

SECRETARIAT GENERAL

DIRECTORATE GENERAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW

DEPARTMENT OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER



Strasbourg, 30 November 2017

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**EUROPEAN SOCIAL COHESION PLATFORM
(PECS)**

2nd meeting
Strasbourg, 19 – 20 September 2017

DRAFT MEETING REPORT

I. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The meeting was opened by Mr Régis Brillat, Head of the European Social Charter Department, who stressed the role of the Platform not only to strengthen the transversal and intersectoral approach to social cohesion within the Council of Europe but also to give more visibility, impulsion and dynamism to it. The linkage to the European Social Charter - ratified by 43 member States - and social rights, as stated in the 2010 Council of Europe's New Strategy for Social Cohesion was essential. A better implementation of the European Social Charter would benefit from and contribute to social cohesion. To this end, cooperation activities with member states on the implementation of the European Social Charter could be strengthened if the social cohesion dimension was integrated, e.g.: through the participation of States representatives in the Platform. The Platform should also contribute to the Committee of Minister's considerations on future perspectives in this domain. The outcomes of the work of the first two-year mandate of the PECS will be reflected in the Secretary General's Report to the Committee of Ministers on the activities of the Platform, at the end of the year.

II. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA AND ORDER OF BUSINESS

2. The Platform adopted the agenda, as set out in Appendix 1 and the order of business.

III. ELECTION OF THE CHAIR AND THE VICE-CHAIR

3. The Platform elected Ms Rita Skrebiškienė (Lithuania) as Chair and Mr Joseph Gerada (Malta) as Vice-Chair for one-year term.

IV. DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE PREVIOUS PLENARY MEETING

IV.1 Developments within the Council of Europe

4. A written document, which was available before the meeting, focused on developments since the previous meeting of the PECS. The following oral information was also given:

i. Department of the European Social Charter

a. European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR)

5. Some of the main developments that have taken place since June 2016 concerning the Charter's monitoring mechanism, including the collective complaints procedure, were:

- January 2017: the Committee published its conclusions in respect of 34 States Parties on the articles of the Charter relating to "Employment, training and equal opportunities". The Committee identified several problems that many States Parties encountered when applying the Charter, for instance: insufficient protection against discrimination in employment on different grounds such as gender and sexual orientation, insufficient integration of persons with disabilities in mainstream education, the labour market and society in general and insufficient guarantee of equal rights between men and women in particular as regards equal pay. In some cases, in some countries, the efforts to combat unemployment and encourage job creation remained inadequate;
- the Committee was currently examining States' reports on the Charter provisions relating to 'Health, social security and social protection' and took several important decisions following collective complaints, which were mentioned during the presentation;
- information was given on pending complaints, with a highlight on the 15 complaints lodged by University Women of Europe - one complaint against each State Party to the complaint procedure - on the topic of equal pay for women and men; the committee declared this first time complaint on the topic admissible and will examine the merit

b. Governmental Committee of the European Social Charter

6. The main role of the Governmental Committee, composed by the States Parties to the Charter, was recalled: to examine conclusions of non-conformity of the previous year selected by the European Committee of Social Rights; this year on “Employment, training and equal opportunities”. The States concerned had to report on the measures taken to bring the conclusions into conformity. If the majority considered that the situation was not brought into conformity, a warning or a recommendation to the State concerned would be submitted to the Committee of Ministers which will address it to this State.

European Code of Social Security

7. The Governmental Committee was also dealing with the European Code of Social Security (“Code”), which was linked to Article 12.2 of the European Social Charter, and the following information was provided:

- the GC welcomed the signature by Ukraine of the Code in 2016 and further steps towards ratification;
- during the meeting in May, the Governmental Committee discussed and approved the draft Resolutions on application of the Code, which will be submitted to the Committee of Ministers for adoption.

c. Cooperation

8. Information was given on cooperation activities relating to the European Social Charter, such as with State Parties on non-accepted provisions or to support a good implementation of the Charter (such as a meeting in Ulyanovsk, Russian Federation, on 25-29 October) and the European Code of Social Security (meeting in Kyiv, Ukraine, in November).

⇒ For the meeting in Ulyanovsk, the Chair of the PECS has been invited to attend; in case of unavailability, the Vice-Chair will take part in the event.

- The Collaborative Platform on social and economic rights was launched in October 2015 by the participating organisations: the Council of Europe ([CoE](#)), the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency ([FRA](#)), the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions ([ENNHRI](#)) and the European Network of Equality Bodies ([EQUINET](#)). The Collaborative Platform CoE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET on social and economic rights should provide an opportunity to discuss ways to ensure that the European Social Charter (ESC) and other international human rights standards relating to economic and social rights are taken into account in the design and implementation of national legislation and practice. The 5th Meeting of the Collaborative Platform on Social and Economic Rights will take place in Riga, Latvia, and will focus on the implementation of Article 30 of the Charter - the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion.

⇒ The PECS was invited to nominate a representative for the Collaborative Platform CoE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET’s meeting in Riga, Latvia, on 26 September.

⇒ a PECS representative would be systematically invited to attend European Social Charter’s cooperation events as well as the meetings of the CoE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET Collaborative Platform.

ii. Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH)

9. In its mandate, the CDDH was instructed to undertake an analysis of the legal framework of the Organisation for the protection of social rights in our continent and in particular to analyse (i) the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights and (ii) other sources such as reports and decisions of those Council of Europe bodies having a mandate relating to social rights and their implications for the respective States Parties. On this basis, to identify good practices and formulate proposals to improve the implementation of social rights and facilitate the relationship between different European instruments for the protection of social rights.

