

A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together, one darker-skinned and one lighter-skinned, symbolizing unity and solidarity. The hands are positioned in the center of the frame, with the fingers interlaced. A gold ring with a light blue stone is visible on the ring finger of the darker-skinned hand. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue and white.

# The European Pillar of Social Rights in practice:

## **PES Action Plan**

A contribution to the European Commission 2021 Roadmap for Social Europe

## FOREWORDS



**Agnes Jongerius**

Chair of the PES Social Europe Network

In a context of rising inequalities, political uncertainty and doubts about the institutions inherited from the 2008 financial crisis, at a time when member states and the whole EU are put to the test of the COVID-19 pandemic, our conviction that social policies play a key role for Europe's future is only reinforced. For us it is clear: the EU will either have a social future, or no future at all! In November 2017, the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights marked a significant moment for social Europe. It set the principles, defined objectives and put social concerns back on the political agenda. However, the Pillar is not an end in itself. If we want to effectively strengthen our social model, reduce inequalities, guarantee high social standards and strong collective bargaining, the EU needs to deliver on each and every of the 20 principles it sets out.

This is the reason why it is now crucial to go ahead and to translate all the Pillar's principles into concrete standards and policies, offering support to all Europeans. With this publication, detailing a comprehensive Social Action Plan to implement the Pillar, we bring our proposals and our contribution to the debate.

One of the first steps of this opening political battle will be the EU's answer to COVID-19. In the current context of economic and social crisis due to the pandemic, the EU recovery strategy must transform the European economy to make it socially fair and just. The European Pillar of Social Rights provides a proper framework for such recovery, it should serve as a guideline for all future EU policies.

Delivering on its principles will help us answer the legitimate expectations of frontline workers, who, despite low wages and tough working conditions, risked their lives to maintain essential services. It will enable us to reinforce welfare states and provide effective support to

those whose health is at risk, to those who face the difficulty of entering a labour market in crisis and to those who struggle to make ends meet. In Europe, we must choose to create decent jobs and to invest in quality social security. By doing so, we can turn the Pillar into a great success, ensuring every single principle that it acknowledges becomes a reality for the poor, the unemployed, the low paid, and for all EU citizens. This will be a collective effort; we must be ready to take the lead to achieve it.



**Yondec Polet**

Deputy Secretary General of the PES

Our main goal at the PES is to develop a European Union that has a strong social dimension and prioritises social rights above economic freedoms. The proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights was a major accomplishment of

our family, but it will be a true success only if we can ensure it leads to real changes.

European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit, from the PES family, has recognised this and, together with his Communication on a Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions, launched a stakeholder discussion which will be open until November 2020. We immediately started working to support him in his endeavour to put forward a Social Roadmap, to be published by 2021, as this provides an opportunity for our political family to make our voice heard. Since the very beginning, the PES has insisted on the need for a fully-fledged Social Action Plan to implement each of the 20 principles in the form of a Social Action Plan. It must outline clear measures and tools to translate the Pillar of Social Rights into binding rules

that strengthen welfare systems, respect labour market models and improve living standards. The document in your hands is a result of many in-depth discussions we held in our Social Europe Network with representatives from PES member parties, NGOs, social partners and MEPs, first under Chair Pervenche Berès and now led by MEP Agnes Jongerius. This text is meant to serve as a toolbox of policy proposals for parties and partners to join the debate on the implementation of the Pillar, both at the European and national level. For each Pillar principle we have identified a broad set of potential measures, both long-term and short-term, that lead to the implementation and address the challenges we are faced with today. We encourage all who share our values and appetite for a more social Europe to join this consultation so that we can create real changes, as the best way for the EU to show its relevance is to provide for its citizens and deliver on the promises made. It is time to put the European Pillar of Social Rights in motion. We have solutions to offer, together we will make them a reality!



### **Sergei Stanishev**

PES President

As socialists and democrats, we are advocating and fighting for sustainable social progress and robust social welfare systems. The laws and policies governing our societies must have a strong social foundation and purpose. Over the past years, the PES has mobilised

its ministers within the EPSCO Council, MEPs in the European Parliament, governments, as well as member parties to further this goal at the European level. Our efforts, backed by a strong personal commitment from Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, led to the joint proclamation by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission of the European Pillar of Social Rights on 17 November 2017. This achievement marked an important step forward for the PES's vision of a social Europe. In the process of adopting the Pillar, we faced resistance from conservative leaders and others who lacked ambition in addressing many problems our citizens face, but our family remained united. The S&D Group in the European Parliament and its Rapporteur on the European Pillar of Social Rights, Maria João Rodrigues, played a crucial role in overcoming this resistance and demanding a binding commitment to the Pillar and the principles it outlines. We pushed hard and the Pillar was eventually endorsed by all EU prime ministers. We now have our social compass in the form of 20 solid and equally important principles that will guide our policies and actions towards a more socially fair and just Europe. The Pillar is one of our biggest achievements but the fight is far from over. We must go beyond stating the principles, designing policies and implementing them to ensure that each principle comes into life and becomes an effective right for all Europeans. This is now more important than ever, as Europe is facing major challenges in recovering from the COVID-19 outbreak. In line with the Pillar, the European recovery must focus on quality job creation, investment in sustainable projects and activities, quality education, training and skills, universally accessible social protection and access to good quality public services. The PES has its own set of proposals for the implementation of the Pillar of Social Rights, a fully-fledged Social Action Plan. This reflects our commitment to ensuring that the 20 principles the Pillar encompasses truly make a difference for European citizens. We will keep finding ways to design a socially fair Europe that leaves no one behind.

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Party of European Socialists  
10–12 Rue Guimard  
B-1040 Brussels  
Belgium

# 1 REGAINING PEOPLE'S TRUST

Too many citizens in all EU member states feel that the EU has not protected them enough from rising inequalities, increased precarious work, low wages, unemployment, low access to social protection or poor living conditions. They deserve an answer. After a decade of austerity, after Brexit, after too many electoral successes for the populists and extremists, the European Union needs to regain peoples' trust and show it is more than just a free-trade area.

European policymaking has been largely concerned with the efficiency of markets and the effectiveness of the four freedoms of movement enshrined in the EU treaties (goods, services, capital and people). This focus too often has left aside the EU's objective of social cohesion, equality, fairness, well-being and a high level of employment, combating poverty and exclusion (as outlined in the TFEU e.g. preamble, Art. 8, Art. 9, and TEU art 3).

