the backing of all political groups, according to MEP Maria João Rodrigues, a member of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee, and former Minister for Qualifications and Employment in Portugal.

We need to prepare ourselves for a big transformation, she said, in everything from energy and digital developments to the way migration is managed - major challenges shaping society and stoking the fires of social inequality. Today, millions of people working in the digital economy are without secure contracts and basic rights, have no access to formal training and social protection. This trend has to stop, she stressed, or it will "undermine welfare systems for everyone".

These are key pillars and the EP is fighting so that all Europeans can count on clear and decent labour contracts with guaranteed protection under the welfare system. Convergence like this demands a proactive stance in the Member States, and that the upcoming EU budget is fully aligned with the Social Pillar's mission and adapted to the situation on the ground, not just in the Eurozone. "The EP is adamant that the Pillar must be for all Member States. all European citizens, not just the Eurozone," Mrs Rodrigues confirmed.

Heinz-Joachim Höffer, Mayor of Alterkirchen (DE) and member of the European Committee of the Regions, explained the role of regional leaders in translating the Pillar into social safeguards. "Our institution is on the front line," he said. It is a channel for communicating and transferring the European message to local authorities, making sure it filters from the higher to lower levels, where the action takes place.

He offered practical examples, which help create understanding among ordinary people, from the importance of lifelong learning to social/affordable housing for the poor, to creative policies that harness technology to overcome obstacles Member States face, leading to improved social protection, health and safety across new forms of work.



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Stockholm, the 'social' city ...

With their large and diverse populations covering the whole socio-economic spectrum, cities are living, breathing examples of Social Europe, showing what works and what does not.

Emilia Bjuggren, Stockholm's Vice-Mayor for Labour Market, Culture and Sport, explained how her city's unified, long-term vision for employment and social inclusion complements many of the Pillar's principles. She underlined the importance of implementing them through partnerships, including through EUROCITIES, which as an organisation is firmly committed to social rights for all.

For this, local development programmes are key to tackling social inequality, she stressed, mentioning the 'Stockholm for everyone' concept: "We recently established local development programmes for each of Stockholm's 14 districts to capture their unique qualities and solve complex problems systematically." Whether it is better language courses so that newcomers, especially migrant women, can integrate into the labour market faster, or lifelong learning projects, cities play a crucial role in implementing the Social Pillar, she confirmed. Its success demands "joint ownership" at different government levels, with the EU and Member States seeing cities as a full partner.

"Engage more with cities to use our rich experience ... in implementing the Pillar and policies," she urged, making sure that Cohesion Funds matches spending with priorities on the ground after 2020.

Reflections

At the coalface

As President of the Social Platform, **Jana Hainsworth** knows all too well the task ahead.
Her members are working at the so-called "coalface of implementing the Pillar", according to the moderator, **Sean Klein**.

"The Pillar really is our day-to-day business," she said. The content may not be new, but high-level commitment to the 20 principles brings "greater political will to hold authorities accountable".

The key concern is longevity, she added, making sure the Pillar is not a "token gesture" that risks being left out of the next political cycle. If better integrated within the framework of economic monitoring tools and embedded in the Semester process, social issues can remain front and centre of all ongoing dialogue.

Social Platform members are busy in the field and can act as watchdogs to hold governments to account and monitor the Pillar's implementation, mostly through soft instruments. More ambitious, consistently-applied tools and measures would be welcomed.

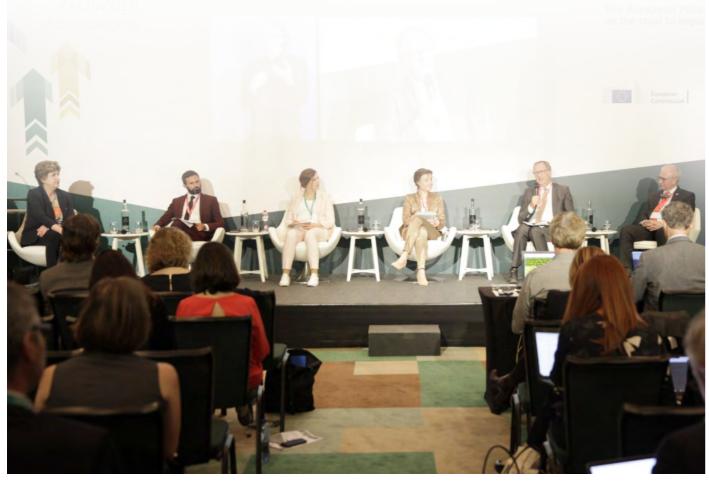
The European Social Network's members face similar challenges in implementing the Pillar consistently in terms of the quality and coverage of social services they provide. The Network's Chief Executive **Alfonso Lara Montero** said indicators and benchmarking assessment exercises are critical for coordination efforts at different levels.

