

BUILDING SOCIAL JUSTICE IN EUROPE:

Linking the European Social Charter and the European Pillar of Social Rights



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

18 March 2026
Chişinău,
Republic
of Moldova

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



BACKGROUND

Across Europe, rising inequality, cost-of-living pressures, demographic change, climate transition and labour-market transformation are reshaping societies. These developments are not only social or economic challenges — they increasingly affect trust in institutions, political participation and ultimately-democratic stability. They are also a matter of social rights as provided for in the European Social Charter, which represents the most comprehensive legally binding instrument protecting these rights at the European level. This treaty guarantees a wide set of social and economic rights and establishes monitoring through the European Committee of Social Rights, ensuring continuous interpretation and accountability.

In parallel, the European Union has reinforced its social dimension through the European Pillar of Social Rights and its implementation mechanisms, including the European Semester and the forthcoming revised Action Plan. The 2024 La Hulpe Declaration marked a major political step in reinforcing the social dimension of the EU. It reaffirmed the commitment of EU Member States to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights and recognised the need to strengthen cooperation with the Council of Europe and the European Social Charter framework.

The Charter and the Pillar are rooted in the same vision, with many principles of the Pillar — fair working conditions, social protection, healthcare, education, housing and equal opportunities — correspond directly to Charter rights. However, there is a need to further align the EU policy tools with binding social-rights standards which will reinforce credibility and effectiveness.

The current global and European political momentum — including the adoption of the Doha Political Declaration in November 2025, the preparation of the new Pillar Action Plan and the High-Level Conference on Social Rights, the European Social Charter in March 2026 — offer a unique opportunity to strengthen coherence between parallel frameworks so as to progress a common (European) social rights architecture.

The event will explore how the European Social Charter and the European Pillar of Social Rights can operate together to reinforce social justice; strengthen democratic stability and improve implementation of social rights in everyday life. Social rights and social justice are key topics in the Council of Europe's ongoing political and strategic consultations for a New Democratic Pact for Europe.



KEY QUESTIONS

The side event will identify forward-looking actions to operationalise social rights in Europe by considering:

HOW CAN THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER SERVE AS THE LEGAL REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS?

HOW CAN EU LAW AND THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER INTEGRATE FINDINGS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF SOCIAL RIGHTS?

WHAT ROLE SHOULD MEMBER STATES AND SOCIAL PARTNERS PLAY IN BRIDGING EU POLICY AND HUMAN-RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS?

HOW CAN THE CHIȘINĂU HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE SERVE TO SUPPORT EU-COUNCIL OF EUROPE SYNERGIES IN THE AREA OF SOCIAL RIGHTS?

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this event is to identify concrete mechanisms through which EU policies and the European Pillar of Social Rights can be operationally linked to Charter standards and monitoring, transforming complementarity into functional cooperation and ensuring that social rights produce tangible improvements in people's daily lives.



FORMAT

A 90 minute session featuring a high-level discussion with the high-level officials of the Council of Europe, EU, the Republic of Moldova. Working language will be English.



PROGRAMME

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on Social Rights: the European Social Charter

Date: 18 March 2026

Venue: Palace of the Republic, Library Room "Onisifor Ghibu"
Nicolae Iorga 21 A str.

16:15 WELCOME COFFEE AND REGISTRATION

Moderator: *Gianluca ESPOSITO*, Director General of
Human Rights and Rule of Law, Council of Europe

16:30 PANEL DISCUSSION

- ▶ *Olivier De SCHUTTER*, Member of the European Committee of Social Rights
- ▶ *Laura CORRADO*, Head of Unit for International Affairs in DG EMPLOYMENT European Commission
- ▶ *Maria do Rosário PALMA RAMALHO*, Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, Portugal
- ▶ *Dastid KORESHI*, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Albania to the Council of Europe
- ▶ *Marcel SPATARI*, Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on European Integration, Parliament of the Republic of Moldova
- ▶ *Isabelle SCHÖMANN*, Deputy General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation

Q&A

18:00 CLOSING OF THE EVENT



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



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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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