Simultaneously, the past decades have seen a rise in social and income inequality across Europe, proving that wealth does not simply "trickle down" to all. The years of crisis have made Europe's citizens pay a very high price, while globalisation, digitisation, social and environmental dumping create strong pressure towards lower social standards. Moreover, we have seen a brain drain of young people from the member states where the economic crisis hit hardest. This must change. For us, the economy must always serve the people and not vice versa.

We are therefore convinced that social Europe plays a key role for Europe's future. In this context of rising inequalities, political uncertainty and doubts towards the institutions, PES fights for social progress and a better life for all Europeans. The proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in November 2017 marked a significant moment for social Europe, we are ready to deliver on each and every of the 20 principles it consecrates.



## 2 FROM THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS TO A SOCIAL ACTION PLAN

“The European Union must better serve its people and guarantee that no one is left behind.”<sup>1</sup> That was the first sentence of our manifesto for the 2019 European elections, in which we clearly stated our willingness to change the EU. We want to build a fairer Europe, leaving behind the neoliberal and conservative models of the past, and focusing on quality jobs, a sustainable future, fairness, social security and an economic model which addresses inequality and the cost of living and that reflects the Union’s ambition to progress towards the fulfilment of the UN’s SDGs. That is why we put forward a new Social Contract for Europe as our main objective during the 2019 European elections.

Amongst others, this new Social Contract must build on the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the European Pillar of Social Rights. Indeed, by embracing the SDGs and the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU will be able to better meet the challenges it currently faces, be it rising inequalities, the environmental and digital transition or demographic change. It will be able to better serve its people and show more consistency in its pursuit of social progress, fairness, upward convergence and the well-being of all its citizens. This implies that the SDGs and the Pillar’s principle must be fully implemented. For the latter, the PES proposes the adoption of a fully-fledged Social Action Plan.



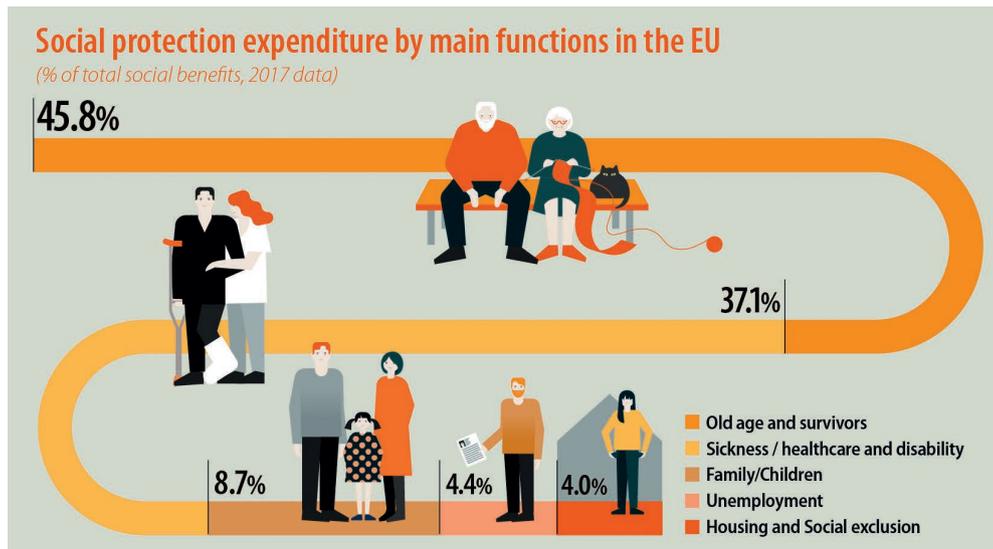
## 2.1 Birth of the Pillar

Following months of mobilisation from our ministers within the EPSCO Council, our MEPs in the European Parliament, our governments, our member parties and a strong personal commitment from Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, the joint proclamation by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on the European Pillar of Social Rights<sup>2</sup> on 17 November 2017 marked an important step forward for the PES's vision of a social Europe.

The path to this proclamation was steep. While conservative leaders such as Viktor Orbán, Angela Merkel and others strongly opposed the Pillar in the first place, our family united behind it. The European Parliament, and especially the S&D Group and its Rapporteur on the European Pillar of Social Rights, Maria João Rodrigues, played a crucial role in overcoming this resistance,

notably by building a very large majority involving five political groups to support the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and demanding a binding commitment to the principles it outlines. We won this battle collectively and the Pillar was eventually endorsed by all EU prime ministers.

The EU thus equipped itself with a set of 20 solid principles, to guide its policies in the years to come. It made the Social Summit in Gothenburg a great success for our political family. More importantly, it put social issues back on the EU's negotiation table. After decades of limited social ambitions, with the notable exception of the Youth Guarantee, the EU finally set itself new objectives. The Pillar of Social Rights is therefore an important victory and it shall be our social compass to ensure that the future transitions are socially fair and just.



[ec.europa.eu/eurostat](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat)

## 2.2 First steps of implementation

Thanks to the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the principles are set, objectives are defined and social concerns are back on the political agenda. However, the Pillar is not an end in itself. If we want to effectively strengthen our social model, reduce inequalities, guarantee high social standards and strong collective bargaining, it is now crucial to go ahead and to translate all the Pillar's principles into rights for individual citizens. By doing so, we can turn the Pillar into a great success, ensuring every single principle that it acknowledges becomes a reality for the poor, the unemployed, the low paid, for the EU's ordinary citizens.

Under the previous institutional mandate, there have already been attempts to deliver on specific principles of the Pillar, among them the Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions, the Social

Fairness Package and the European Social Fund+, in the next Multiannual Financial Framework. Our political family proved instrumental for the successful completion of each of them. Yet, irrespective of the success of these initiatives, other principles still need to be realised for the European Pillar of Social Rights to be fully implemented and significantly improve the social rights of Europeans. A truly successful implementation depends on action taken by actors at all levels, be it European, national, regional and local, as well as on the involvement of social partners considering the crucial role they play. We also need to ensure that all relevant EU initiatives reflect and contribute to the realisation of the Pillar's principles. For example, social and green objectives must be discussed together when designing and implementing the European Green Deal so that it benefits all Europeans.