- ⇒ In this framework, co-ordination would be ensured with the activities of the European Committee of Social Rights and the European Social Cohesion Platform (PECS).

10. Information was given on the work in progress within the drafting Group on Social Rights (CDDH-SOC), which is a sub-committee of the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH), composed of 15 member States and observers:

- at its 1st meeting (19-20 April 2017) the CDDH-SOC examined the draft report by a consultant, Ms Chantal Gallant (Belgium), on the legal protection of social rights within the Council of Europe;
- the following CDDH plenary stressed the need to better reflect in the draft report the diversity of national points of view with regard to Council of Europe's actions and mechanisms in the field of protection of social rights by removing the proposals for future activities,
- a consolidated draft report will be submitted to the CDDH-SOC for examination and adoption during its meeting (4-6 April 2018) in view of its adoption by the Group and its transmission to the CDDH for adoption in June 2018;
- the elaboration of a questionnaire aimed at identifying good practices and encouraging member States to seek new avenues to improve the implementation of social rights, with focus on legal and institutional aspects; this questionnaire was not overlapping with the one of the PECS from a social policies' point of view. The CDDH questionnaire was sent for replies to the Governmental Committee of the European Social Charter and for information to the PECS; the outcome should lead to a Guide on good practices on the implementation of social rights.

iii. European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG)

11. Mr Edwin LEFEBRE, Representative of the CDDG elaborated on the work of the CDDG in relation with PECS's activities. He recalled that the third pillar of the 2010 Strategy for Social Cohesion "Strengthening representation and the democratic decision making process and developing social dialogue and civic engagement" was particularly in line with the objectives and activities of the CDDG.

12. One of the relevant activities of the CDDG was the active promotion of the implementation of the 12 principles of Good Governance. Principle 11 covered Human rights, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion, more specifically "Social cohesion and the integration of disadvantaged areas are promoted" and "Access to essential services is preserved, in particular for the most disadvantaged sections of the population".

13. Current main on-going relevant outcomes were:

- new guidelines to ensure meaningful civil participation on political decisions; the purpose of these guidelines, based on good practices and Council of Europe standards, was to strengthen and facilitate participation of individuals, Ngo, societies at large, in political decision making; the draft guidelines were transmitted to the Committee of Ministers for adoption.
- the revision of Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2001)19 on the participation of citizens in local public life;
- the Compendium of the most relevant Council of Europe texts in the area of democracy.

iv. European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ)

14. The Chair of the CDEJ, Mr Markus Wolf, informed the Platform that, since its last meeting, Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on young people's access to rights has been adopted by the Committee of Ministers; this recommendation was a significant step forward because young people do have rights, but the access to rights, to information is not always accessed as easily as it should be. Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work has been adopted this year.

Mr Wolf stressed that:

- youth policy had an important role to play in the field of social cohesion, including by preparing the participation of in various processes such as the Council of Europe's co-management system, allowing youth organisations and governmental representatives to seat as equal partners in a joint committee;
- the No Hate Speech Campaign has been successful and would be implemented until the end of 2017.

v. Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI)

15. Due to the fact that social cohesion was a transversal issue, the CDMSI was promoting the mainstreaming of social cohesion throughout the Council of Europe, by ensuring that every individual within the 47 member states of the Council of Europe could enjoy their social rights. In particular, the right to freedom of expression online, with a special emphasis on vulnerable groups and young people. The aim was also to ensure that individuals can receive information without any discrimination.

16. The CDMSI was supervising the Committee of Experts on Media Pluralism and Transparency of Media Ownership (MSI-MED), which was preparing a draft Recommendation on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership aiming at strengthening media pluralism and provide space to all sectors of society to actively participate in public debates, and contribute therefore to social cohesion.

vi. Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB)

17. Mr Luca Schio, Director of Department at the CoE Development Bank, explained that the Bank was working to strengthen social cohesion in Europe by improving living condition of vulnerable persons. Vulnerability was quite a difficult concept to define; it concerned a large portion of population and could affect all aspects of life. Vulnerability required a comprehensive approach in order to address this issue in an effective way.

18. The main programmes supported by the CEB, were in sectors like education, job creation, housing, social housing, as well as climate, and with a variety of other factors such as age, disability, social status, illness... The CEB has been targeting number of interventions during 2016, such as: actions for migrants and refugees' population which was a priority for the Bank.

⇒ opportunities of cooperation between the PECS and the CEB should be further considered

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19. The main elements of the following discussion were:

European Committee of Social Rights

- it was recalled that, at the June restricted meeting of the PECS Vice-Chair and Rapporteurs, it has been discussed how to better relate the PECS' work to the results of European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR). For instance, one concrete way could be to consider systematically the ECSR's conclusions/decisions from the previous year and identify some relevant issue to consider in order to support member States to become closer to the requirements of the Charter.

Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH)

- though the CDDH and the PECS questionnaires had different scope and recipients, it would be interesting to compare their results and share information – and, if relevant, follow-ups;

- the PECS should be a platform of discussion, allowing to express different point of views. Future reports during the meetings should tackle issues by bringing more real information and address relevant elements discussed within the committees, not only reporting on the process. For instance, it

would be interesting to know which countries have problems of implementation of the European Social Charter and what should be done to better implement social rights? Though the written report by the CDDH Consultant was really good and well documented, the agenda was not acceptable to all; different instruments of implementation were required on the part of member states and this should be reflected in the verification mechanisms;

Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB)

- the Chair stressed the importance of cooperating with the Bank which played an important role in the field of social cohesion

European Social Pillar

- political issues should not be avoided and the PECS should discuss contents, including deeper discussions on accessibility and enjoyment of social rights;

- the question of the European Social Pillar and the European Social Charter was evoked and the fact that there might be room for cooperation and work within the Platform;

- the Platform has been informed that Lithuania already made an initial compilation on the European Social Charter and the European Pillar of Social Rights.

IV.2. Developments in Member States

20. The Chair recalled that there was a written report on developments since the previous meeting of the Platform but delegations had the possibility to share orally outstanding points; written information could still be sent after the meeting to complete document PECS(2017)9.

21. The delegation of the Russian Federation informed the PECS of recent important achievements in the field of social cohesion aimed at improving the legislation and the active work, including strategic steps, carried out around the following important goals: Decent work and fair wages; Improvement of demographical situation; State support for families with children; Targeted approach to social protection.

22. The representative of Moldova informed the Platform of the on-going Government's reform, with a reduction of the number of Ministries from 16 to 9. The Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family and the Ministry of Health were merged into a new Ministry: the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, which became the central public authority in the Government of Republic of Moldova responsible for the implementation of the social and health agenda in the country. .

23. The Secretariat invited those who did not send the input on recent developments yet to do so in order to complete the draft document; ideally the updating of the information should be done regularly.

V. WORKING PROGRAMME 2016-2017

V.1 Reports by the Rapporteurs of the PECS' Working Groups

24. The Chair recalled that working groups were established to allow the implementation of the PECS' mandate as there was only one two-day plenary meeting per year and no Bureau. The results of the three working groups should be relevant for future developments.

WG1 "Mainstreaming of social cohesion, throughout the Council of Europe"

25. Ms Linda Volosinovsky (Hungary), Rapporteur of Working Group 1, presented orally the main points of the written report on 'Mainstreaming social cohesion throughout the Council of Europe', focusing in particular on:

- the present definition and conceptualisation of social cohesion and social rights, in relation with the European Social Charter;
- the question if there was a need for a revision or a new Strategy for Social Cohesion;
- the aims and activities of bodies and committees of the Council of Europe, and how these were relating to and affecting social cohesion and access to and enjoyment of social rights;
- reaching new perspectives of and new ways to develop social cohesion and give some indications to member States on the way to improve social cohesion and the access to and enjoyment of social rights in their countries.

26. From the following discussion, these points should be stressed:

- WG1's report was considered a real value as a starting point on discussion on PECS' work and possible future developments, but two dimensions should be added: the reduction of inequalities and the co-responsibility ¹ as social cohesion should be built in a shared way. Administrative simplification could also be considered;
- social cohesion in relation to the accessibility to and the implementation of social rights at the European Social Charter's State Party's level; though governments were committed to the Charter, policies were needed to reach real access to and enjoyment of social rights (considered as important as civil and political right), as their implementation was not easy also because challenges were keeping changing over time;
- the importance of discussing real challenges of the implementation of social rights in the political and economic context was underlined, e.g. new inequalities and social disparities, with growing segmentations - such as in the case of access to education and to health care;
- the Council of Europe being a Pan-European Organisation and generator of ideas, the PECS could organise on a regular basis a forum contributing to the social policy debate and to rethinking the system;
- an added value of the PECS could relate to debating the dilemmas/variables and implications that governments had to face when implementing social rights and how to anticipate them and support the governments;
- according to some delegations, a more holistic approach of social cohesion should be sought as well as the possibilities of synergy with other structures, such as with international NGOs, which had a fundamental role to play for the implementation of social rights;
- the PECS should focus its attention on the middle class, which was the bedrock of society and democracy, but was decreasing, and on how it could be held together and how an inclusive middle class with consequent better protected minorities could be expanded; how to incentivise this driver of the economy which at the same time carried most of the burdens and taxations;
- the access to health care and the impact of the crisis on social and health policies were also important issues and part of the mandate of the Platform which should think on how best to reflect the issues relating to health policies.

WG2 "Fostering good practices and innovative approaches"

27. Mr Arman Sargsyan (Armenia), Rapporteur of WG2, presented orally the main elements of the written report based on the quantitative analysis of the replies to the questionnaire on 'Good practices and innovative approaches which had been sent to all the participants in the PECS. 59 completed questionnaires around the three PECS priorities were received. All together there was a good distribution and an interesting diversification of projects around these priorities. A matrix has created on the replies. The completed, on-going and planned projects were distributed under

¹ Recommendation CM/Rec (2014) Of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the Council of Europe Charter on shared social responsibilities

directions and sub-directions. The most reactive area was social economic assistance to families, followed by mobility management and capacity development, knowledge management and excellence centres. The interesting and valuable grounds which resulted could be used in the future within member states or for cooperation activities.

28. From the following discussion:

- the report was considered as a valuable document
- having collected best practices and innovative approaches, it is important that they are highlighted and disseminated
- among the suggestions: to publish the Compendium on the Internet; to choose and discuss at the next PECS meeting the most interesting topics for the majority, which could be used in the future programme and for experts' work;
- the themes to be deepened should be identified; some of the replies could be part of the final report.

WG3 “New trends and challenges”

29. Mr Joseph Gerada (Malta), Rapporteur of Working Group 3, presented orally the main points of the written report on “New Trends and challenges”.