This, he confirmed, comes down to political will and understanding of the need to "go beyond national" interests to reach local and regional authorities, especially for social service provision.

The European Social Network represents over 200,000 social services professionals in 33 countries, funding and regulating social services across a range of sectors, from welfare and housing to employment services.

"We should also remember that public social services are a very important employer; between 2000-2009 they created over 4 million new jobs. It is their statutory duty to protect the most vulnerable, families, children, the disabled and elderly ... and the Pillar impacts their work profoundly."

"This doesn't mean they haven't been doing this work for many years," he said. "They have ... and now they have the framework to move the agenda forward!"



Your job? Just implement the Pillar!



Joost Korte, Director-General of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, remarked on the lively and sometimes provocative discussions during the morning plenary, which suggested the job of implementing the Pillar would all be up to civil society.

"I can correct that a bit," he offered. "I'm new in this job and I was interviewed by [Commissioner] Marianne Thyssen and by the President [Juncker] himself who said ... your job is easy; you just have to implement the Pillar. That's all I want!" The audience cheered as Mr Korte explained what these clear "marching orders" meant for him and his team.

They have to overcome any remaining opposition (in Member States and even internally) to the three tenets that can deliver on the Pillar's promise: **legislation**, the **European Semester**, and the MFF or 'EU budget'.

He outlined some of the ambitious legislation that the Commission has put on the table, which the European Council and Parliament need to decide on, including the Work-Life Balance proposal, the Accessibility Act, and the Social Fairness Package, which could lead to a new European Labour Authority, as well as recommendations for the Council on Access to Social Protection for those working on non-standard contracts (up to 40% of the labour market!).

What protection and benefits do they have? How do we cover them? Can the systems cope? These people need to be included, he continued, but they also need to pay into the "financial reservoir". This is important

work, which the Pillar helps to push forward. Progress on the European Semester is in full swing, he suggested. The country reports released in March will be followed by country-specific recommendations tailored to priorities laid out in the Social Pillar, making the principles real for all Europeans. This process informs the Commission's recommendations, which it hopes the Council will adopt so that Member States can get on with the task of implementing it.

Lastly, the Director-General outlined the Commission's work on the much-discussed EU budget, which is being prepared as we speak, he said. On 29 May, new proposals for the funding regulations, European Social Fund and all the other funds are expected. "You heard this morning from the Commissioner ... she said not a cent less for social!" He acknowledged that with only 27 Member States next year, the pot will be smaller, but Social Europe is enshrined in the Treaties, and the ESF is a key priority enshrined within the Social Pillar.

With competing needs and legitimate challenges, there will be much discussion over this and about how Member States spend the budget envelop, once finally agreed, and here again the Pillar will drive these developments, he predicted.

This makes NGOs, as well as the Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and others present in the room all-the-more important. "It is a challenging time for Europe, so I'm glad the Pillar is there to help boost Europe going forward," he concluded.

The Wrap-Up



The road ahead looms large

The intensity of the exchanges at ACIG 2018 was a testament to civil society's will and ambition to deliver on the promise of the Social Pillar. Yet with so much resting on the next European Semester and current negotiations over the EU budget, an air of uncertainty hung over the room.

For many present, Gothenburg feels almost like a distant memory because their full attention is now on the road ahead, which looms large as Member States and local and regional stakeholders grapple with the realities of funding and implementing the Pillar on the ground, where it counts.

Any suggestion that the European Commission is resting on its laurels after the years of hard work that went into the Pillar are unfounded, and it is by no means resigned to accepting less money for social projects, services and welfare in the coming MFF, **Joost Korte** assured the audience during the final wrap-up. As Director-General of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, he knows the Commission will be "very ambitious" and that the final result "will not be for lack of ambition".

He recapped by thanking participants and organisers for making a very busy day of activities such a success. "It has been a fantastic showcase of [civil society's] commitment to the Social Pillar," he said. The many excellent examples and cases heard

during the day showed that the spirit of a Social Europe lives strong. They also provided clear signals that further reflection is needed. "We have to work together to make it a success," he concluded.

Word cloud experiment

While the organisers set up for the panel discussion, the moderator Sean Klein started a word cloud experiment. "How can we make the Social Pillar a success in one word?" he asked.