## 2.3 PES's call for a proper implementation plan

Since the first talks on the European Pillar of Social Rights, the PES has insisted on the need for a fully-fledged Social Action Plan to implement each of the 20 principles. In July 2016, just after the referendum in the UK, our Employment and Social Affairs Ministers stressed “the need for a more social Europe, for a Europe against inequalities, for a Europe of decent working conditions, and for a Europe of strong social protection.<sup>3</sup> Both our ministers and member parties called early-on to go beyond principles and give the Pillar the ability to achieve its ambitions, coupling it with a Social Action Plan<sup>4</sup> that provides the ability to deliver on the promises made, outlining clear measures

and tools for the realisation of the Pillar's 20 principles. Our PES 2019 European elections manifesto clearly repeated this ambition stressing the need for a Social Action Plan to turn the EU Pillar of Social Rights into binding rules that strengthen welfare systems, respect labour market models and improve living standards.<sup>5</sup>

Because these claims were not heard by the European Commission at the time, the PES progressively developed its own proposals to implement the Pillar of Social Rights, to make sure the 20 principles it encompasses become effective and do protect and benefit citizens across Europe.

<sup>3</sup> EPSCO Ministerial Declaration: After the UK referendum, a call for a more Social Europe, adopted in Bratislava on 15 July 2016

<sup>4</sup> Council Resolution Lisbon December 2017; EPSCO Ministerial Declaration October 2017

<sup>5</sup> PES European Elections Campaign Manifesto: A new Social Contract for Europe, Adopted in Madrid, February 2019

## 2.4 A toolbox for the opening consultation on the Roadmap for Social Europe

Today, with our Social Action Plan we propose a broad set of measures to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, meeting the following objectives:

- **Extending the European social acquis to all forms of employment, both online and offline.**
  - **Guaranteeing equal access to social protection for all in Europe.**
  - **Ensuring wages and pensions are above the poverty threshold across the EU and that work remains a way out of poverty, notably by raising the level of collective bargaining.**
  - **Providing the means for an effective social security net to be deployed in hard times and that further supports the European social model, while ensuring that employers contribute with their fair share.**
  - **Closing the gender pay and pension gaps, promoting women's equal labour market participation, and ending all forms of workplace discrimination.**
  - **Addressing both the availability and the quality of jobs.**
  - **Ending all forms of exploitation and exclusion and combating poverty, ensuring an income above the poverty threshold for all citizens in all member states.**
- **No new constraints on national models, but EU policies that reinforce welfare states and social dialogue.**
  - **Providing quality education, training and skills.**

European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit, from the PES family, has heard this call and already presented a **Communication on a Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions** on 14 January 2020. We welcome this important step and we support him in his endeavour to put forward a Social Roadmap by next year.

The stakeholder **discussion** that Commissioner Schmit launched together with his communication of 14 January will be open until November 2020. It is an opportunity for our political family to make our voice heard and provide input on each of the Pillar's principles with a view to the Commission's Roadmap for Social Europe, to be published 2021.

The European Semester is the main policy coordination tool in place to monitor progress on the European Pillar of Social Rights. Our political family will continue to ask for a reformulated European Semester better fit to the current challenges, that integrates the UN's SDGs, is aligned with the priorities enshrined in the European Green Deal, and that promotes a better implementation of the Social Pillar.

The Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027 (MFF) should also be reinforced to support social investment and serve as a vehicle for the implementation of the Social Pillar. We should continue to fight for an ambitious MFF with a strong social dimension. The European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund will continue to play a crucial role in supporting social cohesion and promoting the digital and green transformation in our economies. The new social window on the InvestEU programme will play a role in social infrastructure investment and in investment in education and skills.

In the current context of economic and social crisis due to COVID-19 pandemic, member states had to implement extraordinary measures to help companies and workers during this emergency. The European Union has deployed several EU instruments to support workers and the new SURE instrument should enter in place as soon as possible in order to support workers, reach companies and save jobs. The new Social and Economic Recovery Plan should be designed to transform the European economy by supporting productive public investment for renewed growth. The European Pillar of Social Rights should thus provide the proper framework for the recovery. The Recovery Plan shall be socially fair and just reflecting the social and employment challenges that Europe will face. The Recovery Plan must be focused on quality job creation, investment in sustainable projects and activities, quality education, training and skills, universally accessible social protection and access to good-quality public services.

We encourage all who share our values and appetite for a more social Europe to join this consultation. We hope that this publication, outlining our social action plan and the policy proposals it encompasses will be useful for you as a source of inspiration. We would like it to serve as a toolbox full of policy proposals to contribute to the consultation, highlighting priorities and potential measures to address them in implementation of the Pillar of Social Rights.

# 3 PES SOCIAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PILLAR

We are convinced that the following policy recommendations, matched to each of the Pillar's 20 principles, will make a difference and change working and living conditions in Europe for the better, especially taking into account the fragilities exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although they do not exhaustively cover our family's vision for social and employment policies, they draw on materials and position papers produced by the PES and our partner organisations falling within the scope of the Pillar. For ease of reference, we have listed the proposals following the chapters and numbering of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Next to these policy proposals it will also be crucial that the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights becomes a strategic investment priority in the context of the European Recovery Plan, at the same level as the Green Deal and the Digital Transition, in order to ensure social fairness, social cohesion and prosperity for all. The Pillar needs a legal framework as well as resources in order to be implemented. In the current crisis, social welfare systems are experiencing unprecedented pressure and related public expenditure will exponentially increase. In order to fuel the recovery, the EU investment effort through the Recovery Plan must have a strong social dimension, strengthening social welfare systems and investing in social security, health-care, education, housing, employment, justice and social services for vulnerable groups in order to combat the social impact of the crisis. Without the financial aspect, the implementation of the Pillar will remain incomplete.

Gothenburg, Sweden, 17 November 2017



## 3.1 Chapter I: Equal opportunities and access to the labour market

The PES shares the fundamental objective of the EU - to continuously improve the living and working conditions of people in Europe. This objective is specified in the European treaties. It implies that everybody must be given the ability to contribute fully in society, enjoying equal opportunities and capabilities to pursue the future he or she has in mind.

“The integration of every person in the education, training, and life-long learning system must be prioritised, independently of their age, gender, and background. The Pillar needs to contribute to equipping people with the skills necessary to face the challenges of a fast-changing labour market.”<sup>6</sup> However, we need

more than skills alone. We must face the fact that not everybody is able to learn new skills. We need investments in quality jobs for those people who are affected by environmental, technological and digital transitions, both for those who are able to get new skills and those who are less likely to do so. At the same time, this crisis has shown that low skilled jobs are as essential for society as highly skilled professions. The value of work cannot be based on the skills levels, the correspondence between jobs and skills requirement has to be revised (too often, companies artificially inflate skills requirements for their openings) and skills investment must also be translated into profits for the worker.



