



European  
Social  
Charter

Charte  
Sociale  
Européenne

## EXPERT SEMINAR

### Reinforcing social rights protection in Europe: to achieve greater unity and equality

#### CONCEPT NOTE

STRASBOURG, 19 SEPTEMBER 2019  
COUNCIL OF EUROPE, AGORA G03

Since its creation in 1949, the Council of Europe has worked to ensure respect for individual freedoms and fundamental rights and the implementation of the rule of law.

In this connection, its system of social rights protection, developed over 70 years, provides guarantees for key principles: free movement of persons, non-discrimination, legal and social security, protection against poverty and exclusion, in particular through access to decent housing, health, education and training, as well as employment, work safety and workplace equality, including for wages.

The entry into force of the revised European Social Charter 20 years ago provided an opportunity to revamp the normative system based on the Charter by introducing reinforced dialogue with the social partners and with civil society.

In this context, the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) plays a decisive role in monitoring the effectiveness of social rights through periodic examination of national reports and analysis of collective complaints.

Its work is intended to serve as a platform for positive changes, made at national level, aimed at catering more for the social dimension of globalisation and the radical changes ahead in the way people work. There have been notable improvements in the social and economic spheres in the different States parties, bringing their national situations into line with their European commitments.

The French Presidency of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, which has made preserving and consolidating the Council of Europe's achievements in the field of human rights protection one of its priorities, wishes to promote the strengthening of social rights in Europe.

In order to consolidate the progress made in the social sphere and also to respond to the latest challenges, the mechanisms for monitoring and overseeing the effectiveness of social rights in Europe must be reformed and modernised to boost member States' appropriation of the reports and conclusions drawn up by the ECSR.

Moreover, the integration of social rights into national law calls for the development of synergies between the Council of Europe and the European Union, on the basis of the Turin process and the recognition of the European Social Charter as the *Social Constitution of Europe*.

The expert seminar to be held on 19 September 2019 under the auspices of the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers will be an opportunity to come together and discuss these topics and follow up the reiteration of the importance of social rights by the Committee of Ministers at its Helsinki session in May 2019. At that session, the Committee of Ministers invited all the member States concerned to consider signing and ratifying the revised European Social Charter and its Additional Protocol, providing for a system of collective complaints, as a starting point for a resolutely proactive and collective drive to combat inequalities and achieve greater social justice.

*In liaison with*

