

SOCIAL RIGHTS: BUILDING SOCIAL JUSTICE AND DEMOCRATIC STABILITY



Event organised by
the Council of Europe, in cooperation with
the European Economic and Social Committee

5 June 2025
Brussels,
Belgium



Background

In a world marked by rising inequalities, demographic shifts, and environmental challenges, the promotion of social rights is more critical than ever. Social rights – such as access to employment, healthcare, education, housing, and social security – are fundamental to fostering inclusive and resilient societies. They are also a key pillar of democratic stability, helping to reduce disparities and enhance social cohesion.

The Council of Europe's commitment to social rights, social justice and democratic stability, established in the European Social Charter and reaffirmed at the 2023 Reykjavik Summit, aligns in crucial ways with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Likewise, the 2024 La Hulpe Declaration and the European Pillar of Social Rights have a key role to play in advancing European progress towards universal social rights enjoyment and achievement of the SDGs.

This event seeks to bridge above mentioned frameworks, enhance their synergies, and advance the global agenda for social justice, democratic stability, and human dignity. It will complement ongoing international initiatives, including the UN Second World Summit for Social Development (November 2025, Doha, Qatar), providing a platform for refining strategies and accelerating collective progress.

Objectives

Highlight the fundamental role of social rights within the human rights framework and their contribution to social justice.

Emphasise the link between social rights, democratic stability, and sustainable development.

Explore effective strategies for integrating social rights law standards into national and regional policies.

Align efforts towards the UN Second World Summit for Social Development by fostering partnerships and innovative strategies.



Key Themes

The event will explore four interrelated dimensions of social rights:

1. Social Rights within the Human Rights Framework:

Social rights, enshrined in the European Social Charter, are essential for upholding human dignity, ensuring equality, and enabling active participation in society. This session will examine how international mechanisms can be strengthened to promote these rights, with a special focus on youth participation in policy and decision-making.

2. Social Justice in Action – From Policy to Practice:

Bridging the gap between high-level policy commitments and tangible outcomes requires innovative, rights-based approaches. This session will address systemic inequalities, highlight challenges faced by vulnerable groups, and showcase successful policies that promote equitable access to resources and opportunities.

3. Social Rights and Democratic Stability:

Social rights play a crucial role in fostering democratic resilience. Access to education, healthcare, fair working conditions, and adequate housing strengthen trust in institutions and mitigates socio-economic disparities that can lead to instability. This session will explore how social rights can reinforce inclusive political participation and long-term stability.

4. Social Rights for Sustainable Development:

The integration of social rights into development strategies is essential for achieving the SDGs. This discussion will bring together diverse stakeholders to highlight collaborative models that generate long-term, sustainable benefits.

PROGRAMME

Social Rights: Building Social Justice and Democratic Stability

*Event organised by the Council of Europe, in cooperation with
the European Economic and Social Committee*

Date: 5 June 2025

Venue: EESC, Room JDE 52, 5th floor, Jacques Delors building,
Rue Belliard 99-101, 1040 Brussels

9:00 - 10:00 REGISTRATION OF PARTICIPANTS AND WELCOME COFFEE



Ms Sally BAILEY-RAVET

Moderator, Council of Europe

10:00 - 10:20 WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS



Mr Gianluca ESPOSITO

Director General of Human Rights and Rule of Law,
Council of Europe



Mr Oliver RÖPKE

President of the European Economic and
Social Committee

10:20 - 11:20 SESSION 1: SOCIAL RIGHTS WITHIN THE HUMAN RIGHTS ARCHITECTURE

Exploring the role of social rights in promoting dignity, equality, and inclusion. The session will highlight how international mechanisms uphold these rights and focus on the perspectives of young people.

Keynote Speech:



Ms Aoife NOLAN

President of the European Committee of Social Rights,
Council of Europe



Speakers:



Mr Jacek KRAWCZYK

Member of the European Economic and Social Committee



Ms Debbie KOHNER

Secretary General of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)



Mr Rareș VOICU

President of the European Youth Forum

Discussion

11:20 - 12:30 SESSION 2: SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ACTION – BRIDGING POLICY AND PRACTICE

This session will examine rights-based policies addressing inequality, showcasing successful national policies linking social rights with sustainable development.

Speakers:



Ms Tatiana PUIU

Vice-President of the European Committee of Social Rights, Council of Europe



Ms Katarina IVANKOVIĆ KNEŽEVIĆ

Director for Social Rights and Inclusion, DG Employment European Commission



Mr Bernd SCHLÜTER

Member of the European Economic and Social Committee



Ms Carlien van EMPEL

Director of the Office for the European Union
and the Benelux countries, ILO



Mr Tomáš BOČEK

Vice-Governor for Target Group Countries, Council of Europe
Development Bank

Discussion

12:30 - 14:00 LUNCH BREAK

14:00 - 15:15 SESSION 3: SOCIAL RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC STABILITY

*Examining the role of social rights in fostering social cohesion,
trust in institutions, and inclusive political participation.*

Speakers:



Mr Paul GALLES

Chairperson of Sub-Committee on the European Social Charter,
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe



Ms Martine DIESCHBURG

Vice-President of the Congress of Local and
Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe



Ms Isabelle SCHÖMANN

Deputy General Secretary of the European
Trade union Confederation



Mr Michele CONSOLINI

Research Officer at Eurofound

Discussion

15:15 - 15:45 COFFEE BREAK

15:45 - 16:45 SESSION 4: THE ROAD TO THE SECOND WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT - PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROGRESS

Exploring how social rights contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the role of multilateral cooperation in shaping the Second World Summit for Social Development.

Speakers:



Amb. Siegfried PEINEN

UN Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgium



Mr Giuseppe PALMISANO

UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights /
Former President, European Committee of Social Rights,
Council of Europe



Ms Cinzia del RIO

President of the Section on Employment, Social Affairs and
Citizenship (SOC), European Economic and Social Committee



Mr Bob RAE

President of the UN Economic and Social Council

Discussion

16:45 - 17:00 PRESENTATION OF CONCLUSIONS AND CLOSING REMARKS



Mr Rafael BENITEZ

Director of Social Rights, Health and Environment,
Council of Europe

www.coe.int

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.