## 3.1.1 Principle 1: Education, training and life-long learning

**“Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and successfully manage transitions in the labour market.”**

The PES believes that investing in education, training and life-long learning are essential for achieving an equal, inclusive, just and prosperous society. Quality public education is a fundamental right that must be universal. All children should have access to quality education, regardless of their families' economic status. Young Europeans must be empowered and be given the skills to shape their future and become active citizens. Similarly, all workers, including older ones and elderly people should be granted access to education and life-long learning. To benefit from the green transition, the digital revolution and the growth of artificial intelligence, workers of all ages must be given the chance to reskill and engage in life-long learning as part of a just transition. In exchange, they should benefit from wage growth and employment stability.

**To ensure the implementation of Principle 1 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:**



# Education

- A new, properly funded **European Child Guarantee** to monitor and combat child poverty should include the objective of free quality education for all children.<sup>7</sup>
- In 2017, 61 million adults aged 25 to 64 in the EU had stopped their formal education before they had even completed upper secondary education.<sup>8</sup> The shares of early leavers from education or training are decreasing, but rates between countries vary greatly.<sup>9</sup> Around 20% of the adult population in countries participating in the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) struggles with basic skills like literacy.<sup>10</sup> The EU should facilitate member states' efforts to provide everyone with equal skills by creating a **European programme for improving literacy**, including digital literacy, as illiteracy remains a challenge in many European countries.
- With increased funding, the **Erasmus+** programme should be widened to include a larger number of students from all levels of education.<sup>11</sup> The programme should be scaled up and strengthened in all its components and be made more inclusive and accessible, with a stronger focus on young people with fewer opportunities, school and youth exchanges and vocational training, ambitious cooperation with third countries, and more support to small-scale partnerships.<sup>12</sup> Persons with disabilities should be able to benefit from EU exchange schemes and opportunities to study and learn abroad on an equal basis with others.
- There should be **recognition, validation and accreditation** at European level of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal education as well as of school studies abroad. We need to support education and development of young people beyond formal education systems including volunteering.<sup>13</sup>
- The creation of the **European Education Area** should be accelerated, in order to guarantee universal access to inclusive quality education and training for all.<sup>14</sup> Education should be the basis to build European citizenship. The EU should increase cooperation between training and education systems and different curricula and further strengthen cooperation through the Bologna Process.<sup>15</sup>
- Cooperation between **teaching and research** should be promoted in the framework of the Horizon Europe programme, European joint degrees and doctorates, European Universities and Centres for Vocational Excellences, as should the use of new technologies to facilitate access to the European cultural heritage through **assistive technologies** for people with disabilities.<sup>16</sup>
- The **quality and inclusiveness** of educational and training systems in response to new social and occupational challenges should be supported. An interdisciplinary approach to overcome the current imbalance between the existing skills and jobs is needed. It should encourage excellence by strengthening partnerships and dialogue among national education systems through EU/OECD quantitative and qualitative benchmarks.<sup>17</sup>

7 PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 5; PES Election Manifesto 2019 A New Social Contract for Europe, p. 3; PES EPSCO Ministerial Declaration After the UK Referendum: a Call for a More Social Europe, 15.07.2016, p. 2

8 Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning

9 Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee

10 Council and the Commission 2015 Joint Report on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)

11 PES Congress Resolution Empowering Youth, Lisbon 2018, pp. 5–6

12 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 84. See also PES Presidency Statement welcoming the PES European Youth Plan, 22.04.2016, p. 3

13 PES Congress Resolution Empowering Youth, Lisbon 2018, p. 5

14, 15 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 84

16, 17 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 85

- E-learning activities should be increased and improved in member states' education systems and quality teaching and learning should be enhanced with the use of all available technological solutions.
- The right to **paid educational leave** should be introduced into EU law, with EU programmes used to support recurrent education allowances for skills updating.<sup>18</sup>
- A **directive on fair conditions for platform workers** should oblige online platforms to provide their workers with **training and education at the expense of the platform**.<sup>19</sup>
- The 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning should be followed up with a **European strategy** with a view to establishing a **common framework for recognition of informal and non-formal learning** in order to facilitate the creation of relevant national procedures and to reach out to a wider group of people. There should be more coherence between training networks and tertiary education, and research in pedagogical and educational matters as well as in social sciences and humanities should be strengthened.<sup>20</sup>
- The European Commission should assess a **possible framework for a European minimum training allowance**, above the cost of living in the respective Member State.<sup>21</sup>



# Skills

- The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund should be broadened, both in terms of its scope and additional funding, and become a **European Just Transition Fund**, enabled to invest in the skills, competence and professional prospects of workers facing any kind of job destruction, be it due to globalisation, digitisation, environmental effects, health or territorial economic crisis.<sup>22</sup> We must also make sure we invest in jobs for those who are not able to reskill.
- Existing EU funding programmes should be used to establish a **real skills-guarantee for all**. For example, the **European Social Fund+** (ESF+) could be used to further re- and up- skill strategies, including through vocational education and training and partnerships with SMEs, and steer adult learning investment towards in-demand skills, especially for older workers facing higher risks of redundancy, for instance through public employment services analysing the skills needs in their region to determine the offer of vocational training. **InvestEU** should get a new window dedicated to social investment and skills, with targeted financial instruments. An **education and skills platform** should be created within InvestEU, in cooperation with social partners and stakeholders, to serve as an interface with industrial policy to identify the skills needed in future labour markets, focusing on the green transition.<sup>23</sup>
- The creation of a portable **personal learning accounts for digital skills** should help workers acquire relevant skills throughout their working life.<sup>24</sup> It is essential to prepare for the ongoing digital transition by, for example, developing an EU Digital Guarantee which would help citizens and enterprises that will play an essential role in this process.
- Labour market intermediaries should be supported to **reduce structural skills gaps**, especially for women in STEM, workers at risk of automation and the low skilled.<sup>25</sup>
- The EU should continue to support **measures under its EU programmes to train and retain specialists** at the cutting edge of their respective technological fields, to be able to make autonomous decisions.<sup>26</sup>
- Education should be supported as a **Sustainable Development Goal** through the **New Skills Agenda for Europe** (formal, non-formal and informal), the European Qualifications Framework and a reformed Europass.<sup>27</sup>
- A **renewed skill audit** should be developed under the **EU Skills Panorama**, with regional data on the skills needs for a climate-neutral Europe to support the most vulnerable regions, sectors and people in re- and up- skilling for future-proof, high-quality jobs in these same regions.<sup>28</sup>
- The EU should work in partnership with the EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities, businesses, training centres and academia to develop and widely deploy **master's degree courses and executive trainings, affordable and accessible to all**, for our present and future workforce to acquire, and update, its green transition-related skills.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>22</sup> PES EPSCO Ministerial Declaration An Ambitious ESF Towards a Strong Social Union, 17.04.2018, p. 1; PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 6

<sup>23</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 87

<sup>24</sup>, <sup>25</sup>, <sup>26</sup>, <sup>27</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 87

<sup>28</sup>, <sup>29</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 85

## 3.1.2. Principle 2: Gender equality

**“Equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men must be ensured and fostered in all areas, including participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment and career progression. Women and men have the right to equal pay for work of equal value.”**

In our 2019 European elections manifesto, the PES and PES Women promised to continue our fight for a feminist Europe with equal rights for all. Any form of discrimination is unacceptable in our modern European societies. Gender equality as a core value is not only a question of human rights, solidarity and fairness, but of effectiveness, economic growth, sustainability and democracy. With regards to employment in particular, our priorities include equal gender pay for work of equal value, closing the gender pay and pension gaps, improving work-life balance and empowering women in economic and political decision-making.

