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Comments submitted by
The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR)
concerning the Ad hoc report on the cost-of-living crisis
submitted by
THE GOVERNMENT OF GREECE

Comments registered by the Secretariat

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Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR)

**Additional Information by the GNCHR
to the European Committee of Social Rights
on the ad hoc report on the cost-of-living crisis**

*The cost-of-living
crisis is a human
rights law issue*

June 2024



The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) is the independent advisory body to the Greek State on matters pertaining to human rights protection and the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI). It was established with Law 2667/1998 in accordance with the UN Paris Principles and is governed by Law 4780/2021. Its members are persons appointed by twenty institutions (independent Authorities, third level trade unions, NGOs, universities and research institutions)



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Additional Information by the GNCHR to the European Committee of Social Rights on the ad hoc report on the cost-of-living crisis

SUMMARY

The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) within its mandate to monitor the compliance of the Greek legislation to the provisions of international and European treaties and Directives, as well as soft law instruments, takes the opportunity to submit its comments and additional information on the ad hoc report on the cost-of-living crisis on the implementation of the revised European Social Charter (ESC) based on the [1st ad hoc report “The Cost-of-Living Crisis” of the Government of Greece](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, December 2023) registered by the Secretariat on 21 December 2023 (RAP/RCha/GRC/2023, Cycle 2023) and on the Ministers’ Deputies 1444th meeting on 27 September 2022 and especially on the Implementation of the Report on Improving the European Social Charter system (operational proposals for the reform of the European Social Charter system)¹.

In this regard, the GNCHR refers back to its previously expressed concerns and comments on the Observations by the GNCHR on the 5th National Report on the implementation of the Revised European Social Charter (Reference Period 01/01/2017 – 31/12/2020)² and on the impact of financial and other restrictive measures on labour rights and working conditions in Greece on the one hand,³ while it formulates further

* The present Additional Information were adopted by the GNCHR Plenary, on June 6, 2024. Rapporteurs: Ellie Varchalama, Second Vice-President, Member designated by the Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE) and Dr Christos Tsevas, Legal Officer (GNCHR). With special thanks to Emeritus Professor Petros Stangos (School of Law, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) and former Member of GNCHR, Giannis Ioannidis, First Vice-President, Member designated by the Hellenic League for Human Rights, Ioannis Lymvaivos, Alternate Chair of the GNCHR Sub-Commission for Social, Economic and Cultural Rights and Member designated by the General Council of National Confederation of Disabled People of Greece (NCDP), Stathis Gkotsis, Alternate Chair of the GNCHR Sub-Commission for the Promotion of Human Rights and Member designated by the Greek Civil Service Confederation (ADEDY) and Assistant Professor Aikaterini Iliadou, designated by the School of Law of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (alternate member) for their contribution to the report.

¹ [Council of Europe, CM/Ministers’ Deputies, CM\(2022\)114-final, 1444th meeting, Implementation of the Report on Improving the European Social Charter system \(operational proposals for the reform of the European Social Charter system\), 27 September 2022.](#)

² [GNHCR, Observations by the GNCHR on the 5th National Report on the implementation of the Revised European Social Charter \(Reference Period 01/01/2017 – 31/12/2020\), December 2022.](#)

³ [See GNCHR Observations on Greece’s combined 23rd and 24th periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination \(CERD\), 2021; GNCHR Submission to the UN Human Rights Committee on the List of Issues Prior to Reporting for the Third periodic examination of Greece under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 2021; GNCHR Stakeholder Report to the Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\) of Greece, 2021; GNCHR, Observations submitted by the Greek national Commission for Human Rights \(GNCHR\) in view of the examination of the 27th Greek Report on the application of the European Social Charter \(Articles 3, 11, 12, 13 and 14\) and on the 11th Greek Report on the application of the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter \(Article 4\) \(Reference Period 01/01/2012-31/12/2015\), January 2017; GNCHR factsheet on the “Impact of Economic Reform Policies](#)

relevant observations on the situation of the cost-of-living crisis in Greece, as a human rights issues, the relevant criteria (or their lack) taken into consideration by the 1st National Ad Hoc Report, the progress made by the competent authorities and the way forward while facing such a harmful crisis to human rights.

Additionally, the GNCHR would like to draw the attention to fundamental and methodological issues of the cost-of-living crisis, based also on the Appendix – Request for an ad hoc report on the cost of living crisis and the questions to States Parties⁴. The GNCHR agrees that the cost-of-living issue has a broad scope and a pan-European dimension and affects different States and populations and targeting disproportionately the most vulnerable, low-income households. Besides, there is a nexus between poverty and reduced enjoyment of the Charter rights. As it is observed in the appendix, this is particularly apparent with regard to rights related to social protection (Articles 12, 13, 16 (family benefits), 30, and 31), the right of workers to fair remuneration, ensuring for them and their families a decent standard of living (Article 4 par. 1), and rights adhering to socially vulnerable groups (Articles 15, 17, 19 and 23).

INTRODUCTION

Role and remit of the GNCHR

The GNCHR as the A Status National Human Rights Institution and the independent advisory body to the Greek State on matters pertaining to the protection of human rights, has, by virtue of Law [4780/2021](#), which has replaced its founding Law 2667/1998, acquired legal personality, functional independence, administrative and financial autonomy. It should be noted that since 2001, the GNCHR is being accredited A status (full compliance) with UN Paris Principle, indicative of its independence and effective fulfillment of its role.

[and Austerity Measures on Human Rights" 2018](#); [GNCHR Observations on the 24th Greek Report on the application of the European Social Charter and on the 9th Greek Report on the application of the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter, 2014](#); [GNCHR, Observations on Draft Law of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs *On the Protection of Employment, Establishment of the Independent Authority Labor Inspectorate Ratification of the ILO Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work Ratification of the ILO Convention No. 187 on the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health at Work Incorporation of Directive \(EU\) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and careers*](#)", 14 June 2021 (hereinafter GNCHR Observations on the Bill On the Protection for Employment), [Summary of GNCHR Observations on Draft Law of Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs *On the Protection of Employment, Establishment of the Independent Authority Labor Inspectorate Ratification of the ILO Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work Ratification of the ILO Convention No. 187 on the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health at Work Incorporation of Directive \(EU\) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and careers*](#), 2021 (hereinafter Summary of GNCHR Observations on the Bill On the Protection for Employment).

