

HIGH - LEVEL CONFERENCE ON THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER
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STATEMENT BY STATE - SECRETARY DEJAN LEVANIČ

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by thanking the organisers for hosting the conference and for choosing the themes for discussions. I'm looking forward especially to the debate on relations between European Social Charter and *acquis communautaire*.

Today, Europe is still confronting the social consequences of the crisis itself, combined with the consequences of the policy choices made by the Governments in their 'recovery' packages. Unfortunately, for too many people in Europe, recovery has not yet started.

Disappointingly, the majority of governments across Europe have reacted to the economic and financial crisis with similar approach: with priority given to reducing public deficits, mainly through austerity cuts in public expenditure, focused on reducing social benefits and public services. The European Commission and European Central Bank have had a strong influence in formulating Member States' responses to the crisis.

Needless to say, recent experiences has showed us that the social Europe can be build and sustainably preserved only hand in hand with social, employment as well as economic policies, in a well balanced way to enable growth, employability and social inclusion.

I have to admit that from the member state Government's point of view is often very difficult to meet obligations under the European Social Charter on one hand and recommendations within the EU semester on the other, in the same time.

Let me share with you one example:

In 2010 Slovenia received a conclusion of the European Committee of Social Rights on non- conformity with Article 4§1 of the Revised Charter on the ground that the minimum wage was manifestly unfair. Since 2010 the ratio between the minimum and the average wage in Slovenia has been on a steady rise and reached 51,4 % in 2013, which was still not in conformity with the Charter. On the other hand the European Commission found out that the ratio is among the highest in the EU in 2013 and suggested Slovenia to revise the minimum wage regulation in order to support competitiveness and job creation.

I believe that the Slovene Government is not alone in facing conflicts between human values and market values, and between speculative and productive investments when choosing the policy options for responding to the crisis.

Since we consider employment and social security to be basic human rights, and social policy to be an investment in human capital, financial resources for the implementation of policy and measures in the fields of employment and social protection were substantially increased for the 2009–2013 period, in comparison to 2008. However, the number of poor has been increasing in Slovenia.

In conclusion,

I would like to stress that the Slovene Government is highly committed to the European Social Charter - the instrument which provides Europe with a true social constitution.

I further believe that an intense dialog between the Council of Europe and the European Commission is needed to increase areas of convergence and reduce areas of divergence between the two normative system. It would be much easier for the Governments to fully meet their obligations.

Distinguished colleagues,

We should not forget that the sustainable development of European society is possible only if we place all three dimensions: **social, environmental and economic** on equal footing. Today we are sending a strong message of real commitment to notable results for fairer, more just and inclusive Europe.

Thank you.