
Declaration by the Committee of Ministers on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the European Social Charter

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 October 2021
at the 1414th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

Sixty years ago – to the day – the Council of Europe member States enshrined in international law a series of social rights (Turin, 18 October 1961). It was the first time that the social rights objectives set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the social progress objective inscribed in the Statute of the Council of Europe were translated into a binding international treaty protecting a broad range of social rights, as a complement to the rights recognised in the European Convention on Human Rights.

Six decades later, the European Social Charter remains a unique and precious international law instrument. It has contributed to many improvements in the protection of social rights in member States, improving the life of people across Europe. New rights were added in a 1988 Protocol and in the 1996 revised European Social Charter. The latter is widely acknowledged as the most up-to-date international human rights treaty in the area of social rights permitting States to take different levels of commitments and to advance at differing speeds depending on their political, social and economic diversity.

The Committee of Ministers reaffirms the eminent role of the European Social Charter in guaranteeing and promoting social rights in Europe and reiterates its resolve to ensure that the Charter system is given the political support and the tools and means required to ensure its effectiveness. The Committee of Ministers underlines that challenges such as globalisation, demographic changes, new information technologies and the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic further highlight the importance of a strong and effective European Social Charter.

The Charter's supervision mechanisms also progressed over time, through practice and by virtue of decisions of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. A 1995 Protocol offers States Parties the possibility to adhere to a system of collective complaints. Mindful of the need for permanent improvement in the protection of human rights, in 2015 the Committee of Ministers set in motion a reflection on how to improve the implementation of the European Social Charter. Continuing this process, the importance of which was recalled at the 131st Ministerial Session (Hamburg, 19 May 2021), on the occasion of the Charter's 60th anniversary, it has established a working party to this end.