30. He recalled the three set of questions prepared for the examination of new trends and challenges in the field of social cohesion, including in relation to the access to social rights, social and health protection. Emphasis was put on the following groups, based on the Secretary General's interim report on the Platform: youth and children; migrants and refugees; vulnerable people, including the elderly. Issues surrounding gender equality were also taken into account.

31. The questions were sent to the members of the three working groups, but all the participants will have the opportunity to reply after this meeting; the work would be finalised by the end of the year.

32. From the following discussion these elements should be retained:

- one delegation considered the identified recommendations more as suggestions stemming from particular examined programmes rather than policy recommendations. For example: the issue of migrants was not just an economic one or related to lack of openness, there were also problems of identity. This kind of elements should also be part of the debate;
- common concerns existed, though challenges might have differed in countries;
- defining groups and people to address in the report appeared to be a real challenge: some delegations preferred an holistic approach, while others considered that vulnerable groups should be taken into account. The report could maybe go deeper and make recommendations and conclusions not only on vulnerable groups; a crosscutting and holistic approach could be envisaged;
- the task of WG3 should be linked to the mandate of the Consultant when it comes to new trends and challenges.

5.2 Study

33. The Chair briefly recalled the curriculum vitae of Professor Paolo Graziano - which was available on the Cloud - and thanked him for accepting to elaborate the prospective study for the PECS. The study was suggested during the first meeting of the PECS as a valuable outcome of the Platform's work of the first biennium, in particular with the view of implementing the future-oriented part of the PECS mandate.

34. From the discussion on the mandate and content of the study, it was suggested, in order to frame the mandate, to take into account:

- the reports of the WGs, in particular WG2 and WG3, as well as the vulnerable groups mentioned in the PECS' mandate;
- new elements on definition and conceptualisation of social cohesion as point of departure;
- the question of trust;
- the work done before, grounded on common understanding, and build on it;
- that social cohesion was dealt with by the Council of Europe for a long period of time and that it was a positive value, which should bring closer people in a world with more and more inequalities;
- social cohesion, as positive value and a solution - not a problem – which created conditions that enabled people to realise their life projects; the basic variable of the society to create such a space should be considered as well as the way public institutions were responding to this need proactively fast and timely enough in a fast changing world; a more pluralistic approach, with the participation of other stakeholders rather than relying only on public institutions, should maybe be sought;
- the fact that for the majority of people it was not clear what social cohesion meant;
- the state of the art;
- basic elements rather than conceptual issues, should not be too technical;
- new challenges to social cohesion, in particular referring to the middle class, and the governments' policy responses (or lack of them);
- identity as an essential component of social cohesion, for instance, when it comes to migration issues, and to which extent European societies could absorb diversity;
- demographic challenges as another divisive factor; for instance, generational divisions, creating all kind of social policy problems;
- overarching bonds allowing to keep the society together and overcome existing divides as, for instance, groups which do not meet anymore, and divisions between young people and other groups;
- changes in the field of work which affected jobs and social cohesion, such as the consequences of automation for the functions of people without high skills, as well as the consequences for the labour market in the future; in some countries the unemployment rate was very high. Private companies' initiatives could also be considered;
- the debate about universal basic income;
- digitalisation and the power and possible misuse of Internet; in the youth sector this gave rise to No Hate Speech Campaign;
- one-page summary of the report should be drafted for politicians/decision makers.

35. The Consultant, after recalling that social cohesion has been the focus of his research for the past 15 years, presented his views on the study:

- not a too lengthy document
- should address some of the key issues raised, policy and concepts;
- understanding what social cohesion was in policy terms and how policy may cope with the new challenges;

- systematising what social cohesion was, according to the Council of Europe but also other institutions and the academic world, in order not to replicate existing work, but as a point of departure on definitions. Definitions were numerous, but measurement was limited. There was conceptualisation, but poor operationalization;
- the novelty of the study would therefore be to show the discrepancy between conceptualisation and operationalization;
- the discussion within the EU Commission and other international organisations will be also focused upon;
- a section would focus on challenges and recent policy answers to address new challenges, with a best practice approach according to number of criteria;
- social cohesion was also a matter of trust, including in the framework of universal basic income and the experiments being conducted in this domain;
- how could social cohesion evolve?
- reaching a better understanding of social cohesion from the political point of view;
- the conclusive section would focus on what should be the direction of social cohesion for the future, on challenges and perspectives such as, for instance, coping with European crisis; some concluding remarks for future policy discussions going beyond the study.

36. A detailed outline of the study will be sent to the PECS for comments by 30 October and any information relevant for the study should be sent to the Secretariat.

VI. OPINION ON PACE'S RECOMMENDATION 2112 (2017)

37. The Platform took note of PACE's Recommendation 2112 (2017) " which was submitted to the PECS, in accordance with the Committee of Ministers' request to the Platform for information and possible comments.

38. The Platform discussed the contents of the proposal drafted by Secretariat and revised by its working groups and the final opinion was presented in document PECS(2017)11, which was forwarded to the Committee of Ministers.

VII. QUESTIONS OF INTEREST TO THE PLATFORM WORKING PROGRAMME

39. As for its previous meeting, the Platform had some experts' presentations relating to one of the priorities indicated for its work in the Secretary's General Interim report, which was: "The impact of the economic crisis on health and social protection, in particular combating poverty and social exclusion, and the fact that these may foster violent radicalisation." Two presentations were also related to the replies to the questionnaire on best practices and innovative approaches.

