

19 March 2026

High Level Conference on Social Rights – the European Social Charter
(Chişinău, Republic of Moldova, 18-19 March 2026)

CHIŞINĂU DECLARATION

1. The Council of Europe member States gathered in Chişinău recognise that social rights as enshrined notably in the European Social Charter are under unprecedented pressure as Europe grapples with overlapping and mutually reinforcing societal crises. Democratic stability and security are directly impacted by rising socio-economic inequalities and the cost-of-living crisis. These factors, as well as the need to increase defence spending resulting from the unstable international situation, including Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, have placed burdens on governments, institutions and communities already grappling with climate change, the health challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and demographic change.
2. The Reykjavík Declaration (2023) and the Vilnius Declaration (2024) reinforced the political commitment of the Council of Europe member States to social rights, as guaranteed by the European Social Charter, a primary instrument for achieving social justice. The Vilnius Declaration welcomed the decisions taken by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to improve the implementation of the Charter system and its monitoring procedures.
3. In this context the member States reiterate their commitment to recognised principles on social rights and social justice enacted by other international or regional organisations including the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and, where applicable, the European Union (EU). They acknowledge the alignment of these principles with the Doha Declaration (2025).
4. Difficulty to guarantee social rights and deliver social justice is a major driver of distrust in public authorities and democratic institutions. The member States welcome the initiative on a New Democratic Pact for Europe (the Pact). With social justice as a key objective, the Pact offers an opportunity for renewed commitments, integrated solutions across sectors and innovative ways to support social justice. As previously stated by the Committee of Ministers, social justice denotes a society based on equality and solidarity, which meets fundamental human needs, reduces inequalities through fair redistribution mechanisms and secures collectively the conditions necessary for every individual to develop and use their skills.
5. Investing in social rights is both a moral imperative and a strategic choice for building sustainable, resilient, just and inclusive societies. Such investment reduces inequality, fosters social cohesion and inter-generational justice, and enhances democratic stability and security. At the same

time, it reinforces trust in institutions and public authorities at all levels of governance. Investing in social rights means investing in the future of democracy itself. Democratic stability and security can only be achieved where social rights are adequately protected.

6. On the occasion of this High-Level Conference, member States and participants at the Conference:

- a. reaffirm their full commitment to the protection and implementation of social rights as guaranteed by the European Social Charter system and encourage member States to consider ratifying the revised European Social Charter (1996), while keeping under review the possibilities for accepting additional commitments, including the additional Protocol (1995) providing for a system of collective complaints;
- b. recognise that ensuring social rights as enshrined notably in the European Social Charter is essential to countering growing threats to democracy driven in particular by fears about economic instability, declining working and living standards and limited opportunities;
- c. recognise that combatting poverty and social exclusion is a question of human dignity. The cost-of-living crisis situation remains critical for millions of people, in particular the most vulnerable groups who are forced to spend a larger proportion of their income on essentials. This crisis disproportionately affected – and still affects - low-income households and particularly vulnerable population groups such as single-parent families, children, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons and Roma and Travellers;
- d. underline the importance of addressing emerging labour rights challenges in Europe, including those arising from digitalisation, artificial intelligence and climate and demographic changes;
- e. acknowledge that effective social dialogue, freedom of association and collective bargaining are indispensable for a just, inclusive and sustainable future of work;
- f. recognise the role played by the Charter's monitoring body, the European Committee of Social Rights, and the follow-up and other work undertaken by the Governmental Committee of the European Social Charter and the European Code of Social Security;
- g. recognise the importance of strengthening visibility, understanding, awareness and ownership of the Charter, in particular at local level where social rights are implemented;
- h. underline the importance of implementation of the Committee of Ministers 2022 reform package and the need to take into account reviews and evaluations thereof;
- i. underline the need for better co-operation within the Council of Europe to promote coordinated action on social rights including between the Charter treaty bodies, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Conference of INGOs, other monitoring bodies and relevant intergovernmental committees;
- j. recognise the importance of institutional dialogue and synergies between the Council of Europe, the United Nations, the ILO and the EU in order to ensure coherence and complementarity.

7. In view of the above, member States:

- a. commit, where necessary, to adopt laws and policies which can ensure equal enjoyment of social rights and equitable access to life/work opportunities to bring about a

stronger, more cohesive, more democratic and socially just Europe, in which the enjoyment of the rights enshrined notably in the European Social Charter is effectively guaranteed, in law and in practice, while preserving an adequate balance between rights and obligations and strengthening incentives for labour market participation;

b. undertake, with due consideration of national systems and practices, to ensure that current economic, demographic and technological transformations in labour markets place workers at the centre, guided by respect for social rights, including decent working conditions, dignity in the workplace, fair remuneration, access to social protection and effective social dialogue;

c. undertake to adopt gender-responsive economic and social policies addressing the persistent social rights shortfalls experienced by women, including those resulting from the gender pay and pensions gaps, women's over-representation in precarious jobs and their disproportionate burden of unpaid household and care work;

d. undertake to strengthen child and youth perspectives and participation in strategies and measures to realise social rights, including those related to eradicating poverty and child labour and securing equal, inclusive societies, by establishing institutionalised, regular and meaningful participation mechanisms and advisory structures;

e. undertake to adopt measures to ensure the right to active social citizenship of older persons and commit to eliminating ageism and age discrimination, as well as to taking the necessary steps to ensure older persons' social protection, including their participation in society and ability to lead independent lives;

f. undertake to ensure the effective exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities to independence, social inclusion and participation in community life by taking the steps required to ensure that quality services are genuinely available and accessible to all persons with disabilities;

g. commit to take appropriate measures to give effect to the conclusions and decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights, including on the basis of the follow-up measures proposed by the Governmental Committee of the European Social Charter and the European Code of Social Security, taking into account national circumstances and realities;

h. resolve to promote and strengthen enhanced dialogue, conducted in a constructive spirit, between the European Committee of Social Rights, the Governmental Committee of the European Social Charter and the European Code of Social Security, competent national and local and regional authorities as well as other stakeholders, with a view to the shared objective of improving the achievement of social rights in practice;

i. resolve to fully engage with and support Council of Europe co-operation activities in the relevant fields and to explore financing options provided by the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) to improve the implementation of the Charter at national level;

j. resolve to maintain political engagement, through High-Level Conferences on social rights and the European Social Charter in order to monitor progress, share best practices, and encourage further treaty commitments.

8. Participants thank the authorities of the Republic of Moldova for the perfect organisation of the High-Level Conference and their gracious hospitality, and welcome the invitation by Portugal to hold the 3rd High-Level conference during their Presidency of the Committee of Ministers in 2029.