**To ensure the implementation of Principle 2, the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:**

- The Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 should be implemented in an effective way in order to close all gender gaps (especially the wage and pension gap between women and men), implement the Work-Life Balance Directive, end undervaluation of women’s work, empower women in economic and political decision-making, combat gender-based violence and ensure access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for all women across Europe. The European Commission should gender mainstream all its policies, especially those relating to the European Pillar of Social Rights.
- Binding targets, per Member State and age group, should be developed to **reduce the EU gender pay gap by 2 percentage points every year, to be eliminated entirely by 2030**,<sup>30</sup> with sanctions for non-compliance. These targets should be monitored in the European Semester.<sup>31</sup>



- The EU should develop a directive on gender pay transparency that would end pay secrecy and allow all workers to discuss pay. A European Pay Gap Audit, transparency grids, an Equal Pay Label, standardised rules for data collection, and dissuasive sanctions would contribute to increased pay transparency.<sup>32</sup> These rules would also equip social partners with the right tools for collective bargaining. A Directive on equality plans at company level and equality measures in collective agreements should be explored.
- The EU should combat stereotypes and gender segregation of professions, and work to eliminate the reasons behind unequal pay, such as involuntary part-time work, unequal pay for work of equal value, and unpaid care work. The EU must promote collective instead of individual solutions to achieve equal pay.
- The European Commission should monitor and review the implementation of the **Work-Life Balance Directive**, including through programming of relevant financial support from the ESF+ and/or infringement procedures if necessary.<sup>33</sup> The Commission should make sure all member states support and transpose the minimum standards of the Directive into national legislation, and encourage states to go beyond the directive and extend the scope of maternity & parental leave, including the rights of self-employed and adoptive parents. The Commission should take additional measures to address different care needs throughout the life-cycle.
- The **Maternity Leave Directive** should be revised.<sup>34</sup>
- The EU should unblock the **directive on women's involvement in company boards**, including a quota of at least 40% of women both on executive and non-executive boards.<sup>35</sup> The Commission should put forward an alternative proposal, should the Women on Boards Directive remain blocked in the Council.
- In order to fight exclusion, poverty and actively promote economic independence, the Commission should take measures to guarantee the right to employment and decent work for all women in Europe. In this regard, the Commission should promote the ratification of the new ILO Convention on violence and harassment in the world of work in order to eliminate gender-based violence in the workplace, involving employers as agents of change.
- Euro area recommendations and country-specific recommendations should provide guidance supporting public investments in affordable and high-quality childcare facilities, as well as care facilities for other dependent relatives.
- The next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) should include **gender-responsive budgeting**, including increased funding for the objectives of the European Gender Equality Strategy and systematic gender impact assessments in the future EU budget.<sup>36</sup> Two separate budget lines on gender equality and women's rights projects as well as on combating violence should be earmarked within the **Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme** and should represent 45%. The provisions of EU-level funding (€6.17 billion) should be reviewed to achieve the targets and objectives of the **Strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Rights** to reflect the need to accomplish women's empowerment. Moreover, for the sake of gender mainstreaming, a specific budget line in each financial programme should be earmarked for gender equality and women's rights.<sup>37</sup>

30 PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 3; PES Combating Inequality in the European Union brochure, 2018, p. 3; PES EPSCO Ministerial Declaration A Social Turn for Europe, 22.10.2017, p. 1  
 31 PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 3; PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 74

32 PES Congress Resolution For a Europe of Gender Equality and Empowered Women, Lisbon 2018, p. 5

33, 34 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 77

35 PES Women Declaration A Progressive Vision for Gender Equality and Women's Rights in Europe, 27.10.2016, p. 4

36 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 131

37 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 140

### 3.1.3. Principle 3: Equal opportunities

**“Regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, ability or disability, age or sexual orientation, everyone has the right to equal treatment and opportunities regarding employment, social protection, education, and access to goods and services available to the public. Equal opportunities of under-represented groups shall be fostered.”**

Equality is a fundamental value of the EU and a core priority for us socialists and democrats. Discrimination, marginalisation and oppression have no place in a progressive Europe, and we have a moral obligation to end it. Unfortunately, many people still face discrimination at work, in school and in their encounters with public authorities because of their gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, ability or disability, age or sexual orientation. We believe that the EU can have enormous added value in this field and that we need additional concrete EU initiatives to ensure equal opportunities for everyone in Europe – it is a question of empowerment and of human rights.



## To ensure the implementation of of Principle 3 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:

- The EU should promote inclusive societies<sup>38</sup> and strengthen the **Article 7 TEU procedure**.<sup>39</sup>
- The 2008 **Equal Treatment Directive** should be fully adopted.<sup>40</sup>
- Directive 2000/78/EC against **discrimination at work** on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation should be updated with measures putting an end to discriminatory youth wages and/or removing them from the Country Specific Recommendations.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, a **Pay Transparency Directive** should be put in place. **Equal pay and equal working conditions** must apply for equal work in the same place, irrespective of the size of the company, the worker's age, disability, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or gender, social and economic status, the place of employment or the type of contract.<sup>42</sup>
- A European fund should be created to support civil society organisations that are protecting minorities and vulnerable groups within a Member State.<sup>43</sup>
- A comprehensive **LGBTI framework directive** should fully guarantee the freedom of movement for LGBTI+ families across the EU, prohibit unnecessary and invasive medical procedures on intersex children and ensure quick gender recognition procedures.<sup>44</sup>
- The European Commission should ensure that nobody, in particular people with disabilities and including those with intellectual disabilities, find themselves disenfranchised in democratic processes in the EU.<sup>45</sup>
- The European Commission should provide a comprehensive strategy for social integration of migrants, which should be integrated in the European Semester and included in Country-Specific Recommendations.<sup>46</sup>
- The EU should commit to the WHO's action on age-friendly environments.<sup>47</sup>
- The EU should take measures to ensure **transparency and equal treatment of different minority interests** in their involvement in EU decision making (ending special treatment for faith-based NGOs).<sup>48</sup>
- The EU should take binding measures to tackle **hate-speech** both online and offline against minorities, as well as incitement to violence and spreading 'fake news'.<sup>49</sup> The scope of existing EU legislation on hate crime should be enlarged to all forms of hatred and intolerance.<sup>50</sup>
- The EU should take a horizontal approach to address **intersectional discrimination**.<sup>51</sup>
- The EU should facilitate **national action plans** on tackling all forms of racism and intolerance, addressing antisemitism, Islamophobia, Afrophobia, and anti-gypsyism, homophobia, agism as well as, structural racism.<sup>52</sup>