Presentations

👉 Article 30 of the European Social Charter 'The right to protection against poverty and social exclusion'

40. Ms Eliane Chemla, General Rapporteur of the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR), presented the provision of the Charter dealing specifically with protection against poverty and social exclusion: Article 30 and said that it was regrettable that not enough countries have accepted this article yet.

41. In part I of the Charter Article 30 it was stated that 'Everyone has the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion.' In Part II a more specific legally binding provision: "With a view

to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion, the Parties undertake: a. to take measures within the framework of an overall and co-ordinated approach to promote the effective access of persons who live or risk living in a situation of social exclusion or poverty, as well as their families, to, in particular, employment, housing, training, education, culture and social and medical assistance; b. to review these measures with a view to their adaptation if necessary.”

42. She recalled that living in a situation of poverty and social exclusion violated the dignity of human beings and that Article 30 of the Revised Charter required States Parties to give effect to the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion by adopting measures aimed at preventing and removing obstacles to access to fundamental social rights, in particular employment, housing, training, education, culture and social and medical assistance. Therefore, by reaffirming a human rights approach, the ECSR emphasises the very close link between the effectiveness of the right recognised by Article 30 of the Charter and the enjoyment of the rights recognised by other provisions. Reports by State Parties were often missing information which was indispensable to examine the conformity of public policy to the commitment of these States when accepting Article 30. Ms Chemla gave an example of what the Committee considered in conformity with Article 30 (Conclusion 2013, Norway).

43. Further information, can be found on the data base HUDDOC-ESC: <http://hudoc.esc.coe.int>

↳ **‘Universal basic income’**

44. Mr Marc de Basquiat, Economist, President of the *Association pour l'Instauration d'un Revenu d'Existence (AIRE)*, started by informing the meeting about the robust philosophical foundation supporting the idea of universal basic income (Thomas Paine - poverty having been created by ‘civilized life’, society must compensate; he proposed the creation of a National Fund out of which payments should be made to every person, rich or poor; Milton Friedman - idea of a negative tax providing an income for poor people not to fall below; individual freedom being the main objective and justification; and Philippe Van Parijs - basic income with unconditional guarantees as indispensable elements of social policy with a rethinking of the notion of social obligation in a way that seemed far removed from the reality of mainstream politics). The purpose of basic income would also be to eliminate all situations of deep poverty.

45. The definition of basic income as “a periodic cash payment delivered to all on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirement” with five requirements: universal, cash payment, individual universal and unconditional.

46. Four principles: 1. Everybody contribute according to their means; 2. Each member of the community is granted four basic rights: education, health, housing and subsistence; 3. No public mechanism prevents anybody from participating in paid employment; 4.No generation is allowed to earn a livelihood at the expense of the next ,the yearly budget equilibrium is mandatory.

47. The challenge was to allow everyone to make a choice of life without being afraid. The problem was that individuals no longer know how to define themselves outside of paid work.

48. Each country should reflect on how to finance such a basic income; the concrete example of financing it in France was given, with a gradual and modest approach, through the tax scheme and current redistribution with a single tax of 23% on all income. A simulation of individual cases could be made at the address: <http://lemodele.fr>

↳ **The SPIRAL approach of the TOGETHER Network - application of the strategy of social cohesion in the territories as a response to the negative effects of the economic crisis’**

49. Mr Samuel Thirion, Secretary General of the TOGETHER Network, explained that the SPIRAL (Societal Progress Indicators and Responsibility of All) Methodology of the Network Together were originated at the Council of Europe and had as basis the Council of Europe’s definition of social cohesion. The aim was to build a shared vision of well-being for all with the citizens. The creation of a territorial platform for dialogue allowed a concrete application through the constitution of

homogeneous groups of citizens replying to three open questions. This resulted in 9 dimensions and 68 components of the well-being as expressed by citizens and showed its multidimensional aspect.

50. More than 400 'Territories of Co-responsibility' took part in the Network TOGETHER, with common data bases of criteria of well-being and actions (Wikispiral.org). Concrete examples of added-value were given: developing dialogue; social added value – social inclusion and reduction of inequalities; economic and environmental added value; employment added value. The work on health rather than on diseases seemed particularly relevant, including for future developments. The Walloon Region was a good example which was also included in the PECS Compendium of Good Practices and Innovative Approaches. Since 2015 the Network invited citizens to think about challenges for the future.

51. The qualitative evaluation of the impact was based on the principle of coevolution, allowing considering aspects that can be measured only by people's words. The implementation did show that:

- transversal dialogue was a key point to overcome barriers and generate trust, social cohesion, co-responsibility and efficiency and led to new forms of democracy completing the representative democracy;

- social cohesion proved to be crucial and a solution, also at the economic and environmental levels;

↳ **'European Food Bank Federation'**

52. Mr Jean-Marie Standaert, EU Liaison Officer of the European Food Bank Federation (FEBA), presented the work of the European Food Bank Federation, a non-profit organisation that concerned 326 food banks in 23 countries with a common set of values and rules. Four candidate countries were in the process of joining the Federation. The main aim was fighting hunger and food waste in Europe.

53. The food was collected free of charge from various sources (producers, distributors, individuals and EU financial donations) and distributed, free of charge, to certified charities and social service organisations supporting the most deprived people. The system promotes volunteering, and fosters solidarity and social responsibility. The quality of collected food was as important as the quantity. An impressive social impact derived from the system. In 2015 in the EU 119 million people (24% of the population) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion; among them 43 million (8,5) could not afford a decent meal every second day. The Food Bank were providing food to 6.1 million people a day.

