

16th Meeting of the COE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET Collaborative Platform
on Social and Economic Rights

**Defending the Social Acquis: The Role of the European Social Charter
in Resisting Deregulatory Trends in Labor Law**

7 October 2026
(09:00 – 17:30 CEST)

**Session 1: Current challenges to labour rights protection in Europe: the
current trends and risks posed to social rights and the world of work**



Karin Lukas is the scientific director of the Vienna Forum for Democracy and Human Rights and the Austrian member of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). Previously, she was a visiting professor at the Central European University, head of the FWF/DFG project “Rights of Solo Self-Employed Persons”, president and member of the European Committee of Social Rights, Council of Europe (2012-2022), and programme line manager at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Fundamental and Human Rights (2019-2023). She has been working for over 25 years on a wide range of human rights and democracy issues, advising ministries, international organisations and companies.



Tadas Leončikas is Head of the Employment research unit at Eurofound (EU agency in Dublin). Since joining Eurofound in 2010, he has worked on various topics including survey research, quality of life, trust, social mobility, social inclusion, social services; currently, he promotes the research focus on changing employment structure and the strategically important sectors for the EU. Tadas's background is in sociology and in his earlier career, he headed up the Institute for Ethnic Studies in Lithuania working on studies related to the situation of ethnic minorities, migrants and other vulnerable groups, and helped to facilitate integration of Roma to labour market. As a researcher, he has collaborated with the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the United Nations Development Programme and the International Organization for Migration.



Dr. Merran HULSE is International Reporting and Engagement Manager at the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, where she leads the Commission's engagement with international and regional human rights mechanisms, including the United Nations, Council of Europe, and European Union. Her work includes coordinating monitoring and reporting across a range of human rights and equality issues, including the Commission's recent parallel reporting on Ireland's implementation of the European Social Charter. Prior to joining the Commission, Merran worked in Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs, and as a researcher at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability.



Ludovica BANFI is a Project Manager at the Justice, Digital and Migration Unit of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Her areas of expertise with respect to the FRA's work include health and migration; multiple discrimination; gender equality and social research methods. She has managed several projects in areas such as migration and domestic work, healthcare of migrants, multiple discrimination and transnationalism in the context of migration in the EU and neighbouring countries. She previously worked as a research fellow at the University of Bologna, the University of Trento and at Middlesex University and as a research assistant in NGOs in Canada, Italy and Ukraine. She holds a PhD in sociology and has published a number of articles, book chapters and reports in the fields of migration and discrimination, including *Genderace, The use of racial anti-discrimination laws: gender and citizenship in a multicultural context - Final report* (2010).

Session 2: Simplification and the social acquis: where should the red lines be?



Georgios Stamatis Georgios Stamatis is a Member of the Hellenic Parliament representing New Democracy and, since 2023, a Substitute Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). He is active in committees covering social affairs, health, equality, disability rights, and non-discrimination.

He serves as General Rapporteur on Roma and Travellers in the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and is rapporteur on issues including Roma and Travellers' historical memory, demographic renewal and family-friendly policies, and the situation of Ukrainian soldiers who became disabled as a result of hostilities. Mr. Stamatis also represents Greece in the Parliamentary Alliance for Good Governance and Integrity in Sport and participates in several PACE networks addressing elections, hate speech, children of Ukraine, violence against women, and LGBTI rights.

In the Greek Parliament, he serves on the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, the Special Permanent Committee on Equality, Youth and Human Rights, the Special Committee on European Affairs, and a subcommittee on disability issues.

He holds a Master's degree in Global Health and Disaster Medicine from the University of Athens Medical School and a degree in Physiotherapy from the University of West Attica.



Prof. Olivier De Schutter is member of the European Committee of Social Rights. He was the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights between 2020 and 2026, and prior to that, a member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2015-2020) and the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food (2008-2014). He chaired the EU Network of independent experts on fundamental rights between 2002 and 2007 and was a member of the Scientific Committee of the Fundamental Rights Agency between 2012 and 2017. He teaches at UCLouvain and at Sciences Po and has taught in the past at the College of Europe as well as at Yale University and Columbia University in New York.



Sophia Reisecker is a member of the EESC, where she is involved in the sections on the single market (INT) and for employment and social affairs (SOC), and the Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI). She serves as Vice-President of the SOC Section and, among other activities, has been the rapporteur on a New Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights and the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy. She heads the department European and international affairs of the Austrian trade union GPA. She holds functions in various European Trade Union Federations and works with worker and management representatives in multinational companies in the manufacturing sector. Sophia Reisecker holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology.



Sarah Bruckner is a policy adviser on European law in the EU & International Affairs Department of the Vienna Chamber of Labour (AK Wien) in Vienna.



Signe Andreassen Lysgaard is Chief Adviser on Business and Human Rights at the Danish Institute for Human Rights. She is a Political Scientist from University of Copenhagen and has more than 17 yrs of experience advising companies, financial institutions, governments and civil society organisations across sectors and geographies on corporate respect for human rights. Today, her work focuses on scaling up respect for human rights across the financial sector and via corporate sustainability reporting. Her work spans policy engagement, project level collaborations and applied research activities. Signe represents the Institute in the Danish Forum on Sustainability Regulation and serves on a number of external expert bodies including the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) Sustainability Standing Committee Consultative Working Group, the Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) Human Rights Technical Expert Group and previously served on the EU Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG) Sustainability Reporting Technical Expert Group (2023-2026) and the EU Platform on Sustainable Finance (2020-2022).