⁴ [Council of Europe, ECSR, Questions to State Parties on ad hoc reports concerning the cost of living crisis \(Appendix\)](#).

The GNCHR Plenary is comprised of 20 members nominated by institutions whose activities cover the field of human rights: independent authorities, third level trade unions, NGOs, bar associations, universities, research institutions and the Parliament.⁵

The GNCHR is entrusted with the dual mandate of protecting and promoting human rights in Greece as set forth in its founding law and its Regulation. In this respect, its main mission is:

- The constant monitoring of developments regarding human rights protection, the continuous reporting and the promotion of the relevant research.
- The maintenance of permanent contact and co-operation with international organisations, such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, with NHRIs of other States, as well as national or international non-governmental organisations.
- The formulation of policy advice on human rights issues.

Amongst its most essential competences is **the provision of advice** to the competent bodies of the State for the effective implementation of human rights protection, in the context of its preventive and protective action, by harmonizing legislative, administrative or other measures with the country's international obligations. Its advisory role, however, is not limited to submitting opinions, recommendations, proposals or reports and participating in Parliamentary sessions. Its role also extends to assisting the reports submitted by national competent authorities for their compliance with international, regional and / or and European human rights standards (*monitoring and reporting*) as well as encouraging the ratification of international human rights treaties. In fact, in its institutional role and mission as a “guardian” of human rights at international, regional and national levels, the GNCHR plays a central role in bridging the gap not only between the State and Civil Society, but also between the Country's international commitments for the implementation of human rights and their effective enjoyment in practice.

Submission of the present Report

As regards its present Report **on the cost-of-living crisis in Greece, the GNCHR** points out that it has already, in the past, expressed its concern regarding issues falling under the scope of application of the revised European Social Charter (hereinafter the revised ESC) and its Additional Protocol and has addressed relevant opinions and recommendations to the competent Ministries. The GNCHR has also submitted observations on previous Greek Reports examined by the European Committee of Social Rights (hereinafter ECSR) on the application of the ESC.

⁵ For the full list of GNCHR's Members, please visit the site of the GNCHR www.nchr.gr

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security (Directorate of International Relations) forwarded a copy of the 1st ad hoc National Report on the cost-of-living crisis to the GNCHR for its information on 12.4.2024, after the report having been submitted to the ECSR and [registered by the latter on 21.12.2023](#). The Ministry of Labour and Social Security, through its designated liaison officer to the GNCHR, could have informed the Plenary about this new initiative of the Council of Europe, given the extensive reports of the GNCHR in the field of the human rights protection in the context of the economic crisis, which has been noted in case of the Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE) v. Greece, Complaint No. 111/2014, decision on the merits of 23 March 2017⁶.

The GNCHR deplors the fact that there is a lack of due collaboration between the State competent Authorities on the application of the revESC and the GNCHR so as inform the Commission on the reporting processes, thus enable its contribution, as the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) to a comprehensive National Report. At this point, the GNCHR, taking into account that the National Report, based on the questionnaire referred above, covers a reference period of the last five years and/or starting from the end of 2021, considers critical for the comprehensive and up-to-date presentation of the national framework under the light of the revESC norms and principles that **the National Report should contain a human rights' impact assessment of the reasoning, the content and the duration of national policies and measures, as an integral part of its methodology, with human rights' indicators and criteria taken into account for the assessment of cost of living crisis. The answers should include comments on the effectiveness of the measures that have been taken, their efficiency, the impact they may have caused, the alternative policy proposals that may have been submitted and other critical indicators.**

Besides, the GNCHR, while acknowledges the importance of any given progress, considers of great importance the need to ensure the full implementation of all social rights' principles under the **effects of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis in a precarious socio-economic environment** with an increased risk of both living and working conditions.

Besides, relying on Article 21 of the Charter (and Article C of the revised Charter) which stipulates that the form of the reports required from States Parties is determined by the Committee of Ministers (i.e. collectively by the States Parties themselves), it is proposed that the issues to be addressed in statutory and ad hoc reports be decided by the GC in consultation with the ECSR⁷.

⁶ ECSR, [Greek General Confederation of Labour \(GSEE\) v. Greece, Complaint No. 111/2014, decision on the merits of 23 March 2017](#), par. 61.

⁷ See for instance Council of Europe, CM/Ministers' Deputies, [132nd Session of the Committee of Ministers \(Turin, 19-20 May 2022\), Improving the European Social Charter system – Consolidated Report, CM\(2022\)67-final](#), 17 May 2022.

In light of the aforementioned, the **GNCHR welcomes the 1st National Ad Hoc Report on the cost-of-living crisis** and at the same time takes the opportunity to submit its Observations, while would deeply appreciate it, if the European Committee of Social Rights would take them under consideration.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The GNCHR, taking into account the debt crisis restrictive measures, along with the migration policy restrictive measures, followed by the pandemic measures and their cumulative negative impact on workers' rights⁸ and living standards draws the attention also to the negative impact of the ongoing war in Ukraine, member State of the Council of Europe, on the socio-economic environment and the increased risk of deterioration of the labour rights and working and living conditions. The Greek economy having been challenged by multiple crisis (debt and pandemic crisis) is facing now a new destabilizing shock centered on energy, raw materials and basic food prices, while the real estate market and the prices of purchasing, but also renting, main residence depict a considerable increase⁹. This disturbance directly affects the supply side and indirectly, through the pay-as-you-go effects of inflation, the demand side, increasing the risk of a new slowdown in the economy. The GNCHR would like to stress that the extent and depth of the impact of the pandemic crisis on social rights and the functioning of the economy in general is depicted in a series of recommendations addressed by the GNCHR to the Greek government and the EU and international Organisations and Institutions.¹⁰

⁸ The GNCHR notes with disappointment that, despite its repeated recommendations on the need to effectively monitor and assess the impact of both the austerity measures and the restrictive measures taken to address the COVID-19 pandemic on the enjoyment of human rights and especially on labour rights, the cumulative impact of these measures has never been assessed. [Summary of GNCHR Observations](#) on Draft Law of Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs "*On the Protection of Employment Establishment of the Independent Authority Labor Inspectorate Ratification of the ILO Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work Ratification of the ILO Convention No. 187 on the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health at Work Incorporation of Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers*", 2021, [GNCHR Report on the Draft Law of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs](#), 2021. See also: [URGENT GNCHR Statement on Labour and Social Security Rights in Greece](#), 2017, [Austerity measures v. Human Rights and EU foundational values \(Sophia Koukoulis-Spiliotopoulos\)](#), 2013, [GNCHR recommendation: "Urgent need to reverse the course of collapse of individual and social rights"](#), 2011, [Decision on the need for continued respect for fundamental rights during the exercise of the strategy to exit the economy and society from the external debt crisis](#), 2010.