54. Some challenges to be faced were linked to the operating environment (such as legal and regulatory aspects, tax issues, lack of awareness,...) and to resource development.

55. Two EU Food Related Programmes were mentioned: 1. "European Fund Aid for Deprived 'FEAD'" and "European Fruits and Vegetables Withdrawal Programme".

↳ **'Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)'**

56. Ms Aiste Ramanauskaite, Secretary to PACE's Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development informed the Platform of work within the Parliamentary Assembly which was relevant to its work:

- the Resolution "Fighting income inequality: a means of fostering social cohesion and economic development" adopted last June and invite the Platform to read the text prepared on behalf Social Affairs Committee;
- the Draft Resolution by Mr Nicoletti on behalf of PACE's Political Affairs and Democracy Committee which contained a call for the fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe – the Assembly will debate the issue in October; the draft resolution contained a paragraph indicating that the Summit should strengthen the supervision system of the European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No. 163), including its collective complaint system and its monitoring mechanisms;

- the Report under preparation on 'the need of a citizenship income', the term chosen to refer to a basic income perceived as a big change in the system, whose feasibility was not obvious for parliamentarians; mid-October a draft will be proposed, centred on needs and rights and that fact that the social model was cracking under pressure leading to poverty and increased inequalities which damaged human dignity. Decent income is a corner stone of social justice. Conclusions would point out the *de facto* failure to ensure decent living standards for all across different section of society, in particular vulnerable groups which were the most affected. The draft should be discussed next January.
- As basic income was based on the idea of no work requirement, a total change in mentality was needed regarding the provision of support people. Feasibility was an issue as material supports is for all members of society not just groups in need"

* * *

57. From the following discussion:

Universal basic income

- the cautious approach in this domain was underlined;
- among the questions on the universal basic income, the problem seemed not to be insufficient resources, but rather practical problems;
- it was recalled the recently rejected proposal of basic income by referendum in Switzerland as it was considered an heavy financial burden which would break the social contract with consequent need to rethink social security; the idea was that people who can work should take care of their own well-being; the question was to know what would happen to the social security system;
- a question was posed concerning the difference between social safety nets and universal basic income as the concept seemed similar. The reply explained that the difference lied in the fact that the universal basic income was a fully automatic, unconditional income;
- in the replies it was said that feasibility was a very difficult question because the existing tax system should have been considered carefully as an important tax reform would be needed; the problem with the Swiss project was that an unrealistic amount of money of 40% of GDP was suggested, when the order of magnitude should be of 15 % GDP; the tax system and its evolution should be taken into account;
- the advantage of the universal basic income was that everybody can get it and this was important for social inclusion without any changes to the systems for pension, education, unemployment, health; it was modest and should not disrupt all the other necessary elements. not change the pension system, unemployment system, education or health system.

Together Network

- in replying to a question on assessment methodology, it has been underlined that there were several evaluation criteria, such as on the way the situation evolved on the territory or an impact evaluation of well-being through co-evaluation for evaluating impact aspects which could be only measure by people's words. This kind of evaluation allowed having information which could not be found in statistics.

European Food Bank Federation

- to the question on eligibility criteria for countries to take part in the European Food Bank Federation, the representative replied that there were possibilities of cooperation and support the development of Food Bank.

58. The Chair stressed that more time should be foreseen for discussion in the future

VIII. PROGRAMME 2018-2019

59. The Platform took note and discussed its draft Term of Reference 2018-2019, which would be submitted to GR-SOC on 3 October.

60. The comments were the following:

- there was a general agreement on the main tasks, which underlined the importance of social cohesion and social rights;
- the problem was the very limited resources and means were given to the Platform, not allowing real exchanges with only a 2-day meeting per year and no Bureau;
- the mandate could be accepted as it was quite broad, however there was a general agreement on the important role of and the focus which should be put on the middle classes as no other Council of Europe's committees were dealing with this issue. A proposal of an addition to the mandate was agreed upon²;
- a Bureau, or at least a Rapporteurs' meeting, once/year should be foreseen as well as, possibly, more support to the Secretariat.

IX. COOPERATION

IX.1 Exchange of views with the Representatives/Secretariat of the Council of Europe's Bodies and Committees

61. This point of the agenda focused on the best way to implement the 'mainstreaming' part of the PECS mandate and the need to well organise this task, in particular with the view of fulfilling the mandate of contributing to impact assessment

i. Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP)

62. Ms Kathrin Merkle, Secretary to the Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP) Culture and Cultural Heritage Division, informed of projects of interest to the Platform:

- the 'Indicators framework on culture and democracy', and, in this context, a first publication on '*Cultural Participation and Inclusive Societies*';
- the new handbook '*Culture and Human Rights: The Wroclaw Commentaries*', a dictionary with 123 keyword entries, including number of keywords of interest to social cohesion, on social policies and social rights, which should be a useful tool;
- the forthcoming European Union's Year of Cultural Heritage; the Council of Europe will be involved, mainly with the European Heritage Days which were very much concentrated on community activities and community building; another joint project with The European Union was just finalised - COMUS ("Community-Led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns"). It aimed to stimulate social and economic development by enhancing cultural heritage in historic towns;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(20CM/Rec(2017)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the contribution of the European Landscape Convention to the exercise of human rights and democracy with a view to sustainable development;

² the following addition under 'Main Tasks', paragraph (i) was proposed: "ensure the mainstreaming of social cohesion throughout the Council of Europe by further developing the concept, by contributing to impact assessments of the various activities in the different sectors with regard to achieving social cohesion, including the relevant activities aimed at building inclusive societies, **considering the role of the middle class**,[...]"