Thanks to a bit of technological wizardry, delegates' responses appeared instantly on the overhead screen. Popular words became bigger as participants suggested them

"EEEEEEEE, lifelong learning, funding, political will, commit, binding, love, partnership, reality, people power, enforce, policy, political honesty, binding, ..."
The audience had spoken ... or written, at least!



"Looking ahead, the debate should be about how to adapt our social models to current and future challenges and galvanise Europe's social spirit ... The economic, social and political case for a social Europe is solid. What we need is to build a consensus on its future shape."

Reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe, 2017

▲ SIDE EVENTS

Sharing, comparing, aligning, improving ...

ACIG's side events play a key enabling role as they offer stakeholders the chance to compare, align and generally boost their contribution. The activities created an open platform for nurturing cooperation and innovative ideas.

How to use transnational human rights jurisprudence and monitoring to facilitate the implementation of the Social Rights Pillar?

Organised by **FEANTSA** and **PICUM**, with the support of **UNOHCHR** and **CoE**.

This side event focused on three possible ways of using the transnational human rights framework in the context of the Pillar.

- The European Pillar of Social Rights is to a large extent inspired by the Council of Europe's Social Charter. The European Committee of Social Rights monitors the implementation of the Charter based on reports received from Member States. The Committee has found that most EU Member States are in breach of one or more social rights which are also part of the Pillar.
- → How to use human rights case law (Europe/ United Nations) to set minimum standards for some of the Pillar's principles? Very few NGOs and other stakeholders have considered case law as a source of binding obligation on Member States. FEANTSA (through the Housing Rights Watch) has conducted an in-depth analysis of transnational case law on the right to housing, which could be a basis for minimum standards for Principle 19 of the Pillar.
- → How to use human rights frameworks to allocate EU resources for the Pillar? The Brussels-based office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has published a paper on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). The paper suggests five priority areas for EU funding based on a detailed analysis of the human rights record of EU Member States.



Community-based support and services as pillars for an inclusive European Union? Join the debate!

Organised by the European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care, COFACE, EASPD and ENIL

Investment in community-based services offers a holistic way of implementing the Social Pillar. This session was organised as a dialogue, bringing together stakeholders from different backgrounds (civil society, policy makers, researchers, etc.) to talk about the link between community-based support and the different principles of the Pillar. The discussion encompassed all principles, including inclusive education, training and lifelong learning, active support to employment, work-life balance, childcare and support to children, social protection, health care, inclusion of persons with disabilities, long-term care, housing and assistance for the homeless.

The European added value of investing in children and youth in vulnerable situations

Organised by the EU Alliance for Investing

This side event discussed how empowering children and young people through more child-centred policy making can provide a means of ending the cycle of disadvantage. Such an approach can build on the potential impact of the European Pillar of Social Rights on child development outcomes.

The session set the tone for the discussions by looking at case studies of promoting children's active participation in local communities. The activity drew connections between the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, child development, and societal wellbeing. The event highlighted how the EU should invest more in these types of interventions to ensure the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, including Principle 11. The next Multiannual Financial Framework should ensure that adequate resources are allocated to achieve these objectives.

Side Events Side Events



The Future of Work and the European Pillar of Social Rights: How to foster inclusive labour markets to reduce poverty and inequality?

Organised by **EAPN**, the **European Economic and** Social Committee, the European Trade Union **Confederation** and **SOLIDAR**

The European Pillar of Social Rights can play a key role in responding to the new trends shaping labour markets (non-standard employment, digitalisation, globalisation, the gig economy etc.). The Pillar has an important role in addressing these challenges, to ensure quality and sustainable work and to fight against poverty and inequality.

This activity brought together social partners, civil society, and the European Economic and Social Committee to propose positive ways of working together for a meaningful delivery of the Pillar. It is a timely and crucial discussion in the context of the Social Fairness Package, not least the proposal to expand access to social security to all workers and European Labour Authority, while also looking at the European Semester as key framework for implementationEU Member States.



From principle to action: Implementing the Pillar at local level

Organised by the **European Social Network** and **EUROCITIES**

Local authorities and social services are crucial when it comes to the implementation of various principles put forward by the Pillar, specifically in the area of social protection. This side event explored the relevance of the Pillar for local stakeholders, how the Pillar can act as a framework to support and engage them in its implementation, and specific examples of how local authorities are already implementing some key principles.

This includes innovative children's services that make a difference to children's lives in their most formative years, contributing to Principle 11 of the Pillar, and also how public services are promoting a more integrated approach to ensure social rights are upheld for all. The debate also explored ways that employment and social services can coordinate in the implementation of the Pillar's principles. Participants had the chance to discuss senior local-level professionals' views on the Pillar, and examples of successful implementation.





