

SOCIAL RIGHTS - PILLAR FOR DEMOCRATIC STABILITY AND RESILIENCE FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE



Side Event on the margins
of the High-Level Conference on Social Rights:
the European Social Charter

18 March 2026
Chisinau,
Republic
of Moldova

15:30-17:30 CET
"Governor" conference room,
Mimi Hotel Chisinau
(Jolly Alon hotel),
37 Maria Cebotari str.

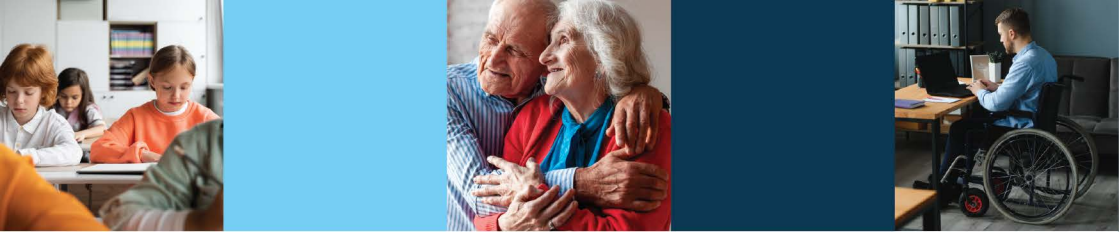


**Ministry
of Social Policy, Family
and Unity of Ukraine**



MINISTRY OF LABOUR
AND SOCIAL PROTECTION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA





BACKGROUND

Social rights guaranteed by the European Social Charter (ESC/Charter) are essential to democratic resilience, ensuring adequate social and economic protection for all. No other pan-European instrument offers such broad and comprehensive safeguards. Through its legally binding provisions and monitoring mechanisms, the ESC serves as Europe's social constitution, ensuring that social rights remain integral to the continent's human rights architecture.

In 2023, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe reaffirmed their commitment to the European Social Charter, recognising social rights and justice as vital to democratic stability and security. This commitment was reinforced in 2024 at the Vilnius High-Level Conference, where states stressed the roles of national governments and cooperation with international organisations in promoting the Charter's standards. The Council of Europe's New Democratic Pact for Europe highlights that advancing social justice and rights is essential for a resilient democratic order.

Ukraine is currently confronting the profound challenges posed by Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, resulting in significant internal displacement, damage to critical infrastructure, and increased social vulnerability. The Republic of Moldova is addressing complex economic and security challenges that influence both national stability and the effectiveness of its social protection systems. Both countries remain committed to aligning their systems with European standards, recognising that protecting social rights is crucial for public trust, democratic resilience, and long-term stability.

As EU candidates, both the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine are leveraging the European Social Charter to support social rights, cohesion, and resilient democratic governance while harmonising national legislation with the EU *acquis* through the accession process.

KEY TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SUSTAINABLE PROTECTION FOR DEMOCRATIC STABILITY:

Strengthening inclusive and sustainable social protection systems in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine is essential for democratic stability and resilience. It is vital that both countries continue to expand access to inclusive, community-based social services for people in vulnerable situations, with particular attention to children, including children with disabilities, those deprived of parental care, and those impacted by poverty or displacement. Such measures are essential to ensuring every person is afforded meaningful protection and opportunity, and to building cohesive, stable societies which are well aligned with European standards and values.

GOOD PRACTICES FROM COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEMBER STATES ON LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL ALIGNMENT WITH EUROPEAN SOCIAL STANDARDS FOR DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE:

Aligned laws and institutions in Council of Europe member states with European social standards, such as the European Social Charter and EU social acquis, helps protect social rights and reinforce democratic governance. Modern frameworks, meaningful social dialogue, and active civil society involvement promote resilient, rights-based systems and strengthen democratic stability and resilience.

COORDINATION AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION:

Given the cross-border consequences, such as refugee movements and migration flows, and the ongoing paths toward EU integration, close cooperation among countries, particularly Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, as well as with international organisations, is essential. The Council of Europe can play an important role in facilitating these processes by providing technical assistance to countries and serving as a platform for interstate cooperation. This cooperation should be guided by a shared commitment to solidarity, sustainable development, and social justice across Europe.

OBJECTIVES

The side event aims to:

- Examine how compliance with the European Social Charter reinforce democratic resilience and stability in Europe;
- Explore good practices from Council of Europe member states on legislative and institutional alignment with European social standards, and how these efforts strengthen social rights protection, democratic resilience, and long-term institutional stability;
- Highlight the Republic of Moldova's and Ukraine's national priorities and social policies that strengthen resilience, stability, and public trust in institutions, while also addressing challenges such as war-related displacement, economic vulnerability, and limited institutional capacity. How are both countries closing gaps in social protection, reducing poverty, and expanding inclusive, community-based services for people in vulnerable situations;
- Explore initiatives to strengthen cooperation between the two countries and with international partners.

The European Social Charter offers the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine a vital framework for reinforcing democratic stability by embedding social rights in law and in practice. Especially in times of war and transitions, protecting social rights is essential for safeguarding democracy and ensuring no one is left behind.



PROGRAMME

SOCIAL RIGHTS - PILLAR FOR DEMOCRATIC STABILITY AND RESILIENCE FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE

*Side Event on the margins of the High-Level Conference on Social Rights:
the European Social Charter*

15:15 - 16:00 REGISTRATION OF PARTICIPANTS, WELCOME AND NETWORKING COFFEE

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

16:00 - 17:25 PANEL DISCUSSION

The panellists will discuss how democratic stability and resilience can be strengthened through the effective implementation of European social rights standards, with particular emphasis on the European Social Charter.

Speakers:

- ▶ *Mr Alain BERSET*, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
- ▶ *Ms Aoife NOLAN*, President of the European Committee of Social Rights
- ▶ *Mr Denys ULIUTIN*, Minister of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine
- ▶ *Ms Natalia PLUGARU*, Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova

Questions and Answers

17:25-17:30 CLOSING REMARKS

- ▶ *Mr Rafael BENITEZ*, Director of Social Rights, Health and Environment, DGI, Council of Europe



High-Level Conference on Social Rights - The European Social Charter



Social Rights - Pillar for Democratic Stability and Resilience for the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine

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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.



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