

DELIVERING SOCIAL RIGHTS, RENEWING DEMOCRACY: FROM DOHA AND CHIȘINĂU TO LIVING REALITY



Side Event at the High-Level Week
of the 81st Session of
the United Nations General Assembly

22 September 2026
New York, USA

15:00-16:00 NY time
Conference Room 11,
UN HQ, New York

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Concept Note

The Council of Europe proposes to convene a focused side event during the United Nations General Assembly 81st session, in New York, in September 2026 to build a bridge from the outcomes of the Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha, in November 2025 and the High-Level Conference of the Council of Europe on Social Rights, the European Social Charter in Chişinău in March 2026.

The Doha Summit reaffirmed that social rights are foundational to peaceful, inclusive and resilient societies, and called for accelerated investments in decent work, social protection, housing, health, and youth opportunities.

The Council of Europe High-Level Conference on Social Rights in Chişinău translated this global ambition into a regional rights-based agenda. Through the Chişinău Declaration, member States reaffirmed the central role of the European Social Charter as the cornerstone of social rights protection in Europe and recognised that social justice, equality and effective social protection are indispensable to democratic stability and resilience.

The next step is implementation. Across Europe and beyond, democratic institutions are facing converging pressures: inequality, cost-of-living crisis, demographic change, technological disruption, war and geopolitical insecurity, disinformation, polarisation and declining public trust. These pressures demonstrate that democratic security cannot be understood only in institutional or military terms. Democracy must also deliver fairness, protection and opportunity in people's daily lives.

The Council of Europe's New Democratic Pact for Europe offers a strategic framework for this renewed democratic agenda. It seeks to reinforce democratic institutions, rebuild public trust, empower citizens and respond to democratic backsliding through practical and inclusive action. Social rights should be placed at the heart of this effort. Where people have access to decent work, housing, healthcare, social protection, education and meaningful participation, they are less exposed to fear, manipulation and exclusion. Where social promises are fulfilled democratic confidence is stronger.

Purpose

The event will provide a high-level platform to discuss how the commitments made in Doha and Chişinău can be translated into concrete action through the European Social Charter and the New Democratic Pact for Europe. It will highlight social rights as a foundation of democratic resilience, public trust and democratic security, and identify practical steps for implementation through stronger multilateral cooperation.

PROGRAMME

15:00 Opening of the event

Moderator: *Mr Rafael BENITEZ*, Director of Social Rights, Health and Environment, Council of Europe

15:02 High-level policy discussion

- ▶ ***Mr. Alain BERSET***, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
- ▶ ***Mr. Mihai POPȘOI***, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova
- ▶ ***Ms. Domna MICHAILIDOU***, Minister of Social Cohesion and Family Affairs of Greece
- ▶ ***Ms. Ana Isabel Xavier***, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Portugal
- ▶ ***Dr. Felipe PAULLIER***, Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs, United Nations

16:00 Closing of the event

Format

A 75 minute session featuring a high-level discussion with the Council of Europe Secretary General, UN leaders, Ministers. **Working language will be English. Access for UN badge holders only.**

Partnerships

Co-organisers: **Council of Europe, Greece, Portugal**
Sponsors: **Albania, Republic of Moldova**

Key themes

SOCIAL RIGHTS AS A FOUNDATION OF DEMOCRATIC SECURITY

The event will underline that democratic resilience depends on the ability of institutions to protect dignity, reduce inequality and provide access to essential rights. Decent work, social protection, housing, healthcare, education, equality and participation are therefore not only social-policy priorities, but core elements of public trust and democratic security.

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ACTION

The event will explore how social justice can be embedded in a broader response to democratic backsliding, polarisation and declining public trust. It will consider what tools and mechanisms can be used to connect institutional democratic renewal with people's lived experience of fairness, protection, opportunity and meaningful participation.

FROM DOHA AND CHIȘINĂU TO IMPLEMENTATION

The discussion will focus on how the global commitments made in Doha and the rights-based commitments reaffirmed in Chișinău can be translated into concrete action. Particular attention will be given to the European Social Charter as a key implementation framework, including stronger follow-up to the conclusions and decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR DELIVERY AND RESILIENCE

The event will identify practical ways to strengthen cooperation between the Council of Europe, the United Nations, the ILO, member States, civil society, local and regional authorities and youth representatives. The focus will be on implementation-oriented partnerships, including policy reform, technical cooperation, financing, local-level delivery and sustained political follow-up.

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.



Council of Europe



Department of Social Rights,
Council of Europe



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