Socially-aware speed dating!

Speed dating (usually) without the romance ... is how ACIG likes to pitch this session because it is a fast and efficient way to meet social inclusion innovators and project leaders. As in previous editions, this format fostered information-sharing, the exchange of best practice, insights into new initiatives and the chance to build relationships and networks across Europe.



How does it work?

Project coordinators briefly discuss the goals, funding and outcomes of their projects before their audience moves to another table and another project. The showcased projects were selected for their successful practices in implementing the Social Pillar on the ground, as well as their proven impact, sustainability and transferability to other EU countries or sectors.

The following projects were presented:

Diakonie housing counselling for asylum seekers and refugees in Vienna

Presented by Diakonie Austria, submitted via Eurodiaconia

Diakonie housing counselling is a social counselling centre in Vienna. Its target groups are asylum seekers and third country nationals who are beneficiaries of this protection status, and it supports their search for accommodation in Vienna. The prevention of unlawful and forced evictions is one of the project's most important activities, as is finding adequate, stable and lasting accommodation to secure social inclusion and facilitate the integration process.

Fighting Loneliness (FILO)

Presented by the City of Rotterdam, submitted via the European Network of Social Authorities

Society is challenged by a growing number of ageing people who live longer and experience loneliness, and by a change in social cohesion between (groups of) people. Professionals need to know which interventions can be applied, what their role is in implementing them, and the skills they need to carry them out. The aim of this project is to exchange innovative, effective and efficient practices, approaches and methods for alleviating loneliness among the elderly. It also aims to improve the skills and competences of students, professionals and volunteers in the field of care and welfare.

Side Events

The opening speech of Marianne Thyssen

Early Vocational Rehabilitation

Presented by **Heliomare**, submitted via the **European Platform for Rehabilitation**

The Early Intervention Network (Foundation) provides services at an early stage of an individual's absence from work due to illness or disability.

They take a multidisciplinary, personalised approach to provide individual and group treatment, guidance and after care. They determine health care or vocational rehabilitation needs, and aim to resume workplace reintegration immediately after the start of rehabilitation. This project has been recognised as a success story in the Netherlands to help reduce social exclusion for the unemployed.

➤ New Guaranteed Income Scheme in Catalonia

Presented by the **Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs** and **Families of the Catalan Government,**submitted via the **European Social Network**

The Guaranteed Citizenship Income (RGC) scheme is a social benefit which guarantees the minimum of a dignified life for people and families in poverty, in order to promote their autonomy and active participation in society. In its deployment (6 months so far) more than 48 000 applications have been registered. Currently, more than 26 000 families (about 60 000 people) receive the income.

Disability, Equality, Security, Careers (DESC)

Presented by LADAPT, submitted via EASPD

The project aims to promote equal employment opportunities and secure professional career paths for young people with disabilities in Europe.

The project involved identifying promising practices, creating a toolkit and training programme for staff of service providers, and developing the European Disability Employment Week.

The European Pillar of Social Rights meets the European Solidarity Corps

Submitted and presented by the **European Volunteer Centre**

The European Solidarity Corps is a EU initiative to create opportunities for young people to volunteer or work in projects, in their own country or abroad, that benefit communities and people around Europe. The European Volunteer Centre shared its experience of hosting two Corps trainees, and its contribution in implementing the Social Pillar.

For instance, the trainees were involved in the Tandem project that facilitates volunteering opportunities in solidarity-focused organisations for third country migrants and refugees, in order to support their integration and combat stigmatisation.



A detailed description of the projects can be found on the 2018 ACIG website: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventsId=1299&furtherEvents=yes

♠ The opening speech of Marianne Thyssen

EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills & Labour Mobility



Dear colleagues and friends, dear Minister,

Thank you for being here today.

What we will discuss, and all the work we have done together on Social Europe for the past 3 years, is about real people.

It is about us, our children, our friends and neighbours. Today and tomorrow.

I had to reflect on that also as, on the way here, I saw the exhibition on the European Pillar of Social Rights by the entrance.

An exhibition about real people sharing their real experiences

There's Asko Koponen, from Finland, who got support from the EU Globalisation Fund after Nokia shut down. He managed to reskill and now has a new job.

There's Aristea Zachari, from Greece. The Youth Guarantee helped her to find an apprenticeship. Now, she is setting up business as a hairdresser.

There's Mateusz Hanslik, from Poland, who took 7 months of paternity leave. So he could spend time with his kids and his wife could continue with her career.