⁹ See indicatively Bank of Greece, [Real Estate Market](#) and Bank of Greece, [New Index of Apartment Prices by Age](#), 2024.

¹⁰ [Extraordinary times call for extraordinary responses: Summary of Recommendations to the State regarding the impact of the pandemic and the measures taken to address it on human rights](#), 2021, [Austerity measures v. Human Rights and EU foundational values \(Sophia Koukoulis-Spiliotopoulos\)](#), 2020, [GNCHR factsheet on the "Impact of Economic Reform Policies and Austerity Measures on Human Rights"](#) 2018, [Statement of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights \(GNCHR\) on the impact of the continuing austerity measures on human rights](#), 2015, [Statement of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights \(GNCHR\) on the impact of the continuing austerity measures on human rights](#), 2014, [Open letter of the President of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions, Mr. Alan Miller](#), to

The severe impact of the economic crisis has been underlined in the respective reports of the GNCHR. The gender dimension of the impact of crisis and restrictive measures still exists in the legislation and in its implementation in practice,¹¹ that **limit women's labour rights, individual and collective and social security rights** such as high female unemployment rate¹², high gender pay gap¹³, dismissals or harmful change of pregnant women's conditions of work in the private sector, non-equal labour and social security protection of seasonal work, extended labour precariousness, absence of a minimum single maternity benefit to all working mothers and the continuous reduction of the already insufficient day-care structures for children and dependent persons.

Moreover, the GNCHR, in view of comprehensively monitoring the promotion and protection of **individual and collective labour rights**, remains skeptical and highlights the existing challenges, such as equal access and protection of just conditions of work, fair remuneration and protection of wage, protection of dignity, health and safety at work etc. in the context of adapting the Greek legislation to the human rights standards set by the revised ESC. At the same time it stresses the need to undertake, without further delay, additional steps for strengthening the regulatory framework in force and to fill gaps where these are found to remain or occur, under the light and in compliance of ECSR decisions (*see below par. 4*).

the President of the European Commission, Mr. José Manuel Barroso and the President of the European Central Bank Mr. Mario Draghi, 2014, The NCHR Recommendation and decisions of international bodies on the conformity of austerity measures to international human rights standards, 2013, NCHR Recommendation: On the imperative need to reverse the sharp decline in civil liberties and social rights, 2011, The need for constant respect of human rights during the implementation of the fiscal and social exit strategy from the debt crisis, 2010. Summary of GNCHR Observations on Draft Law of Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs "On the Protection of Employment Establishment of the Independent Authority Labor Inspectorate Ratification of the ILO Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work Ratification of the ILO Convention No. 187 on the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health at Work Incorporation of Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and careers", 2021, GNCHR Report on the Draft Law of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2021. GNCHR, "Observations on the 24th Greek Report on the application of the European Social Charter and on the 9th Greek Report on the application of the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter", October 2014. GNCHR, Factsheet on the Impact of Economic Reform Policies and Austerity Measures on Human Rights, 2019, GNCHR, "Statement of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) on the impact of the continuing austerity measures on human rights", July 2015, GNCHR, "Observations on the 24th Greek Report on the application of the European Social Charter and on the 9th Greek Report on the application of the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter", October 2014, GNCHR, "Observations on the Draft of the Second Periodic Report of the Hellenic Republic for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)", December 2013.

¹¹ Submission by the Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) to the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review of Greece, September 2015.

¹² Observatory of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality 19th e-bulletin - Female Unemployment, 1.4.2019.

¹³ EIGE, Gender Equality Index, Greece in 2023 edition and European Commission, European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination, Country report – Gender equality, Greece, 2023.

The GNCHR notes that the assessment of the cost of living crisis should also include the third country nationals that reside and work or are in search of work in the reporting State. Under this light, the GNCHR remains focused on the proper exercise of labour rights concerning **terms and conditions of work of third country nationals**. As it concerns the enjoyment of labour rights of migrant workers on the agriculture sector, GNCHR still monitors the substantial compliance of the State to the European Court of Human Rights landmark judgment *Chowdury and Others v. Greece* in 2017, which has identified serious violations and failure of the State to appropriately prevent phenomena of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation and of forced labour.¹⁴ The GNCHR reiterates the need to effectively protect the right to work of migrant workers in line also with the State's human rights' obligations arising out of international and European commitments. Such rights and monitoring processes are part of the indicators analyzed in this report. In this context, it is necessary to reiterate that the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergency measures taken to respond to the outbreak of the crisis in order to protect the rights of all people without discrimination, yet they did not tackle the chronic problems faced by migrant workers in general and especially in the agriculture sector. Thus, during the pandemic, the living and working conditions in the agriculture holdings, the overcrowding and the complete lack of basic human standards exacerbated the increased risk of labor exploitation and forced labor.¹⁵ To that direction GNCHR draws the State's obligation to include special references on the reception and working conditions of third country nationals to bilateral agreements with other countries. This aspect is crucial for the non-discrimination towards third country nationals as far as it concerns the labour law practice and conditions and with the aim to ensure the same conditions for this group of workers as the citizens. The national law and practice of the third country nationals should be interpreted under the light of social rights, non-discrimination and the cost-of-living crisis as a human rights law issue. Thus, the GNCHR expresses its concern given the fact that, while Greece does not have a coherent labor integration policy, the cost-of-living crisis has a serious impact on a large population of third-country nationals living in the country, the exact number of which is not accurately recorded in the information systems of the Ministry of Labor and Social

¹⁴ GNCHR [Chowdury and Others v. Greece. Recommendations for the full compliance of the Greek State](#), 27 August 2018, [Communication](#) on the assessment of the level of compliance of the Greek State with GNCHR's recommendations on ECtHR judgment *Chowdury and Others v. Greece* (Manolada-case) 5 June 2020 and GNCHR [Chowdury and Others v. Greece. Recommendations for the full compliance of the Greek State](#), 27 August 2018.