38 PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 5

39 PES Congress Resolution For a Stronger Democracy in Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 3

40 PES Vision for a European Pillar of Social Rights, Conclusions of the PES Social Europe Network, 04.05.2017

41 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 76

42 PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 3

43 PES Congress Resolution For a Stronger Democracy in Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 4; PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 132

44, 45, 48, 49, 51 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 132

46 S&D Progressive Societies Sustainable Equality Report, 2018, p. 115

47 <https://www.who.int/ageing/age-friendly-environments/en/>

50, 52 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 133

### 3.1.4. Principle 4: Active support to employment

Everyone has the right to timely and tailor-made assistance to improve employment or self-employment prospects. This includes the right to receive support for job search, training and requalification. Everyone has the right to transfer social protection and training entitlements during professional transitions. Young people have the right to continued education, an apprenticeship, a traineeship or a job offer of good standing within 4 months of becoming unemployed or leaving education.

The unemployed have the right to personalised, continuous and consistent support. The long-term unemployed have the right to an in-depth individual assessment after 18 months of unemployment at the latest.

After a decade of austerity policies, employment rates were generally improving in Europe but many Europeans, especially young people, still struggled to find decently paid, quality jobs. The current COVID-19 outbreak unfortunately will also have an unprecedented socioeconomic impact and has already destroyed many jobs across Europe. Unemployment is all too often seen as an individual failing and active labour market policies as a budgetary burden, but unemployment is a problem that must be tackled collectively. As a society we have a duty to help people who lose their jobs by investing in new jobs and providing opportunities for reskilling, not least in times of digital and green transitions. People of all ages have a right to work and live in dignity, and active support to employment should be seen as a social investment. Throughout the crisis, European social democrats fought to protect public services that support the unemployed. Our family was also a leading force behind the European Youth Guarantee. We now want to see additional concrete initiatives at the EU level to help actors at the national and local levels to actively support decent employment.



## To ensure the implementation of Principle 4, the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:

- The EU should set up **active labour market policies** that guarantee a quality individual offer of job, training or further education to each jobseeker.<sup>53</sup>
- The **European Youth Guarantee** should be strengthened and be made permanent. Its scope should be extended until the age of 30,<sup>54</sup> and cover vulnerable groups (NEETS, migrants, homeless people). Its funding should be doubled under the ESF+<sup>55</sup>, and the job offers made to young people should be of the best quality, relevance and sustainability, with adequate remuneration and working conditions.<sup>56</sup>  
**National implementation of the Youth Guarantee** should be monitored in the framework of the **European Semester** in order to ensure that it is available to young people in all member states.<sup>57</sup> In addition, the Youth Guarantee must become a more adaptable instrument, able to respond rapidly to situations of crisis, just like the COVID-19 pandemic. It must become an anti-cyclical instrument to address youth unemployment in the member states most hit. This implies reprogramming obligations for member states in ESF+ operational programmes and through increased pre-financing, frontloading and increased EU co-financing.
- A **European activity right** for all long-term unemployed should eventually be added to the existing European Youth Guarantee.<sup>58</sup>
- EU funding programmes should support innovative pilot projects to give employment to those that are the furthest away from the labour market. These could build on the example of the French **zero long-term unemployment territories**, which provide an activity guarantee for long-term unemployed by channelling unemployment costs towards the creation of employment schemes that provide stable quality jobs of added value for society, which are paid at least the minimum wage.<sup>59</sup> This allows unemployed people to re-enter the labour market and gain skills and confidence providing services that benefit their local community at a cost similar to that of social benefits. EU funding programmes could also support projects inspired by the similar idea of the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy, which advises to introduce “basic jobs”, which are subsidised jobs for people at the lowest end of the labour market performing tasks which have a positive societal effect but are not profitable.
- Introducing the concept of **individual activity accounts** should improve portability of entitlements and facilitate career changes, or the ending of careers, without renouncing training and learning entitlements, social security or pension protection.<sup>60</sup>
- An ambitious review of the Council recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships is needed to provide a right on the part of apprentices to quality and inclusive apprenticeships, fair pay, working conditions, and a contract.<sup>61</sup>

53 PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 6

54 PES EPSCO Ministerial Declaration Ensuring the Youth Guarantee Is a European Success Story, 12.10.2016; PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 77; PES Congress Resolution Empowering Youth, Lisbon 2018, pp. 3–4

55 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 93

56 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 77

57 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 78

58 S&D Progressive Societies, Sustainable Equality Report, 2018, p.187

59 PES Briefing Zone zero chômeur de longue durée, February 2019; PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 93

60 PES EPSCO Ministerial Declaration A Social Turn for Europe, 22.10.2017, p. 2; PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 85

61 ETUC, A Trade Union input for an Action Plan to Implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, p. 5



## 3.2 Chapter II: Fair working conditions

**W**e want to strengthen our social model, reduce inequalities and in work poverty, guarantee high social standards and strong collective bargaining.

Good working conditions, health and safety at work, decent and minimum wages established by law or collective bargaining, equal pay and equal rights in the working country for work of equal value and a strong social dialogue should be reaffirmed as the cornerstones of a fair labour market.<sup>62</sup>



## 3.2.1. Principle 5: Secure and adaptable employment

Regardless of the type and duration of the employment relationship, workers have the right to fair and equal treatment regarding working conditions, access to social protection and training. The transition towards open-ended forms of employment must be fostered. In accordance with legislation and collective agreements, the necessary flexibility for employers to adapt swiftly to changes in the economic context must be ensured.

Innovative forms of work that ensure quality working conditions must be fostered. Entrepreneurship and self-employment must be encouraged. Occupational mobility must be facilitated.