- Recommendation CM/Rec(2017) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on Big Data for culture, literacy and democracy, which looked inter alia at critical media and information literacy;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)9 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender equality in the audiovisual sector.

ii. **Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ)**

63. Mr Matej Manewski, member of the Advisory Council on Youth, explained that in the Youth field they were eager to work on social cohesion, which was crosscutting through their activities. He recalled main relevant focus and achievements of activities in the domain of Youth:

- the recent recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to member States in the field of youth: on access to rights and on youth work;
- the 'Enter! Recommendation'³ and the related long process, which included support to the implementation of the Recommendation and its follow-up until June 2018; a guide on how to use the recommendation has been published and the recommendation was being translated in several languages;
- the issue of inclusion of young refugees
- the Roma Youth Action Plan which included issues relating to social cohesion

64. Member States represented in the PECS were invited to support at national level the implementation of the Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers on youth issues and to help reaching young people in their countries. He expressed the openness to share more information and collaborate closely.

65. The PECS representative in the Youth Department's activities added that the most recent Recommendation on youth workers provided also basis for cooperation.

iii. **Commissioner for Human Rights:**

66. Ms Claudia Lam, Adviser in the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, reiterated the suggestion of an exchange of views with the Commissioner. Given that the next meeting of PECS will take place after the end of the current Commissioner's mandate, an invitation for such an exchange of views could be addressed to the new Commissioner. The invitation would be addressed to the new Commissioner and could be focusing on the new Commissioner's priorities and the links between social cohesion.

67. The Chair agreed with this suggestion.

iv. **Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB)**

68. Mr Luca Schio, informed the Platform that the Bank was facing increasing requests for funding (in 2016, 35 projects were approved for an amount of 3 billion and 500 millions of euros); a majority of them were relating to the support of refugees and displaced people – who were a priority for the Bank. He recalled that social cohesion was the main thread for the bank, whose actions were also relating to the sectors of education, health and job creation for small and medium firms. Cooperation with member States and within the Council of Europe was an asset for the Bank.⁰

v. **Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM)**

69. Mr Thorsten Afflerbach, Head of the SRSG Roma Support Team, gave an update of CAHROM's activities and achievements:

- the first implementation report on all activities undertaken within the thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers was adopted in June and was available on the

³ Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 of the Committee of Ministers on access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights

Website; the Action Plan included 21 actions, in the first two years actions at local level with mediators in field of education and health care have been implemented;

- the Conference on 6 and 7 November on 'Improving the political participation and representation of Roma and Traveller women', focusing on this particularly vulnerable group who were underrepresented at a political and decision-making level;

70. Recalling that Roma integration and inclusion had a strong link to social cohesion, the PECS was invited to send a representative at the next meeting of CAHROM on 24-27 October; this would help to better define the inclusion of social cohesion in CAHROM's work.

vi. Conference of INGOs

71. The representative of the Conference, Mr Robert Bergougnan, stressed the relevance of the PECS acknowledging the importance and critical role of the middle class for social cohesion, as this class has its own set of challenges, as well as the importance of boosting the participatory process. The Conference of INGOs had a role to play as representative of the civil society as well as of trade unions and international organisations of social workers;

72. Cooperation could be developed:

- participation in the PECS's work, such as it has been done when providing examples of good practice and innovative approaches relevant to social cohesion/social rights;
- through the multiplier role of the Conference;
- on issues of interest, such as those relating to the Turin Process; migrants reception; the treatment of older people in the health system; the fight against poverty (it has been reminded that 17 October was the International Day Against Poverty and Social Exclusion)
- on the occasion of the regular visits by the Chair and members of the Conference in different countries to meet with civil society and governmental representatives; on this occasion it would be interesting to have a linkage with States representatives in the Platform.
- through the membership of a representative of the Conference in WG1 on 'Mainstreaming'.

* * *

73. Suggestions to improve the mainstreaming and internal cooperation were:

- the active cooperation with the youth sector should be continued, including with the involvement of the PECS in the review of the impact of the Enter! Recommendation;
- PECS Member States, and Participants, should join WG1 on "Mainstreaming" a reply to this call for new members of Working Group 1 was expected very soon;
- called for strengthened cooperation with the Secretariat of Council of Europe's bodies and committees, including by mutual participation in relevant event and by providing information on any element concerning social cohesion and social rights within their activities, in order to allow to follow accurately their work and, if needed, to proceed with the impact assessment indicated in the PECS Mandate;
- if the next PECS ToR were adopted, the way to implement the mandate on 'Mainstreaming' should be developed further;
- Indications should be given on the implementation Council of Europe's Action Plan on Building inclusive societies (2016-2019), as reflected in the report by the Secretary General on a first assessment of the Action Plan; advise
- an internal CoE group with regular meetings would be an useful mainstreaming tool.