¹⁵ GNCHR [Report](#) on the need for protection of human rights with regard to the measures taken in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and recommendations to the State. Description of the issues discussed in the Plenary Meetings during the lockdown Meetings of 8th, 22nd, 29th of April and of 6th May 2020, 12 June 2020, GNCHR [Report](#) regarding the impact of the pandemic and the measures taken to address it on human rights. Extraordinary times call for extraordinary responses, 5 July 2021 [in Greek], GNCHR Extraordinary times call for extraordinary responses: [Summary](#) of Recommendations to the State regarding the impact of the pandemic and the measures taken to address it on human rights, 12 July 2021.

Security concerning employment status or unemployment status given the aforementioned notes.

At the same time, it is important to take into consideration that there are similar State obligations according to [article 21 par. 1 of the Constitution of Greece](#), “*the State shall take care to ensure that all citizens enjoy a decent standard of living by means of a system of minimum guaranteed income, as specified by law*”, which is found under Part Two “Individual and Social Rights”. Besides, taking into consideration the Observations on the 5th National Report on the implementation of the Revised ESC, which sums up the finding that the reduction of the minimum wage was a constant issue throughout the years of the economic and pandemic crisis¹⁶. Besides, the minimum wage issue has been extensively discussed in the ECSR decision of the complaint No 114/2014 Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE) v. Greece¹⁷.

It has been stressed that the rights – civil, political, economic and social – were openly violated and violated at all levels during the economic crisis in Greece¹⁸. The austerity measures were put before human rights standards in several cases. All the same, today the cost-of-living crisis needs to be put before human rights standards in order to monitor the violations and the compliance of the State. It could be considered that this evolution of the crisis from an economic crisis to a pandemic crisis led to the cost-of-living crisis described under this ad hoc report. Thus, the GNCHR considerations are still valid and in effect for a new type of crisis but linked to the previous two crises, as the main indicators, such as vulnerability, remain the same independently of the rigid economic statistics.

Indicative data

As already pointed out, the composition of the GNCHR includes Members appointed by the two higher-level trade union organizations of Greece, the Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE), which covers workers with private law contracts and the Greek Civil Service Confederation (ADEDY) which covers public sector workers, who contributed to this report with the following information:

¹⁶ See for more focused references to different recipients and contexts in the GNCHR, [Thematic Factsheet on the “Impact of Economic Reform Policies and Austerity Measures on Human Rights”](#), 5 January 2018.

¹⁷ ECSR, Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE) v. Greece, Complaint No. 111/2014, decision on the merits of 23 March 2017, preliminary considerations and para. 86.

¹⁸ FIDH – Hellenic League for Human Rights, [Downgrading rights: the cost of austerity in Greece](#), 2014, p. 90.

- 1) According to the findings of the Research and Training Institute (Koinoniko Polykentro) of ADEDY on the comparative assessment of the purchasing power of public officers in Greece and in EU countries¹⁹:

According to the analysis Greece, in all the years 2016-2020, is placed the last positions of the ranking with a performance score ranging from 6.47 to 6.88 (average 6.77) (10 is the best score). The average European country has score 8.3/10 and the average of the Eurozone 7.7/10. Same results appear when the NACE salary amounts are considered, thus confirming the validity of the study. This performance of Greece is interpreted as a serious lag in purchasing power and confirms the current perception that in Greece the remuneration of the Central Public Administration falls far short of the level that could respond to the current costs and living expenses. This lag is estimated to have further intensified in the current year 2022 due to the significant increase in the cost of living and the stability in the salaries of civil servants. (...) Given that the living costs cannot not be easily affected by political decisions, Greece can improve its position either by reaching the average European country or by reaching the top best. In the first step, the approach of the middle ranking positions (around 17th place occupied by countries such as Portugal, Slovenia and Malta) could be achieved by an increase of the average net earnings from the current €1,026 to €1,550, i.e. by a 50% increase. To reach the top ranking positions in which the payroll ensures full support of the cost of living, the average monthly earnings for Greece should reach the level of €2450.

- 2) According to the findings of the Labour Institute of GSEE (INE GSEE) Annual Report 2024 on “The Greek economy and employment”²⁰:

Overall, in the period 2019-2023 Greece records the largest percentage decrease in real income from work (-8.3%) compared to all EU-27 countries. Therefore, Greece not only does not converge with the EU-27 in terms of social sustainability, but also diverges rapidly from the northern European countries and from the peripheral countries, which developed rapidly during the same period.

In 2023, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security signed and ratified 19 Collective Labor Agreements (CLAs) of a sectoral or of the same professional, national or local nature. Out of these, 12 are national sectoral and of the same professional nature, while 7 are local sectoral and of the same professional nature. In the same year, 209 operational CLAs have also been signed.

¹⁹ ADEDY/Koinoniko Polykentro, [Comparative assessment of the purchasing power of public officers in Greece and in EU countries \(reference period 2016-2020\)](#), 2023 (in Greek & Summary in English).

²⁰ GSEE, [Annual Report: “The Greek economy and employment”](#), 2024 and [Main Findings](#), 2024, pp. 6-8 (in Greek).

The findings of many of the indicators of social sustainability in Greece show a deterioration of social conditions after 2020 as a result of the impact of the pandemic crisis, the crisis on lives but also the ineffectiveness of the economic and social policy in place. Indicatively, we mention that in 2023, 21.8% of minors and 18.3% of adults were at risk of poverty. In the same year 27.5% of people with education level 0-2, 18.5% of people with education level 3-4 and 7.6% with education level 5-8 were at risk of poverty. Besides, 23 out of 100 employed with education level 0-2 lived with income below the poverty line, about 10 out of 100 employed with education level 3-4 and 3.5 out of 100 employed with education level 5-8.

The percentage of minors and adults living in households with very low labor intensity reached 86.9% and 61.7% respectively in 2023, highlighting the significant social ramifications of the underperformance of the labor market in Greece. In the same year 24.1% of people living in cities and 30.4% of those living in rural areas were found at risk of poverty or in social exclusion. The percentage of young people aged 18-24 in severe material and social deprivation in Greece is more than twice as high as the European equivalent. In 2023, 14.7% of persons of 18-24 year old, 13% of persons of over 55 years old, 12.9% of men and 14.1% of women were in severe material and social deprivation. In the same year, the percentage of people with material and social deprivation in the 1st income quintile decreased from 73.7% in 2022 to 68.3%. However, it is still at significantly high levels.

