



Strengthening cooperation between National Human Rights Institutions/Equality Bodies and civil society organisations working on social rights

12th Meeting of the COE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET Collaborative Platform on Social and Economic Rights

**20 September 2022, 09:30-17:00 CET
Bratislava, Slovak Republic**

CONCEPT*

The Council of Europe Department of Social Rights has organised in the past two years several training sessions for [National Human Rights Institutions](#) (NHRIs), [National Equality Bodies](#) (NEBs) and civil society organisations on how to engage with the [European Committee of Social Rights](#) (ECSR) under the monitoring procedures of the [European Social Charter](#). Moreover, the Council of Europe published two brochures¹ which aim to explain those procedures and what role these organisations could play to strengthen the implementation of social rights at national level. To strengthen social rights implementation at the national level, stronger linkages and more active collaboration between national public bodies specialised in promoting and protecting human rights is needed - namely, NHRIs and NEBs - on the one hand, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), on the other hand. Therefore, the main objectives of the 12th meeting of the [COE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET Collaborative Platform on Social and Economic Rights](#) are:

- to consolidate and further advance the knowledge of NHRIs/NEBs and civil society organisations on the monitoring procedures of the European Social Charter in order to encourage them to take an active part in them;
- to explore the opportunities to strengthen cooperation, exchange of practice and synergies between NHRIs, NEBs and civil society organisations;
- to reflect on the distinctiveness, as well as the complementarity between the central roles of NHRIs, NEBs and civil society actors in promoting social rights, including in the Covid-19 context;
- to enhance the capacity of National Human Rights Institutions, National Equality Bodies and civil society organisations to use the European Social Charter and the outcomes of the monitoring under the Charter for policy shaping and decision making so as to render social rights fully effective.

* May be subject to editorial amendments.

¹ [How can \(I\)NGOs engage with the European Committee of Social Rights under the monitoring procedures of the European Social Charter](#) (2019) and [How can National Human Rights Institutions and National Equality Bodies engage with the European Committee of Social Rights](#) (2021)

BACKGROUND

National Human Rights Institutions, National Equality Bodies and civil society organisations play multiple roles. They are an important source of information for both citizens and government. They monitor government policies and actions and hold government accountable. They engage in advocacy and offer alternative policies and advice.

Moreover, cooperation with civil society is an important element of the [Paris Principles](#) which are the standards intended to provide a framework for independence and effectiveness in promoting and protecting human rights. One of the requirements is a pluralistic representation of society within NHRIs and their consultative forums intertwined with their independence. Each institution should reflect the broader composition of society and also, in its way of working, relate to the broader community, by collaborating with civil society and engaging with those that may otherwise be left behind and not be heard.

This is why a strong partnership between NHRIs/NEBs and civil society organisations can help governments better understand local needs, find the best solutions to emerging problems, and make positive impacts more efficiently.

This is even more true in the current situation, where Europe has to strive for economic recovery after Covid-19 and the devastating effects on human rights caused by the Russian military aggression against Ukraine. This is why the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe must intensify efforts to protect human rights, including in their social rights dimension, and build stronger partnerships with these organisations.

In the [2021 EU Council Conclusions on strengthening the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#) in the EU, European Union Member States highlighted the role of civil society organisations in assisting citizens with regard to their rights, in preventing and reacting to violations or abuses and in sharing relevant Charter knowledge and raising awareness.

In 2022, the Council of Europe launched a [civil society portal](#) which gives NGOs the information they need to work alongside the Council of Europe. It also includes a new [Practical Guide for civil society](#). As regards the European Social Charter, NHRIs, NEBs and NGOs can meaningfully engage and contribute to both the reporting and the collective complaints procedures under the Charter. They can also promote the progressive realisation of social rights by encouraging Council of Europe member states to make further commitments under the Charter, whether by accepting additional provisions or, for those that have not yet done so, by embracing the collective complaints procedure.

Through engaging with the European Committee of Social Rights under the monitoring procedures of the European Social Charter, third party organisations can raise awareness on the economic and social rights situation in the country, promote their work at national and European level and achieve greater impact. In addition, through the work of the ECSR, third party organisations can strengthen their policy work and hold the state accountable for not fulfilling its obligations under the legally binding instruments that it has ratified. The ECSR monitoring offers a valuable tool that can assist and can be relied upon by organisations in their endeavours to uphold social and economic rights which are human

rights. Moreover, findings on non-conformity with the Charter's provisions are a very clear and useful starting point for advocacy and are subject to regular reassessment by the ECSR.

PARTICIPANTS

The event is designed to bring together representatives of the Council of Europe, the [European Union Fundamental Rights Agency](#), national human rights institutions, national equality bodies and civil society actors active in promoting and defending social rights.

FORMAT / WORKING LANGUAGES

The meeting will be held in Bratislava, Slovak Republic. The working languages will be English and French.