Employment relationships that lead to precarious working conditions must be prevented, including by prohibiting abuse of atypical contracts. Any probation period should be of reasonable duration.

Everyone in Europe must enjoy good working conditions. We as socialists and democrats are committed to fighting precarious work – in the new, digital economy as well as in more traditional areas of work. As promised during our 2019 European Parliament elections campaign, all workers must have the same rights: no job without a contract, no job without a fair salary, and a ban on zero-hours contracts and fake self-employment. Moreover, the rights acquired in one job must not be lost when moving to another employer, contract or country – it should be possible to change or end one's career without renouncing social security and pension protection. Our family was instrumental in bringing about the 2019 Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions, a first step in the implementation of Principles 5 and 7.

We must now continue to push for additional concrete initiatives, paying special attention to mitigating inequalities in the labour market.

**The current crisis has shown that every worker is essential** and that if our societies are functioning in confinement, it is not only thanks to healthcare workers, researchers and security forces but to a large extent also thanks to cleaners, transport workers, supermarket cashiers, care workers, delivery workers, domestic workers, platform workers, workers in call centres, food and agricultural workers, fishermen and many others whose contribution is indispensable. Too often these workers have poor working conditions and low wages and in many sectors the majority of them are women. **The Commission should identify the sources of their precariousness and propose a European legal instruments to ensure decent working conditions for all workers**, including essential workers, to strengthen collective bargaining coverage, to ban zero hour contracts, to end bogus self-employment, to set strict limits regarding subcontracting practices, and to improve social protection standards. In-work poverty must be eliminated from the EU together with COVID-19.

**To ensure the implementation of Principle 5 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:**



- A new **directive on decent working conditions** should aim at ending precarious work through strengthened collective bargaining coverage, banning zero-hour contracts, ending bogus self-employment, setting strict limits regarding subcontracting practices and improving social protection standards.<sup>63</sup> It should include a clear definition of workers, either as employee or self-employed. Being identified as an employee or as self-employed should trigger the application of a specific set of workers' rights, as well as provisions on equal pay for equal work at the same place.<sup>64</sup>
- An “**Employee Status**”, which guarantees all social rights, should be extended to platform workers and the bogus self-employed.<sup>65</sup> Regulation on self-employment should be created to protect workers who do not qualify as employees.<sup>66</sup> Collective agreements should also be automatically extended to wider categories of workers than traditional “employees”, with a view to including **platform workers**.<sup>67</sup> Individual platform workers should be made able to get in touch with other platform workers and organisations representing their interests. Access of trade unions to digital workplaces and the right to bargain on behalf of single self-employed workers in the digital economy should be guaranteed.<sup>68</sup>
- The EU should adopt a directive on fair working conditions for platform workers. This directive should include a reversal of the burden of proof of an employment relationship for online platforms, and establish minimum standards for the definition of working hours, access to occupational and safety training, as well as on the conditions to access the platform. Moreover, it should include fairness and transparency of ratings and their transferability to other platforms, an effective and impartial dispute-resolution mechanism prohibiting arbitrary exclusion of workers or deactivation of accounts, and employee data protection. It should also ensure the application of existing legislation and labour law (such as the Directive on Temporary Agency Work) to the platform economy, where possible, and an adaptation of EU legislation where necessary. Upcoming legislation should take new forms of digital employment into account.<sup>69</sup>
- The EU should extend access to social and labour rights for **non-standard workers**, including for platform workers, as well as **reform/interpret competition law** to give self-employed and freelance workers the right to organise and bargain collectively.<sup>70</sup> [See also Principle 8]
- The EU should follow up on the implementation on social conditions in road transport (**Mobility Package I**), such as cabotage, driving and rest times, and posting of drivers.<sup>71</sup>

63 PES Brochure Combating Inequality in the European Union, 2018, p. 29

64, 69, 71 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 76

65, 66 PES Online Brochure Workers' Rights and Social Progress in the Digital Economy, 2017, p. 26

67 PES Online Brochure Workers' Rights and Social Progress in the Digital Economy, 2017, p. 26; PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 83;

68 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 83;

70 ETUC, 15 ETUC priorities for the new mandate of the EU institutions, 07.10.2019; PES Online Brochure Workers' Rights and Social Progress in the Digital Economy, 2017, pp. 12, 83

- Employment arrangements should be flexible whenever possible and working conditions should be adaptable to the needs of the worker. For instance, providing the possibility of teleworking should be incentivised but come with clear minimum conditions, possibly through a European directive.
- The EU should complement current legislation and extend it to internships, building on the existing quality framework, with the central goal of **ending unpaid internships**.<sup>72</sup>
- PES has long supported the creation of a robust **European Labour Authority (ELA)** to ensure fair labour mobility and protect workers from exploitation and competition for the lowest standards.<sup>73</sup> The EU should follow up on the recent regulation establishing this authority by ensuring that the ELA is up and running swiftly in order to guarantee decent working conditions for mobile workers and proper application and enforcement of EU labour law.<sup>74</sup>
- The **EURES Database** should be complemented with additional information on social protection systems, labour laws and main types of contracts in the country of the offer in order to create a one-stop shop to support EU mobility.<sup>75</sup>
- Rules and guidelines on public procurement procedure should take into account social standards as a mandatory criterion for eligibility. They should not only prevent social and environmental dumping, but also reward companies offering the best social conditions to their employees and subcontractors.
- Monitor the implementation of the Council Recommendations on Access to Social Protection and, in four years' time, decide whether a directive could be more effective.<sup>76</sup>

72, 74, 75 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 76

73 PES EPSCO Ministerial Declaration A Social Turn for Europe, 22.10.2017, p. 1; PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, pp. 4–5

76 ETUC, A Trade Union input for an Action Plan to Implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, p. 9



### 3.2.2. Principle 6: Wages

**“Workers have the right to fair wages that provide for a decent standard of living.**

**Adequate minimum wages shall be ensured, in a way that provide for the satisfaction of the needs of the worker. In-work poverty shall be prevented. All wages shall be set in a transparent and predictable way according to national practices and respecting the autonomy of the social partners.”**

To improve the standard of living of Europeans, to raise purchasing power and combat wage competition that drives wages down, the PES believes that it is time for a fast wage increase. We must fight inequality through decently paid work for everyone. In-work poverty is morally and economically unjustifiable, which is why the PES campaigned for a European framework for decent minimum wages applicable to all workers (in respect of national specificities) during the 2019 European Parliament elections. Wages should further increase overall, sharing profits more equally, and we will support collective bargaining efforts towards this objective. Collective bargaining coverage is down in 22 member states since 2000: at least 3.3 million fewer workers are benefiting from a collective bargaining agreement across the European Union today compared to the beginning of the century. We need ambitious actions at European level to ensure that member states promote collective bargaining, in particular sectoral collective bargaining, and to increase collective bargaining coverage.