From 2021 to 2023, approximately 36% of households in Greece coped with great difficulty in spending to cover their basic needs. In 2023 the proportion of part-time contract workers at risk of in-work poverty rose by 3.5 percentage points, with almost 22 in 100 workers having disposable income below the poverty line, compared to 9 in 100 employed people with a full-time contract.

3) The finding of the European Trade Union Institute²¹ are also revealing. The real reduction by an additional 1.7% of the purchasing power of employees in Greece is also recorded by the ETUI report for 2022.

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

1. Background and the importance of an ad hoc report on the cost-of-living crisis

To this precarious and burdened work environment, a result of the ten-year economic crisis, which caused irreparable damage to the content and the coverage of social rights' protection in Greece, was added the unprecedented and multi-layered crisis to which the

²¹ See Figure 1 - Development of hourly nominal and real minimum wages in 2023 (in %; 1 January 2022 – 1 January 2023) on the reduction up to 1.7% as part of the real changes in 2023 in the ETUI/Torsten Müller, [Policy Brief, Minimum wage developments in 2022 – fighting the cost-of-living crisis](#), 2023.

pandemic led, with additional serious impact on the overall economic situation of the society and the enjoyment of the right's protected by the rev ESC.

Besides, the right to housing could have impact on certain groups such as Roma, persons with disabilities, children, women and third country nationals and migrant workers, given also identified serious violations and failure of the State to appropriately prevent phenomena of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation and of forced labour²². There are several references and campaigns against inflation from the perspective of the standard of living and the quality of life of the consumer²³.

The interference to the right to housing, which has recently emerged with the issue of social housing²⁴ as well, intensifies and raise questions of violation of the substance of the right. For instance, regarding the gender aspects of energy poverty, the cost-of-living crisis is having a negative impact on women's economic and social inclusion, health and fundamental rights, while it also makes it harder for women without an income or with a low income to flee abuse and domestic violence from a partner to whom they are financially tied²⁵. The findings of the ILO Global Wage Report 2022-23 on "The Impact of COVID-19 and inflation on wages and purchasing power"²⁶ indicate similar critical issues such as the fact that lower-income earners are the most impacted, the wage employees lost six weeks of wages due to the COVID-19 crisis, but also that the minimum wages and social dialogue are key to maintaining wage workers' living standards.

The importance of this ad hoc thematic report is undeniable, given the horizontal impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the holistic approach that need to be taken into consideration by States and relevant stakeholders.

2. Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA) and the need to establish indicators

Human rights impact assessment, as a process for identifying, understanding, assessing and addressing the challenges and the effects of certain measures on the human rights is an important aspect towards the compliance with the ESC provisions on social rights.

²² GNCHR [Chowdury and Others v. Greece. Recommendations for the full compliance of the Greek State](#), 27 August 2018, [Communication](#) on the assessment of the level of compliance of the Greek State with GNCHR's recommendations on ECtHR judgment [Chowdury and Others v. Greece \(Manolada-case\)](#) 5 June 2020 and GNCHR [Chowdury and Others v. Greece. Recommendations for the full compliance of the Greek State](#), 27 August 2018.

²³ See e.g. Union of Working Consumers of Greece (EEKE), [Campaign against inflationary grocery prices, 1.9.2023-1.9.2024](#).

²⁴ Council of Europe, ECSR, [2023 Conclusions of the ECSR](#), March 2024. See e.g. the reference to insufficient data of on the average waiting time for the allocation of social housing, as well inadequate supply of social housing. Greece is not included in the findings.

²⁵ [European Parliament, Topics – Gender equality - International Women's Day: the gender aspects of energy poverty, published 27.02.2023](#).

²⁶ ILO, [Global Wage Report 2022-23 on "The Impact of COVID-19 and inflation on wages and purchasing power"](#), 2022.

Even more, human rights impact assessment and reporting is critical when it comes to countries emerging from crisis. The need and importance of the HRIA has been recently noted in the Toolkit of the Council of Europe on the Human Rights Impact Assessment of the measures taken by the State in situations of crisis²⁷. Besides, it is unclear how rights are put into measurable quantities under the economic scheme and how this process follows specific criteria and standards in order to fulfil the need to assess the cumulative impact of measures on social rights.

The National Report in question, presenting the country's social policy and good practices for securing income and dealing with the risk of poverty lacks the practical perspective of using a certain methodology and indicators for the assessment of the impact on social rights and the ways of the compliance of the authorities to the Charter provisions and principles.

The GNCHR points out with disappointment that, despite its repeated recommendations for the need to effectively monitor and evaluate the effects of the restrictive measures that have been taken and are being taken on human rights, based on, among others, gender, but also other indicators, during the stage of design of these measures, in order to also strengthen accountability for progress made in protecting human rights, the cumulative impact of the restrictive measures of the economic crisis has never been assessed.

As endorsed by the European social acquis, there must be a stable process of institutional social dialogue, e.g. between the State and the national social partners representing workers' and employers' side before reaching any final answers to such reports in order to cooperate in good faith and give prominence to the needs and suggestions coming from the field. An important lack of institutional social dialogue has been observed in Greece, especially during the debt crisis period, which unfortunately exists until now. An indicative example relates to the minimum wage setting process, which until 2010 has been steadily set, after free collective bargaining as a universally binding minimum standard of work by the National General Collective Agreement. Under the 1st MoU conditionalities, this process and competency has been transferred by law to the State, as one of the toughest austerity measures²⁸. Its implementation began in 2019 while the last Ministerial Decision No 25058, according to article 26 ("Determination of the minimum wage for the year 2024") of the Law 5085/2024 (Official Gazette A 17/2.2.2024) has been issued in 29 March 2024 (Official Gazette B

²⁷ Council of Europe, [Toolkit - Human Rights Impact Assessment of the measures taken by the State in situations of crisis](#), May 2024. The Toolkit is the first instrument adopted at intergovernmental level that is intended to assist national authorities in this process. Following its preparation by the Steering Committee for Human Rights, it was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, at the 1491st meeting of the Minister's Deputies held on 6 March 2024.