IX.2 Exchange of views with observer States, other International Institutions and NGOs

i. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

74. Mr Grigorios Tsioukas of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) informed the PECS on:

- the European Pillar of Social Rights and the role of the European Social Charter in this context as well as on the on-going political dialogue and the proposal by the CoE Secretary General. The Pillar should be implemented in accordance with the European Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, but we should also take into account the European Social Charter;
- recent work by the FRA relating to social cohesion and social rights, in particular relevant surveys and reports, such as on social inclusion and migrants participation in society; community policy and on-going project on child poverty and well-being and persons with disabilities

75. Mr Tsioukas also stressed the importance of the COE work on social rights, including discussions on the concept and content of social cohesion, as a source of inspiration, reflection and reference for the FRA. He welcomed the reports of the Platform and the work on good practices and innovative approaches as a useful contribution as well as the presentations during the meeting which highlighted diverse approaches to social cohesion at the implementation level. He expressed the availability of the FRA for sharing data and information as well as to contribute to the prospect study which should be a milestone of the work of the first biennium of the PECS.

76. Replying to the question on the place of the European Social Charter in the EU Social Rights Pillar, he replied that the Secretary General of the Council of Europe proposed his opinion and would be present at the Summit in Goteborg (November 2017); he added that the European Social Charter was a point of reference for the work of the FRA and that a representative of the Council of Europe was in the management board of the FRA.

77. The Chair underlined that the FRA was an important counterpart.

ii. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

78. Ms Jutta Seidel of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), explained that access to economic and social rights for persons of concern to the UNHCR (refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons and internally displaced persons) was a challenge and concern to the UNHCR in many Council of Europe member States. The UNHCR cooperated in many occasions with the Department of the European Social Charter on social rights issues, such as the recent regional conference for economic and social rights for the forcibly displaced persons of the conflict in former Yugoslavia (Sarajevo) or in a Round Table on the right to work.

79. Suggested, as a first step of cooperation, to share the respective updates and expressed the UNHCR availability to pursue the good cooperation in the framework of the European Social Charter, which was a beneficial instrument to the protection of the rights of person of concern to the UNHCR. Gratitude was also expressed to the Development Bank of the Council of Europe (CEB) for having as major beneficiaries persons of concerns to the UNHCR.

80. The Chair stressed that sharing of information was an important tool for cooperation

iii. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

81. Ms Ulrike Schmidt, Representative of the OSCE - and its three institutions which deal respectively with different aspects of social inclusion - especially ODIHR. Social economic inclusion of minority groups; free media exercising their rights (rights of journalist, hate speech particular addressed to female journalist); social economic inclusion of migrants and refugees and women in different spheres of life; would be interested to exchange information on inclusion of women in socio-economic sphere and would be happy to provide contributions at this regard.

iv. Morocco

82. The representative of Morocco said that they experienced more difficult living conditions than in Europe and the government was aware of the importance of social protection. Tools such as a single national social protection registry were being developed. In the field of health, a card was given to vulnerable people who did not have a health insurance, in order to allow them to have free access to hospitals. Allowances were provided to women with children and who do not work.

83. The Chair underlined that mutual learning approaches are important as well as mutual help to find solutions

X. REPRESENTATION OF PECS AT EXTERNAL EVENTS

84. The Chair recalled that any member of the Platform can be involved in external relevant events in order to facilitate co-operation and improve communication on the PECS.

85. The PECS nominated the following member as representatives:

Mr Ingus Alliks (Latvia) to attend and represent the Platform at the 5th Meeting of the CoE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET Collaborative Platform on Social and Economic Rights (Riga, Latvia, 26 September 2017);

The Chair (if not available, the Vice-Chair) to attend and represent the Platform at the Seminar on the European Social Charter (Ulyanovsk, Russian Federation, 25-26 October 2017); the representative of the Russian Federation to the Platform would try to be present too;

Ms Petia Moeva (Bulgaria) to attend and represent the Platform at the meetings of the Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child (CAHENF);

Mr Riccardo Venturini (San Marino) to attend and represent the Platform at the meetings of the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM).

XI. WORKING METHODS AND CALENDAR

86. The Platform exchanged views in order to organise the finalisation of the implementation of its mandate 2016-2017 and decided to:

- continue working within 3 working groups;
- for the following documents: Reports of the Working Groups, Questionnaires, Compendium on recent developments, new inputs could be sent to the Secretariat by 15 October; the questionnaire of Working Group 3 will be sent to all;
- for the examples of best practices and innovative approaches, topics to be deepened would be chosen next year, if the next mandate was approved.

XII. EUROPEAN SOCIAL COHESION PLATFORM NEWSLETTER

87. The Platform noted the developments relating to the Newsletter, which was published monthly. The participants agreed to disseminate the Newsletter around them and to inform the Secretariat of any suggestion for improvement.

88. The newsletter was considered as useful tool for mainstreaming social cohesion with broad information.

XIII. EUROPEAN SOCIAL COHESION PLATFORM WEBPAGE

89. The Secretariat updated the PECS on its Webpage: <https://www.coe.int/pecs>. The PECS Newsletter was available on this page as well as relevant documents and information. The shared space, created to facilitate the exchanges between the members of the three working groups, could be accessed from this Webpage. Suggestions for improvement could be sent to the Secretariat.

90. The recent awareness-raising video on the European Social Charter, which is available on the Website of the Charter, was also shown to the PECS.

XIV. OTHER BUSINESS

91. No other business.

XV. DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT PECS MEETING

92. The Platform decided to hold its third meeting on 3 and 4 May 2018 in Strasbourg, provided that its Terms of Reference 2018-2019 are adopted by the Committee of Ministers.

XVI. ADOPTION OF DECISIONS

93. The Platform adopted the list of decisions as they appear in document PECS (2017)10.