Session 3: A changing world of work: AI, new forms of work and climate-related risks



Luis C. MELERO GARCÍA is a Legal Specialist in International Labour Standards at the ILO and a Public Attorney of the Spanish Social Security Administration, with expertise in Labour Law and Social Security. He currently serves as Thematic Lead on Social Security and Maternity Protection Conventions within the ILO's Application of Standards Branch. He has served as Labour Attaché at the Spanish Permanent Mission in Geneva and at the Spanish Embassy in Bern, with accreditation in Austria and Liechtenstein.

He holds a Master's degree in industrial and Employment Relations from the ILO's International Training Centre and an Executive Master in Artificial Intelligence. He is also an "Ambassador" of CIFE's Executive Master in EU Studies.

He participates in the ILO Observatory on Artificial Intelligence and Work in the Digital Economy and leads a project to modernise the ILO reporting system through digitalisation.



Oliver Philipp is a policy expert on artificial intelligence, digitalisation, and the future of work at the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's Competence Centre on the Future of Work in Brussels. He is responsible for developing and managing international research and policy dialogue projects on AI in the workplace, platform work, algorithmic management, workers' rights, collective bargaining, and social protection. His work translates research on technological change into practical policy recommendations, and he serves as a central point of contact for the delegation's exchanges on AI, digital labour markets, and worker-centred technological transformation. Before joining the Competence Centre, Philipp worked at the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's headquarters in Berlin, where he coordinated international policy initiatives on social and economic transformation. He holds a Master's degree in European Studies from the Universities of Mainz, Dijon, and Opole.



Marouane LAABBAS EL GUENNOUNI is a researcher at the European Trade Union Institute since November 2024. He holds a Law degree and a degree in Industrial Relations, both from Rovira i Virgili University (Spain), completing an academic course at Université Toulouse Capitole (France). In 2021, Marouane earned a Master's degree in Environmental Law from the same university, where he wrote his thesis on the intersection of Environmental and Labour Inspectorates. In parallel, he joined the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in Luxembourg, contributing to projects related to the daily activities of the Court's members. By October 2021, he became a predoctoral researcher at the Public Law Department of Rovira i Virgili University, focusing on the links between environmental protection and workers' rights. Lately, he joined the editor board of The Catalan Journal of Environmental Law. In 2023, he was awarded a Fulbright-Schuman fellowship to further his research on collective bargaining, unionism, and the green transition. He carried out this research at Colorado State University in 2023 and at Rutgers University in 2024 (both in the United States). Currently, his work explores the connections between health and safety at work, and the impacts of climate change and ecological transition.



Lenka VESTENICKÁ is a Human Rights Officer at the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights in the Department of International Relations, Monitoring and Reporting. She is responsible for activities concerning the Centre's external relations, monitoring, and reporting. Her area of work mainly focuses on social rights, climate change, and artificial intelligence. She works at the intersection of these areas, specifically connecting the climate change and social rights nexus. In her current work, she is focusing on the gender and climate change, specifically looking at the gendered impact of climate change on poverty. Her scope of work also includes research on sexual harassment policies in the workplace environment, conducting interviews, and issuing reports and recommendations to enhance safety in the relevant institutions. In her previous role as an Advocacy Officer at People in Peril, the largest humanitarian organisation in Slovakia, she worked on advocacy activities with focus on protecting refugee rights in Slovakia. She holds a degree in International Relations and Environmental Studies from Masaryk University in Brno.

Session 4: The European Social Charter and the Charter for Fundamental Rights as a Framework for Protecting Labour Rights



Prof. Olivier De Schutter is member of the European Committee of Social Rights. He was the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights between 2020 and 2026, and prior to that, a member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2015-2020) and the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food (2008-2014). He chaired the EU Network of independent experts on fundamental rights between 2002 and 2007 and was a member of the Scientific Committee of the Fundamental Rights Agency between 2012 and 2017. He teaches at UCLouvain and at Sciences Po and has taught in the past at the College of Europe as well as at Yale University and Columbia University in New York.



Gabriel N. TOGGENBURG is a legal expert, academic, and European civil servant specializing in EU integration and human rights law. Since 2022, he has served as the Head of the Sector for the Charter of Fundamental Rights, Democracy, and Rule of Law at the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). He first joined the FRA in 2009 and previously held roles as the agency's Policy Coordinator for the EU Charter and Senior Legal Advisor in the Director's office. A lawyer by training, Toggenburg holds a Ph.D. from the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence. Alongside his institutional career, he is an Honorary Professor for European Union and Human Rights Law at the University of Graz (Austria).



Abigail BOOTH is a Senior Adviser at the Swedish Institute for Human Rights and has contributed to the Institute's report providing additional information to the European Committee of Social Rights as part of its ongoing review of Sweden. She is also Co-Chair of the ENNHRI Working Group on the Human Rights of Older Persons. Abigail has extensive experience working in civil society and international human rights organisations on a range of human rights issues, including economic, social and cultural rights and the human rights of women, with a particular interest in the practical realisation of human rights.



Mathieu Beys currently works as a Legal Adviser at the Belgian Federal Institute for Human Rights (IFDH), where he contributes to annual and ad hoc reports, parliamentary opinions, international treaty monitoring, and the implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. His work includes strategic litigation, advocacy, reporting, training and awareness-raising for decision-makers. He has expertise in civil liberties, social rights, criminal law, asylum and migration law.

Previously, he worked at Myria, the Belgian Federal Migration Centre, as a legal adviser specialising in the fundamental rights of foreigners. He also worked for an international NGO based in Brussels and practised as a lawyer at the Brussels Bar, handling cases involving immigration, criminal and social law.

He holds degrees in Law and History from the Université Libre de Bruxelles, where he continues to work as a teaching assistant in legal history.