

European Social Conference
Paris, 2nd March 2017

Joint ministerial declaration

At a time when the European Union is about to celebrate the 60th anniversary of its founding treaty, the Treaty of Rome, we, Ministers of Social Affairs, Labour and Employment, gathered in Paris at the invitation of the French Prime Minister, Bernard Cazeneuve, express our support for the creation of a European pillar of social rights. We welcome the European Commission's initiative to launch a major public consultation in March 2016 on this issue. Today we call on the Commission to present concrete and ambitious proposals for the European pillar of social rights in the coming weeks. To this end, we today offer a common contribution.

At a time when so many European citizens have doubts about the European project and its realizations, building a strong and effective pillar of social rights is an absolute necessity. In the context of the tensions we are experiencing, Europe must protect its citizens, in order to reinforce itself. Europe must proceed with economic and social convergence, to ensure a fair distribution of economic wealth and deepen social cohesion across the Union. It must reinforce its commitment to fight poverty and social exclusion, and to eradicate child poverty. We are convinced that the EU remains a unique opportunity for young people's and workers' mobility, for employment, economic prosperity and the social protection of all European citizens. Therefore, we must continue promoting an ambitious and protective European social model that would strengthen cohesion throughout the EU. Today more than ever, it is our responsibility to convince our people of the need for this, and to make it a tangible reality in all Member States.

The European pillar of social rights needs to build upon the following features.

The first, at the historic heart of social Europe: **the definition of common rules for decent working conditions and health and safety at work.** We need to strongly reaffirm this objective, on which Europe was built, to enable it to be fully realised. This must lead to give more weight to social rights enshrined in the treaties and to acknowledge that economic freedoms cannot prevail over social rights. It is also necessary to move progressively towards decent minimum wages, which have the ability to fight workers' poverty, while promoting efficient and wide-coverage collective bargaining and respecting national practices and the role of social partners in each of the Member States. Furthermore, the evolution of work in our societies calls on us to lay the foundation for new rights: for example, we should reflect on a right to disconnect for European employees that goes hand in hand with the digital revolution.

The second feature, to which we are strongly committed: **a socially fair labour market, accessible to all.**

Accessible to all means allowing everybody to benefit from the opportunities that exist in other Member States, whether it is a more ambitious programme that financially supports the **mobility of people who want to take up vocational education and training in another Member State**; the creation of a **European student card** giving access to specific services (student dormitories, university canteens, libraries); or support for access to a first job. This goes together with the specific targeting of the young people who are the furthest away from employment to help them access the labour market, in particular ensuring the sustainability of the European Youth Initiative and the Youth Guarantee, whose budget should be increased

Fair means reaffirming the fundamental principle of **equality between women and men**, while defending the principles of non-discrimination and equality at work, promoting stable quality employment, and in particular by taking measures that favour a more equal sharing of family responsibilities.

We are determined to strongly reinforce the **fight against posting abuses** in the frame of the revision of the 1996 Directive. Any abuses of workers undermine our social models and the trust in Europe. We must ensure equal working conditions and remuneration for all workers. We should also improve the coordination of social security systems, in order for all workers to keep their social security coverage when moving to another Member State and for corresponding social contributions to be actually paid to the appropriate social security fund. It is also crucial to reinforce **scrutiny obligations** throughout the supply chain: hiring a subcontracting company can not allow to turn a blind eye on its social practices.

Third feature: **a social safety net guaranteed for all European workers to better protect them against the hazards of their working life**. We must support the creation of “activity accounts” giving workers a right to lifelong learning, and in a broader sense a safety net all through their lives, irrespective of the changes and gaps in their careers. New forms of employment, created by digital platforms, are impacting on labour markets. We need to comprehend this new reality to protect all workers, irrespective of the type of activity, and to provide them social protection and ensure the portability of their rights. This could be done with a **framework directive on decent conditions in all forms of employment** as put forward by the European Parliament.

The pillar of social rights must build on **a reinforced social dialogue**. It also entails a commitment that employers and workers’ representatives, who are closest to social and economic realities, must be at the heart of the reforms and the regulation of our labour markets. Social dialogue has a key role to play in designing economic and social policies. The views of social partners should be better integrated at all stages, levels and relevant institutions of policy making.

We will promote these commitments to our peers and the European institutions. We warmly welcome the summit which takes place in Rome on March 25th to mark the 60th anniversary of the European Union Treaty and the European social summit that Sweden will host on 17th

November in Gothenburg, which will be occasions to reaffirm the importance of a strong social Europe.

We also commit to ensuring that this reflection continues in all our Member States, together with social partners and civil society representatives, in order to associate them with this ambitious European project.

Across Europe, while populism gains ground, Europe must be an effective social shield for its citizens. We hereby declare: the diamond anniversary of Europe, when we celebrate our 60 years of common destiny, will either be social or will not be at all!

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Mrs Myriam El Khomri, Minister of Labour, Employment, Vocational Training and Social Dialogue (France)

Mr. Nicolas Schmit, Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Economy (Luxembourg)

Mr. Michael Farrugia, Minister of Family and Social Solidarity (Malta)

Mrs Ylva Johansson, Minister of Employment (Sweden)

Mr. Alois Stöger, Federal Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (Austria)

Mrs Andrea Nahles, Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs (Germany)

Mr. José Vieira da Silva, Minister of Labour, Social Solidarity and Social Security (Portugal)

Mr. Giuliano Poletti, Minister of Labour and Social Policy (Italy)

Mrs Michaela Marksova, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs (Czech Republic)

Mr. Lodewijk Asscher, Minister of Social Affairs and Employment (Netherlands)

Mr. Branislav Ondrus, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Slovakia)