



## **POSSIBLE ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED AT THE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER VILNIUS, JULY 2024**

**The most important objectives of the High-Level Conference for the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy of Spain include:**

1. Promoting acceptance by Member States of further commitments under the Charter where possible. In this respect, a treaty event is envisaged where Council of Europe member States can undertake or pledge additional commitments under the Charter, including acceptance of provisions and, for those that have not yet done so, ratification of the revised Charter and acceptance of the collective complaints procedure.
2. Encouraging ratification of the Revised Charter by the seven States that are still bound by the 1961 Charter as being of particular importance in order for the Council of Europe to show unity in its mission to defend social rights and to reduce the (treaty law) complexity that arises from the existence of two social charters.
3. Initiating a reflection on whether and how to consolidate the various instruments that make up the Charter system and, if appropriate, requesting that the Committee of Ministers set in motion a process to consolidate the Charter instruments into one single treaty.
4. Discussing strategic partnerships, including the relationship with the European Union and the feasibility of EU accession to the Charter.

**With regard to thematic proposals and further measures to improve the protection of social rights, guidelines and orientations should be issued to promote a common approach among the members of the Council of Europe on the following issues:**



- **EQUAL PAY FOR MEN AND WOMEN.**

The Government of Spain reaffirms its commitment to equal pay, given the differences in remuneration that still exist between women and men for work of equal value.

In addition, despite significant progress in the labour market, care and the most precarious jobs are provided mostly by women.

Pay inequality is structural and has several causes, such as:

- direct and indirect discrimination,
- the undervaluation of women's work,
- occupational segregation in the labour market, strongly marked by socially and traditionally entrenched stereotypes and gender roles,
- the low number of women in positions of greater responsibility,
- unequal distribution of special allowances,
- increased presence of part-time jobs and reduced working hours in jobs carried out by women,
- the almost exclusive assumption by women of domestic and care work, which is essential for the society but which has always been invisible and precarious.

To this end, there is a need to improve the instruments for transparency in remuneration and reconciliation, as well as to ensure that they are enforced.

- **REORGANIZATION OF WORKING TIME**

Measures to reconcile work, family and personal life need to be improved, and the Spanish Government intends to reduce working hours without reducing wages. This will, among other things, improve the balance of caring responsibilities and provide more time for personal life.

- **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ALGORITHMS**

The rapid evolution of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its impact on the labour market makes it essential and urgent to have a thorough debate on the challenges posed by AI, its risks, but also its potential.



We know that algorithms are not neutral, that they are biased, and can lead to discrimination against vulnerable groups (young women, people at risk of exclusion, people with disabilities, people of different origins and ethnicities and LGBTQI+ people). We therefore have a responsibility to ensure that the digital transition benefits the social majority and the rights of working people in relation to the use of AI and algorithms at work, so that the digital transition is fair.

- **GREEN TRANSITION**

It will be increasingly important to pay attention to protecting the health and safety of working people from climate change.

It is no longer possible to conceive this phenomenon as an isolated event, but as a growing trend that will lead to scenarios such as the present one, which will happen again with increasing frequency.

The working environment is a particularly vulnerable area and there is an urgent need for action to ensure effective preventive regulation.

Appropriate measures should be taken to protect workers from any risk related to adverse weather events, including extreme temperatures.

Collective bargaining should be a dynamic phenomenon, adapting the reality of work to the modern world. We are experiencing a climate emergency and collective bargaining should move towards green collective bargaining on issues such as the impact on employment and on territorial and social cohesion; the training of workers to acquire the necessary skills; mobility to travel to the workplace; and energy efficiency and the circular economy in productive activities and work performance.

- **DEMOCRACY AT WORK**

The aim is to deepen social dialogue, identifying new areas for cooperation between companies and employees. The involvement of employees in company decision-making processes should be addressed within the Council of Europe, building on the positive experiences in several Member States where such involvement is recognised in company management and supervisory bodies.



- **OTHER POSSIBLE TOPICS TO BE ADDRESSED**

In the future European Social Agenda a number of issues should be relevant from the perspective of the European Social Charter: teleworking and the right to disconnect; work and non-work practices in companies; the effective right to lifelong learning; mental health and psychosocial risks at work; and employment protection in the event of individual and collective redundancies.

**On the possibility of consolidating the various instruments that make up the Charter system and, if appropriate, requesting that the Committee of Ministers initiate a process to consolidate the Charter instruments into a single treaty:**

Spain could support this very interesting option. It would be nice to have more information on how this could be implemented.

**Discuss strategic partnerships, including the relationship with the European Union and the feasibility of EU accession to the Charter.**

Spain supports the efforts to speed up the process of EU accession to the European Social Charter and closer cooperation between the institutions of the European Union and the Council of Europe, in order to contribute more effectively to achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

The new EU Strategic Agenda for the period 2024-2029 and the European Pillar of Social Rights must be at the heart of this cooperation framework.

In the coming years, more emphasis should be placed on EU-Council of Europe co-operation and co-ordination in the aforementioned areas.