²⁸ See e.g. for references to the minimum wage in GNCHR [Thematic Factsheet on the "Impact of Economic Reform Policies and Austerity Measures on Human Rights"](#), 5 January 2018.

1974/29.3.2024) on the Determination of minimum wage and daily wage for white collar and blue collar workers throughout the country. Besides, the lack of social dialogue has been noted in the Case No 2820 in the context of the ILO supervisory mechanism²⁹, which underlines the critical role of the social partners in the design and implementation of measures. One recent further example, related also to the minimum wage process and amount, as a means to combat the cost of living crisis, is that the national social partners were not invited to appoint their representatives and participate in the special Working Group set by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security for the the incorporation of the [Directive \(EU\) 2022/2041 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on adequate minimum wages in the European Union](#) in the Greek legal order³⁰.

From a comparative law and policy perspective, there are several interesting good practices. Regarding the Cyprus report, the adjustment mechanism of the national minimum wage, including a committee consisting of three trade union representatives, three representatives of the employers' organizations and three academics or experts on labour issues, but also the social dialogue process described, is a good practice example³¹. Regarding the Belgium report, the participative process with poverty organizations and people in poverty is also a good practice example to combat poverty and social inequalities³².

Based on the 1981 ILO Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 154), the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations in its 2023 findings³³ has firmly hoped that the Government will continue its efforts to promote collective bargaining for all groups of workers, including the public service, and to progressively extend the matters covered by collective bargaining. It requests the Government to provide information on all the measures taken in this respect.

The cost-of-living indicators should include elements such as the coverage of population, the drawbacks emanating from the current situation, the reference to vulnerable groups and the universality of benefits. This kind of indicators is not a result of measuring only specific policies and using statistics, focusing e.g. on the inflation, but there is a need to

²⁹ ILO, [Case No 2820 \(Greece\) – Complaint date: 21 October 2010, Closed, Report in which the Committee requests to be kept informed of development – Report No 365](#), November 2012, para. 891.

³⁰ Ministry of Labour and Social Security, [Amendment of No. 25530/1.4.2024 of the decision "Establishment of a Scientific Committee for the incorporation of Community Directive \(EU\) 2022/2041 of the European Parliament and of the Council of October 19, 2022 for adequate minimum wages in the EU" and for the incorporation of the International Labor Convention 131 \(ILO 131\)"](#), 24 April 2024.

³¹ Cyprus, [Ad hoc report on the cost-of-living crisis, Cycle 2023](#), RAP/RChA/CYP/2023, 24 November 2023, p. 2.

³² Belgique, [Rapport ad hoc sur la crise du coût de la vie](#), Cycle 2024, RAP/RChA/BEL(2023), 21 décembre 2023, p. 38.

³³ ILO, [Application of International Labour Standards 2023, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations](#), International Labour Conference, 111th Session, 2023, Report III (Part A), p. 143.

follow a specific methodology of a human rights impact assessment, when it comes to identifying the ESC indicators. It is indicative that in page 8 of the National Report, there are no reference to data regarding persons with disabilities. The National Confederation of Disabled Persons (NCDP) Observatory on Disability Issues has published three Statistical Bulletins ([Bulletin 1](#), [8](#), and [13](#)) since 2018 that focus on persons with disabilities, poverty, and social exclusion. Additionally, the Observatory's annual reports also contain data on persons with disabilities, poverty, and social exclusion (see annual report [2020](#), [2021](#), and [2022](#)³⁴). It is useful to refer to the 2021 Committee's findings regarding the 4th Assessment of the follow-up: International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) v. Belgium, Complaint No. 75/2011, decision on the merits of 18 March 2013, Resolution CM/ResChS(2013)16, where the Committee finally concluded that there had been a violation of Article 30 of the Charter on the ground that the State's failure to collect reliable data and statistics throughout the whole territory of Belgium in respect of highly dependent persons with disabilities prevented an "overall and co-ordinated approach" to the social protection of these persons and constituted an obstacle to the development of targeted policies concerning them. In its cost-of-living crisis report, Belgium refers to the chapter 2 of the Integrated Social Health Plan, which aims to reduce social and health inequalities and prevent social breakdowns and measures aimed at activating social benefits as a tool to combat child poverty are taken up, such as the definition of a model of solidarity and fair family allowances, which takes into consideration the needs of families in this area (firstly on the basis of family income), while also taking into account specific situations (children suffering from an illness, vulnerable families, pandemic, etc.)³⁵. The inclusion of persons with disabilities and persons suffering from mental illnesses and other groups that may face poverty or social exclusion can be found in the Lithuania report on the cost-of-living crisis³⁶

The importance of intersectionality in assessing and mitigating the human rights impact of the rise of the cost of living is a crucial indicator. The different needs of each household call for differentiated means of support. Regretfully, the National Report did not seem to take into consideration specific data referring to the vulnerability of children with disabilities, nor to the precarious situation faced by young people with disability in light of the cost of living crisis, while assessing its implemented policies. There is a need of integrating social issues into the construction of ecological planning. As the France report shows while they are not the first responsible, the poorest are often

³⁴ See respectively the following parts of the Annual Reports: pp. 106-107, pp. 132-133 and especially the charts on the risk of poverty and/or social exclusion and disability situation based on a Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and p. 51, which focuses on poverty and social exclusion for persons with disabilities in the thirteen regions of Greece.

³⁵ Belgique, [Rapport ad hoc sur la crise du coût de la vie](#), Cycle 2024, RAP/RCha/BEL(2023), 21 décembre 2023, pp. 36-37.

³⁶ Lithuania, [Ad hoc report on the cost-of-living crisis](#), Cycle 2024, RAP/Cha/LTU/2023, 29 December 2023, p. 12.

the first to suffer the consequences of environmental degradation and have fewer means of adaptation to cope with ongoing climate and technological developments³⁷.

Regretting the lack of explanation of the charts defining the material deprivation rates by gender (National Report, p. 13), the need to reflect on gender specific needs emerges. Taking into consideration gender assessment specifically would provide clear data that would allow for narrowing down the poverty gap.

