



HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER

Written contribution towards shaping the Conference's Programme and the Political Declaration

The Republic of Slovenia signed the European Social Charter (Revised) (hereinafter: the Charter) on 11 October 1997; the Act Ratifying the Charter was adopted by the National Assembly on 11 March 1999 and the Charter was ratified on 7 May 1999.

With ratification of the Charter, the Republic of Slovenia also accepted the supervision over application of the Charter in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter providing for a System of Collective Complaints.

The Republic of Slovenia accepted 95 of the 98 paragraphs of the Charter, which certainly places us among the best practice countries. Nevertheless, in the future we will also try to encourage the discussion on the acceptance of the remaining three paragraphs where we are already in conformity or close to conformity with Charter provisions.

As a country, we are strongly committed to the Charter, widely regarded as the Social Constitution of Europe. The European Social Charter should be recognised as an important instrument that addresses and protects the importance of key labour and social rights. But on the other hand, it should also be a platform for further development of labour and social rights also addressing some persistent issues of the contemporary world of workers and their families.

We fully support the commitment to strengthen the Charter system and the initiative to further explore ways to make the commitments effective as we believe that is an on-going process that needs to be encouraged with a continuous dialogue. The Secretariat, GT-CHARTÉ and other stakeholders of the Council of Europe have already made a lot of progress in this respect, but now we should discuss options to upgrade our efforts and to go one step further. Once issues of efficiency will be sufficiently addressed another effort will be necessary to address also issues of content and revision of existing rights and possible addition of new rights or the effectiveness of the Charter.

The High-Level Conference is an opportunity to spread the dialogue and a symbolic event contributing to the package of reforms to modernise the Charter system. We agree with the initiative to institutionalise the conference as we believe that it would be useful to make a commitment to organise such events on a regular basis. We suggest that a conference should be organised every two to three years. Our initiative would be to address a predefined topic, according to a specific issue to be coordinated in advance. This would contribute to efficiency and quality of discussion, as different areas are covered by different governmental institutions (as labour, health, housing etc.) and other stakeholders. Outcomes of such conferences could also be understood as guidelines for member states on how to address highlighted issues on national levels.

Slovenia accepted most paragraphs of the Charter and is one of 16 countries that adopted a collective complaints system which is an additional tool in pursuing social justice and equality in Europe. The message of commitment is clear, we support the encouragement and enhanced dialogue to promote the acceptance of provisions where possible. We also support the effort of encouragement to the seven countries that are still bound by the 1961 Charter. Respecting and understanding the commitment of existing member states and encouraging them to accept all provisions of the European social charter and its collective complaints system should be facilitated through dialogue and if possible technical assistance to member states were needed.

In recent years we have been facing crises of major proportions and new challenges (Covid pandemic, Russian aggression and war in Ukraine, war in Gaza, energy crisis, high inflation, raising of AI intelligence, Climate change etc.) which put great pressure on human rights and social rights as part of it. At the same time, the constant dynamics of global challenges provides an opportunity to strengthen the relevance of the Charter. Perhaps the time has come to also raise the question of contemporary issues of our citizens and on the need to define new (social) rights that are not addressed or have not been sufficiently addressed in the Charter so far.