



SOCIAL RIGHTS AND THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

A review of States Parties' ad hoc reports on the cost-of-living crisis

■ The review on “Social rights and the cost-of-living crisis” marks the first time, the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) has undertaken an examination of State Party ad hoc reports. The review provides a **general overview** of the social rights impacts on the cost-of-living crisis within the Council of Europe member states; as well as the measures taken by states in response to the crisis.

■ In it, the ECSR sets out what the Charter requires in situations where the cost of essentials rises much faster than average household incomes and provides guidance and recommendations to be used as a framework by States Parties.

■ Upholding Charter rights for the benefit of all is not just essential – it is fundamental for economic recovery, social justice, and democratic stability. As Europe emerges from the current cost-of-living crisis, a steadfast commitment to these rights is crucial to rebuilding a fairer and more resilient society.

ECSR KEY MESSAGES

1. Policymakers should ensure regular adjustments to the **minimum wage**, either through automatic indexation or periodic revisions, to maintain its alignment with at least 60% of the national average wage, thereby safeguarding people's purchasing power in the context of the cost-of-living crisis.

2. The cost of **energy** has been a very significant challenge for people during the cost-of-living crisis. Governments should closely monitor levels of energy poverty, provide targeted support to those most affected, and implement long-term policies to ensure stable, consistent, and safe access to **adequate energy**.



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3. **Housing** is the biggest expense for all income groups, and the cost-of-living crisis has worsened existing housing issues. Governments must ensure rents are affordable, prioritise vulnerable households for social housing, and prevent evictions due to unpaid rent or/and housing arrears.

4. **Social protection** is a fundamental element of the Charter. Rising inflation has greatly reduced the value of social security benefits and assistance, leaving recipients unable to afford essentials. States must take all necessary steps to ensure these benefits remain adequate by adjusting them to keep up with inflation and support the most affected groups.

5. **Rising food costs** during the cost-of-living crisis left some groups unable to afford basic essentials, impacting Charter rights related to education, health and protection from poverty and social exclusion. States should move from temporary support and reliance on forms of last-resort relief, such as food banks, to long-term solutions that ensure everyone, especially the most affected groups, can afford adequate, sustainable food.

6. The cost-of-living crisis disproportionately affected **low-income households, children, youth, persons with disabilities,**

older persons, LGBTI individuals, marginalised communities, ethnic minorities, Roma, and migrant families. States Parties should conduct human rights impact assessments, collect comprehensive data, prioritise long-term measures, and ensure meaningful consultation with affected groups while implementing targeted support.

7. **Women** have been particularly severely affected by the consequences of the cost-of-living crisis. Governments must adopt gender-sensitive economic policies to address women's financial vulnerabilities and ensure crisis measures address their specific needs.

8. During a cost-of-living crisis, States Parties must ensure meaningful participation of and **consultation** with those most affected by the crisis in the decision-making processes concerning their Charter rights.

9. The existence of a cost-of-living crisis does not reduce States' duties under the Charter. Upholding Charter rights for the benefit of all supports **economic recovery, social justice and democratic stability.**

10. The **protection of social rights** contributes directly to the reduction of poverty and social exclusion, the improvement of living conditions, and the promotion of greater opportunities for all.



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