There is a need to include the balanced approach along with the additional information coming from the field. The liaison officers as described in the [Law 4780/2021](#) and the relevant documents of the GNCHR ([Organisation](#) and [Regulation](#)) need to be part of this procedure and transfer the information and recommendations to the Ministries relating to certain policies and measures to be taken. The hearings before the GNCHR is also a tool to be used accordingly in order to underline the importance of the opinion of every relevant actor.

The phases of the human rights impact assessment process need to be followed faithfully. The planning and scoping, data collection and the selection of human rights indicators, the analysis of impacts (e.g. types of human rights impacts and the assessment of the impact severity), the impact mitigation and management, such as the participatory monitoring, the reporting and evaluation. The GNCHR, during its Contribution to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the Implementation of Human Rights with Regard to Young People³⁸, has stressed the importance of the settlement of a permanent mechanism that would evaluate and assess the impact of austerity measures on both the enjoyment of and access to human rights by all those living on EU territory (HRIA). It has been underlined that the proposed HRIA should guarantee an evidence-based analysis and address the impact of the measures in the light of concrete data. The “cumulative impact” on human rights of the constant implementation of austerity measures and of the non-compliance with the judgments of the national supreme courts as well as the decisions and recommendations issued by national, European and international human rights tribunals and bodies should be conceived as fundamental and autonomous parameters of HRIA.

The Council of Europe HRIA Toolkit separates the process into six phases, such as the defining the scope and scale of the HRIA, assessing the measures in the light of human rights, examining the existence of remedies, analyzing and mitigating the impact of the measures, adapting the measures in light of the experience and in response to a changing context and identifying and taking stock of lessons learned. The main effect of those phases is the way the HRIAs influence decision-making and contribute to the assessment of the need for an emergency legal framework. Thus, any legal framework described in the National Report of the State needs to take into consideration the HRIAs.

³⁷ France, [Rapport ad hoc sur la crise du coût de la vie](#), Cycle 2024, RAP/RCha/FRA/2023, 12 janvier 2024, p. 22.

The checklist of the HRIA process is extensive and indicative of the value of the process. Such as a process and safeguards are essential during a cost-of-living crisis.

Besides, the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), whose member is the GNCHR, has underlined the importance of a human rights-based approach to poverty reduction and measurement³⁹, the role of NHRIs in realizing economic and social rights (recommendations and good practices)⁴⁰, the practices of NHRIs in Europe given the different mandates⁴¹.

The indicators deriving from other contexts, such as the ILO and the EU, should alert national authorities as to whether there is a need to consider to what extent the national context is fully in compliance with the ILO and EU standards on the relevant subjects.

According to Conclusions of the ECSR⁴², the cost of living has been considered as an indicator to certain rights and groups, such as the right to equal treatment and children.

3. Dimension of human rights within financial reports and fragmentation of the compliance

This phase of human rights monitoring can turn to be ambiguous and unclear when it comes to how the financial reports “use” or “misuse” the human rights dimension or when the priority is not the latter but only certain economic figures relevant to the national economy. This overlooks many different indicators, such as the factor of vulnerability, which is extended to several groups, such as the ones referred above. This assumption raises the question as to whether certain policies take into consideration social rights indicators in order to fully comply with the ESC provisions and standards or there is a fragmentary approach complying only with economic indicators.

There are several examples of regulatory impact assessment, such as the best practice principles proposed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)⁴³. This approach need to give prominence to and include a human rights impact assessment. The regulation-making process needs to take into account the protection of human rights. Based on States’ international obligations, achieving governments’ social,

³⁸ GNCHR, [Thematic Factsheet on the “Impact of Economic Reform Policies and Austerity Measures on Human Rights”](#), 5 January 2018, p. 15.

³⁹ ENNHRI, [A human rights-based approach to COVID-19 economic response and recovery, Protecting jobs, SMEs, and workers, including in the context of national recovery and resilience plans](#), March 2022.

⁴⁰ ENNHRI, [Role of NHRIs in advancing economic and social rights highlighted at ENNHRI Annual Conference](#), 14 November 2019 and ENNHRI, [How National Human Rights Institutions can engage with the European Committee of Social Rights](#), 31 January 2022.

⁴¹ ENNHRI, [Economic and Social Rights – Practices of National Human Rights Institutions in Europe](#), last updated in November 2019.

⁴² Council of Europe, [Digest of the case law of the European Committee of Social Rights](#), June 2022, p. 123.

⁴³ OECD, [Regulatory Impact Assessment, OECD Best Practice Principles for Regulatory Policy](#), 2020

economic and environmental policy objectives means achieving human rights protection.

Besides, considering the impact assessment approach within the national legislation according to the Regulatory Impact Analysis Manual⁴⁴, published by the Presidency of the Government – Secretariat General for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs the Regulatory Impact Analysis is a tool used internationally, in order to provide the necessary, quantitative and qualitative, documentation of the consequences - positive or negative - of each regulatory initiative. Further, as it is noted in the Manual, according to article 62 par. 2a of Law 4622/2019, the explanatory statement of article 74 par. 1 of the Constitution identifies and delimits the problem that the evaluated regulation seeks to resolve, formulates specific, clear, time-delimited and – if possible – measurable objectives pursued by the regulation, as well as the reasons why it is not possible to achieve the above objectives without this regulation. In other words, the explanatory statement reflects the motivations, the targeting and the necessity of the evaluated regulation, which after all is one of the fundamental principles of good legislation.

The human rights dimension needs to be apparent within financial reports with extensive consequences on social rights. Otherwise, there is a fragmentation of the compliance, while the State tries to comply with policy goals, especially regarding the economy, but because of that or by focusing only on that it cannot comply with ESC objectives and human rights obligations.

4. The importance of the ECSR case law

The crucial role of the case law regarding Charter violations and the impact of restrictive measures on the cost of living need to be linked in the national reports, given the State's obligation to comply in law and practice to the protection of labour and other rights enshrined in the revised European Social Charter and the Greek State's obligation to assess in a coordinative manner the cumulative impact of the restrictive measures⁴⁵ that have been taken during a multiple crisis environment (debt crisis, migrant crisis, pandemic crisis) on the proper access and enjoyment of human rights, including social rights. The National Ad Hoc Report lacks such a direction and does not consider the human rights impact assessment as a priority in the context of the aforementioned crisis.

