

Statement of interpretation on Article 4§1

As interpreted by the Committee, this provision which obliges Contracting States to take appropriate measures to ensure a decent standard of living for workers and their families, requires those states to make a continuous effort to achieve the objectives set by this provision of the Charter. This being so, account must be taken of the fact that the socio-economic status of the worker and his family changes and that his basic needs, which at first are centred on the provision of purely material basic necessities such as food and housing, subsequently move towards concerns of a more advanced and complex nature, such as educational facilities and cultural and social benefits.

One particular point in this first paragraph relates, moreover, to a question of great importance: methods of fixing wages when these are not provided for by collective agreements or legislation. While all workers are free to decide whether or not to join a union, the Committee noted that the first governmental reports quoted high percentages of non-union workers. For this reason, the Committee wondered whether these workers were not in fact placed at a disadvantage where the fixing of wage rates was concerned. It took the view, however, that existing wage procedures did have their effect on the determination of wage levels for non-union workers. The Committee was unable to express a precise opinion on the basis of the reports submitted and hoped that the second two-yearly reports would provide clarification on this point.

Generally speaking, moreover, in the absence of adequate information, the Committee was unable to judge from the first governmental reports whether or not the Contracting States fulfilled the obligation arising under this paragraph.