

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



## **Sustainable Economic and Social Recovery Based on an Equality and Human Rights Approach**

### **What role for National Human Rights Institutions and National Equality Bodies?**

On-line Meeting

of the CoE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET Collaborative Platform on Social and Economic  
Rights

**9 July 2020**

**14.30-17.00**

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#### ***RATIONALE***

The main objective of the meeting of the CoE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET Collaborative Platform on Social and Economic Rights are to identify, analyse, and share new lines of thinking for strengthening the protection of equality and human rights in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

In specific, the meeting aims to highlight the profound and transformative societal challenges triggered by the COVID-19 outbreak and their impact on equality and human rights. Importantly, a leading objective of this event is to discuss and illustrate how national human rights institutions and national equality bodies can play an effective role as key actors in the ongoing recovery efforts in their social, economic and environmental dimensions.

## **OBJECTIVES**

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The 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the CoE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET Collaborative Platform on Social and Economic Rights will aim in particular to:

- Highlight the lessons about specific risks and vulnerabilities revealed by the experience of NHRIs and NEBs during the COVID-19 crisis, and explore the recovery and rebuilding initiatives needed at both European and national level;
- Discuss the necessary components of an “equality and human rights based approach to recovery” in the context of COVID-19 and how the current situation might be different from previous periods of economic crisis and reform;
- Identify what are the likely difficulties and challenges related to the actual implementation of an “equality and human rights based approach to recovery” on the ground at both national and European levels and how could these challenges be overcome or, at least, mitigated;
- Identify a possible role for NHRIs and NEBs in promoting and implementing an “equality and human rights based approach to recovery” and clarify and delineate the specific tasks and responsibility, that this role will entail, including the extent to which these tasks are adequately covered by their existing mandate and resources.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

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The event is designed to bring together representatives of Council of Europe and European Union institutions and agencies, national human rights institutions, national equality bodies and civil society for a discussion on strengthening the protection of equality and human rights in Europe through and during the economic, social and environmental recovery processes following the COVID-19 outbreak.

The event will be open for the public to follow via web streaming. Participants will be asked to register and will have the opportunity to submit questions for the discussion panels at registration or during the event through the use of interactive software.

## **BACKGROUND**

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As the immediate health emergency caused by the Covid-19 pandemic eases in Europe, the focus turns to the continent's economic recovery. And the picture is austere.

Forecasts suggest that the European Union's first economy, Germany, will shrink by 6.5%, France by 8.2%, Spain by 9.4% and Italy by 9.5%, though those in the east of Europe, like Poland, have fared better, expected to shrink by only 4.3%.

Overall the EU is expected to be down a massive 7.4% this year, which is significantly worse than the fall in 2009.

Everyone is being affected: many people fear they might lose their jobs and are unwilling to spend, while businesses are facing disruptions in their supply chains. Governments see tax revenue falling and welfare expenditure increasing, which will bring budget deficits, higher levels of debt and drive up borrowing costs.

At the same time, governments, national and international human rights defenders, and

civil society are presented with the opportunity to learn from past mistakes and create a new narrative about the values that should underpin Europe's future economy, one that is built on equality and that respects, protects and fulfils everyone's rights as much as possible. Moreover, as governments around the world turn their thoughts to economic recovery, their plans must respond to what the lockdown has clearly shown: that people want and need access to nature-rich green spaces near to where they live, and that economic growth must be environmentally sustainable. Thus, in the current context it becomes imperative to address the three core pillars of the Sustainable Agenda 2030 — people, environment, and economy — with the realization that environmentally friendly economic growth that secures livelihoods should be coupled with strong and resilient social welfare and social security systems.

Taking an equality and human rights based approach to these decisions can support accountability, openness, honesty, transparency and public engagement, helping to maintain the public's trust in institutions and the decisions they take. Any recovery plan needs to be in line with the existing international human rights framework, with the Paris Agreement on combating climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals.

National Human Rights Institutions and Equality Bodies have a key role to play at national level when governments design post-Covid economic recovery plans.

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#### ***FORMAT/WORKING LANGUAGE(S)***

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The meeting will be held online via the BlueJeans online Platform. The working language will be English. Specific recommendation on how to use BlueJeans will be shared in a separate document.