⁴⁴ Presidency of the Government – Secretariat General for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, [Regulatory Impact Analysis Manual](#), Athens, 2020 (in Greek).

⁴⁵ GNCHR, [Thematic Factsheet on the “Impact of Economic Reform Policies and Austerity Measures on Human Rights”](#), 5 January 2018

Regarding the follow-up to decisions on the merits of collective complaints⁴⁶, the following findings are useful as indicators as far as it concerns the cost-of-living crisis and the broader effects that may cause:

- European Roma Rights Centre v. Greece, Complaint No. 15/2003, decision on the merits of 8 December 2004, Resolution CM/ResChS(2005)11 and International Centre for the Legal Protection of Human Rights (INTERIGHTS) v. Greece Complaint No. 49/2008, decision on the merits of 11 December 2009, Resolution CM/ResChS(2011)8

The Committee considers that the situation has not been brought into conformity with the Charter as regards sub-standard dwellings and forced eviction and has not been brought into conformity with Article 16 of the Charter.

- 5th Assessment of follow-up: General Federation of Employees of the National Electric Power Corporation (GENOP-DEI) and Confederation of Greek Civil Servants' Trade Unions (ADEDY) v. Greece, Complaint No. 65/2011, decision on the merits of 23 May 2012, Resolution CM/ResChS(2013)2

The Committee finds that the situation has not been brought into conformity as far as it concerns article 4 par. 4.

- 3rd Assessment of follow-up: Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE) v. Greece, Complaint No. 111/2014, decision on the merits of 23 March 2017, Resolution CM/ResChS(2017)9 and Resolution CM/ResChS(2018)12

Regarding the excessive length of weekly work authorized and the lack of sufficient collective bargaining guarantees, under article 2 par. 1, the Committee considers that the situation has not been brought into conformity. Further, the situation has not been brought into conformity regarding Articles 4 par. 1 and 4, 7 par. 5 and 3 of the Additional Protocol to the 1961 Charter (Article 22 of the Revised Charter).

The conclusion of the GSEE mentioned in the decision 111/2014⁴⁷ is indicative: *"(...) the legislative measures taken under the Memoranda have resulted in a deterioration of all economic and social indicators, including massive shut-downs of enterprises, monstrous unemployment and pauperisation of Greek citizens. Moreover, the measures whose nature is permanent and irreversible have been adopted without any assessment of their social impact"*.

⁴⁶ ECSR, [Follow-up to decisions on the merits of collective complaints, Findings 2023](#) (adopted in January 2024, March 2024).

⁴⁷ ECSR, [Greek General Confederation of Labour \(GSEE\) v. Greece, Complaint No. 111/2014, decision on the merits of 23 March 2017](#), par. 114.

- 1st Assessment of follow-up: University Women of Europe (UWE) v. Greece, Complaint No. 131/2016, decision on the merits of 6 December 2019, Recommendation CM/RecChS(2021)8

The Committee finds that the situation has not been brought into conformity with Articles 4 par. 3 and 20 c as regards access to effective remedies and ensuring pay transparency and with Article 20 c as regards measurable progress with reducing the gender pay gap.

Thus, it seems that it is of utmost importance to monitor the unexecuted decisions of the ECSR, while the State identifies ESC issues or while sending information to ECSR, as this is also an indicator of general compliance, especially for the ad hoc reports, which as it seems by the Appendix referred above, there are horizontal issues and interferences to different rights and ESC provisions.

5. The cost-of-living crisis as a human rights law issue

With everything taken into account, it is considered undeniable that the cost-of-living crisis raises a multilevel human rights issue. It is not only a result of the economy, but a broader human rights issue, a modern challenge for social rights and violations of ESC human rights standards. For instance, there are interferences for the rights mentioned below, as they have also described in the GNCHR Observations on the 5th National Report on the implementation of the Revised European Social Charter (2017-2020)⁴⁸ (indicative reference):

- Article 4 par. 1: to recognise the right of workers to a remuneration such as will give them and their families a decent standard of living;
- Article 4 par. 2: to recognise the right of workers to an increased rate of remuneration for overtime work, subject to exceptions in particular cases;
- Article 4 par. 3: to recognise the right of men and women workers to equal pay for work of equal value;
- Article 6: The right to bargain collectively
- Article 26: The right to dignity at work

Thus, the GNCHR agrees that there is a key emerging challenge in terms of contemporary rights in the Council of Europe. All things considered, the cost-of-living crisis can be considered as a human rights crisis, including the relevant aspects of many rights and provisions of the ESC, such as the ones related to the questionnaire on the basis of which

⁴⁸ GNCHR, [Observations by the GNCHR on the 5th National Report on the implementation of the Revised European Social Charter \(Reference Period 01/01/2017 – 31/12/2020\)](#), December 2022.

the ad hoc reports should be drawn up. The Committee has especially focused on aspects of articles 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 23, 30, 31 and 4§1, in particular aspects related to income and purchasing power.

At this point, it is important to consider the fundamental decision of the ECSR on collective complaint No. 14/2003 *International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH) v. France*⁴⁹, as for the first time the ECSR highlighted that it understands the ESC as a living instrument and set of values which inspired it and includes dignity, autonomy, equality and solidarity. The confirmation of this case law was systematic in the years that followed. The ECSR stress that the rights guaranteed are not ends in themselves but they complete the rights enshrined in the European Convention of Human Rights. The effective treatment of the cost-of-living crisis requires a more comprehensive economic policy, which addresses the roots of the crisis and goes back to the States' policies. The principles from which the Charter is inspired can point the way in this direction. Starting from the ESC principles it is critical to reach to the core of fiscal and monetary policies and observe the impact to rights.

This current cost-of-living crisis indicates a crisis of dignity, autonomy, equality and solidarity. The crisis is significantly impacting the living standard of the population, the decent standard of living, the percentage of the population living below the poverty line, the economic and social exclusion. There is a need to answer these questions under the fact that the cost-of-living crisis is a human rights law issue.

⁴⁹ ECSR, [International Federation of Human Rights Leagues \(FIDH\) v. France No. 14/2003, decision on the merits of 4 March 2005](#), par. 27, 31. See also for the analysis Stangos, Petros, *La fabrique de la jurisprudence sociale européenne – Les décisions «réclamations collectives» du Comité européen des droits sociaux*, Larcier, 2024, p. 149.