



GC(2024)13rev

Strasbourg, 18 March 2024

**GOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE
OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER
AND THE EUROPEAN CODE OF SOCIAL SECURITY**

Input for the High-Level Conference in Vilnius

Contribution on behalf of the Governmental Committee regarding the objectives and possible outcomes of the High-level Conference with a view to strengthening the CoE's social rights framework

The Governmental Committee reaffirms the critical importance of upholding social rights. As fundamental human rights, social rights lay the foundation for long-term sustainability of societies and economies by investing in a healthy and (digitally) skilled population. Thus, prioritising social rights is both a moral imperative and a pragmatic necessity for fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities, eradicating discrimination of all kinds and reinforcing democratic values and governance as well as ultimately empowering civic participation.

In response to the Committee of Ministers' commitment to strengthening the Charter system, the Governmental Committee has assumed significant responsibilities. This includes proposing recommendations to address persistent non-conformity with the Charter, support the efforts that member States are undertaking on social rights, and fostering member States' acceptance of additional commitments, where possible. Embracing these tasks, the Governmental Committee aims to contribute to a more robust and responsive social rights framework across Europe.

On the occasion of the High-level Conference, the Governmental Committee reaffirms its full adherence and commitment to the European Social Charter system and its support for States Parties taking on further commitments, where possible, under this foundational Council of Europe treaty. Urging member States to commit to the Revised Charter adopted in 1996, it additionally encourages acceptance of the collective complaints procedure and expedited ratification of the 1991 Amending Protocol. Nonetheless, the Governmental Committee emphasises the importance of reducing treaty law complexity. The Governmental Committee embraces the notion of embarking on exploratory efforts to assess the feasibility and methods for consolidating the various instruments comprising the Charter system. Recognising the potential benefits of consolidating the Charter instruments, the Governmental Committee is eager to play an active role in facilitating this work.

Meanwhile, the Governmental Committee encourages States Parties to accept additional Charter provisions and the protocols made alongside the Charter, wherever appropriate. It affirms its commitment to actively assist States in overcoming any barriers they may encounter in this regard, favouring a smoother transition towards enhanced social justice and human rights protections. The Governmental Committee will therefore continue to explore all possible avenues and tools to create an enhanced dialogue between the European Social Charter bodies, the Member States and other relevant stakeholders, in particular the social partners. Consequently, the Governmental Committee enthusiastically acknowledges the proactive steps taken by several States in signalling their intent to notify acceptance of additional Charter provisions, particularly within the framework of the Treaty event at the High-level Conference in Vilnius.

Finally, the Governmental Committee notes the prospect of establishing future High-level Conferences of specialised ministers and relevant stakeholders, including social partners, in the realm of social rights (labour, health, social affairs, housing, and related domains). The Governmental Committee suggests that any future high-level conferences would need to have clear policy themes, taking into account the resources of member States, in order to successfully advance social rights agendas at the highest levels of governance, ensuring their effective implementation across Europe.