Three Europeans who remind us, that the principles of the Pillar are not abstract. But that they make a real difference to people's lives.

The exhibition will be travelling through Europe. Lots of people will get the chance to see it.

I hope it will give us here today an extra impulse, to make the Pillar a reality.

In this room we have everyone present to make a success out of the Pillar:

Representatives from EU Members States – from all levels of government. Trade unions, civil society, academics and concerned citizens who believe that the Pillar can make a change for the better.

I started the Convention because I believe firmly that civil dialogue can greatly contribute to reconnect our policy-making with real people and real lives.

This dialogue has been growing stronger ever since.

Two years ago, we had our first Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth.

At the time, the Pillar was already on everyone's lips. We received from you many contributions and recommendations on how to shape it.

You also helped to shape many of our proposals that are at the core of the Pillar.

For example: You helped us take the impact of the Work-Life Balance Directive on families and carers into account.

The opening speech of Marianne Thyssen

Useful Links

You helped us take stock of the Investing in Children Recommendation.

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And you helped us to make sure that our proposal on Access to Social Protection reflects the concerns of Europeans.

You pushed us from the start to be as ambitious as possible as far as the Pillar is concerned.

You lobbied for high standards of social protection, equal opportunities, work-life balance and quality services.

So I want to sincerely thank you for your commitment, enthusiasm and support. I know well that it cannot be taken for granted.

Exactly one year and one day ago, we adopted the Pillar of Social Rights.

The European Pillar of Social Rights is the most ambitious social initiative of the European Union in decades.

It's our compass for upwards social convergence in Europe, and our rulebook for the new world of work.

Today, I think we can take some pride in what we have achieved.

But we can't pause for too long. Now is the time to put the Pillar into practice.

Last November, at the first European Social Summit in twenty years, we made history. Social history to be precise.

The European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council on behalf of twenty-eight Member States jointly proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights.

We now have a joint responsibility to implement the Pillar. Each on our own level, each according to our own competences. The Commission has already taken important initiatives. Initiatives that I know are close to your heart:

We proposed an initiative on Work Life Balance. So that parents and carers can better combine work and family life.

So that men and women can share caring responsibilities more fairly. So that women can have a more equal position on the labour market.

We presented a proposal for Access to Social Protection, to improve social protection of people with atypical contracts and the self-employed.

We continue to support young people in finding a job and gaining valuable life experience, with the Youth Guarantee and the European Solidarity Corps.

We keep pushing for a European Accessibility Act. So that people with disabilities can participate more fully in work and in society.

But we cannot implement the Pillar by ourselves.

In Europe, mainly the Member States are responsible for social affairs. We expect them to take their responsibility and be good for their word.

To monitor performance, we have made the Pillar part and parcel of the European Semester, our annual process for policy coordination.

The indicators of our new social scoreboard help us to keep track of progress in the Member States. Our Country Reports have never been so social.

And besides the Commission and Member States, social partners and civil society play an essential role in implementing the Pillar.

So I would like to ask you:

Continue to take part in the debate. Continue to provide us with your research, your analysis, your opinions.

Help us to keep track of the implementation of the Pillar. Point out success stories. And ring the alarm bell when things go wrong.

Help us to keep the Pillar at the top of agenda: in Europe. In the Member States. And in every company and organisation.

And when necessary, please remind the Member States of the commitment they made in Gothenborg.

Finally, help us to make sure our future EU budget also reflects the Pillar of social rights.

We are now discussing our next Multi-annual Financial Framework.

I will be honest: we are facing tough decisions.

The new budget will have to address new challenges, such as security and migration. At the same time, with the departure of the UK, the budget will be impacted.

As far as I am concerned, we should focus on what matters most: people.

But I don't make that decision on my own.
I need to convince a lot of people in Europe.

So I need your support. When you go home today, please make your voice heard: not a cent less for social!

And I promise I will do my best, for a budget that invests not just in bricks and steel, but also in people.

Ladies and gentlemen.

In conclusion: we have come a long way.

Two years ago, the Pillar was still an idea in our minds, an ambition in our hearts.

This time last year, the Pillar was a proposal on paper.

Last November, the Pillar was a political commitment by all of Europe's leaders.

Now it is time to turn the Pillar into living and breathing reality, for all Europeans.

So let's roll up our sleeves and get to work!

I wish you a very successful conference.



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Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth 2018

#ACIG2018 #SocialRights

The European Pillar of Social Rights: on the road to implementation

INKS

EMP

ec.europa.e

site

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#ACIG2018 #SocialRights

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