## To ensure the implementation of Principle 6, the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:

- A **European framework for decent minimum wages** should be adopted to prevent in-work poverty, with the aim of achieving gradual upward convergence of national minimum wages, either by law or collective bargaining in line with national law or practice.<sup>77</sup> The EU must deliver on the dual objective of: increasing statutory minimum wages to a level where they ensure at least a decent standard of living and promoting and safeguarding collective bargaining, in particular sectoral collective bargaining.
- The rates of non-compliance with current minimum wage rates in Europe are higher for women than for men (Eurofound, 2019). Any upcoming EU framework must therefore include **measures to address non-compliance** if it is to have a tangible benefit for women.
- Where they exist, **wage discriminations** on the grounds of age, with subminimum wages set below a certain age threshold, or for specific categories of workers, such as civil servants, should be removed. Deductions from statutory minimum wage (e.g. for buying uniforms, breakages or other equipment necessary for work) should be prohibited and tips and other extra payments should be excluded from the calculation of the statutory minimum wages (these should be paid on top of them).
- A living **wage indicator** should be included in the Social Scoreboard.<sup>78</sup> The number of low wage workers and their composition shall be covered.
- A **wage developments analysis** should be introduced into the Macroeconomic Dialogue involving EU institutions and social partners, aiming for upward convergence in wage levels.<sup>79</sup> To achieve this, collective bargaining coverage should be extended. Collective bargaining agreements on sectoral level rather than company level should be preferred and further promoted. In order to achieve this target, actions at EU level are necessary, inter alia to ensure that the right to organise for collective bargaining is properly respected in all member states, that collective bargaining is available for all workers, including non-standard workers and self-employed workers, and that public procurement processes contribute to promoting collective bargaining.
- An **EU-wide definition of a living wage** should be adopted to evaluate correctly the level of wage necessary to live a decent life in each Member State. The wage indicator of the European Semester should be updated to reflect median wage and wage diffusion, and serve as a base for creating a living-wage index.<sup>80</sup> This index should form the basis for binding targets on Member States actions in the context of the Annual Growth Survey.<sup>81</sup>
- To prevent an increase of wage inequalities, measures to link the lowest wages with the highest earnings in a same company or sector via a **wage ratio**<sup>82</sup> should be introduced, in order to promote upward wage convergence.

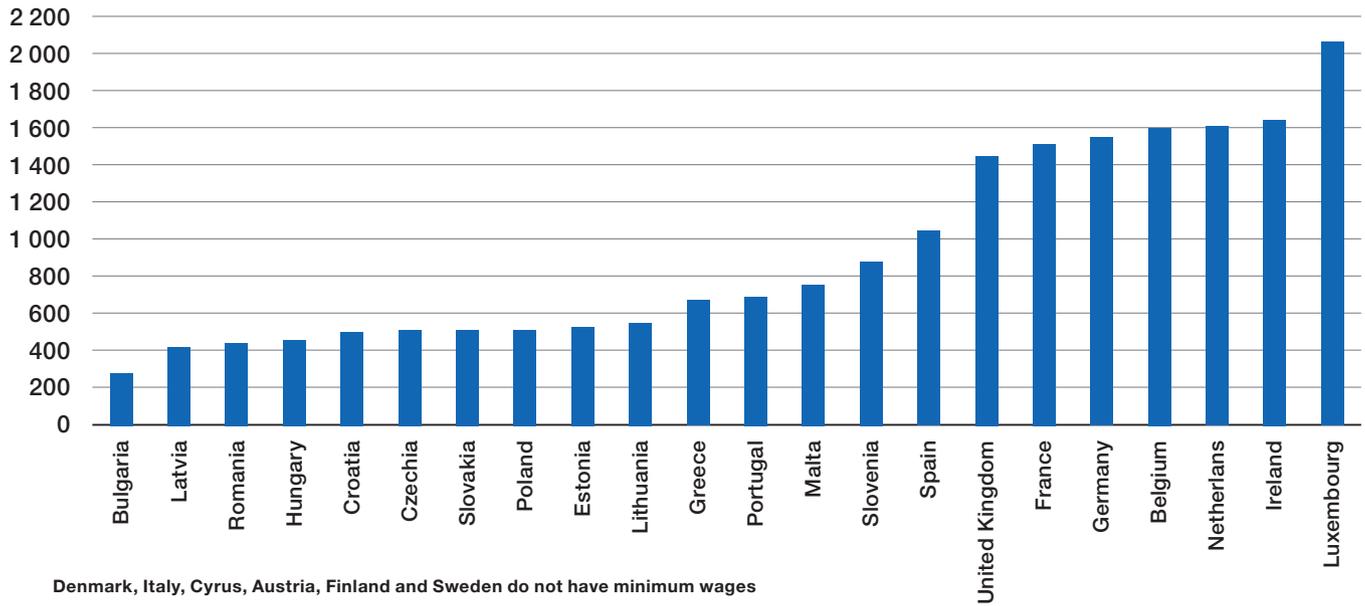
77 PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 3

78 PES EPSCO Ministerial A Social Turn for Europe, 22.10.2017, p. 2

79, 80 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 74

81, 82 PES Brochure Combating Inequality in the European Union, 2018, p. 27

### Minimum wages in the EU member states, as of January 2019, in € per month



### 3.2.3 Principle 7: Information about employment conditions and protection in case of dismissals

**“Workers have the right to be informed in writing at the start of employment about their rights and obligations resulting from the employment relationship, including on probation period.**

**Prior to any dismissal, workers have the right to be informed of the reasons and be granted a reasonable period of notice. They have the right to access effective and impartial dispute resolution and, in case of unjustified dismissal, a right to redress, including adequate compensation.”**

Everyone in Europe must have clarity about their employment status. All workers should be informed about their rights, have a set working time and wage, and defined rules for renewal and termination of contracts. The PES has always backed strong rights for all workers, in all sectors, in all member states. Our family was instrumental in bringing about the 2019 Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions, a first step in the implementation of Principles 5 and 7. We must now continue to push for additional concrete initiatives.

## To ensure the implementation of Principle 7 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:

- PES has long advocated for a **Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions**,<sup>83</sup> and welcomed its adoption in June last year. The EU should now oversee its consistent implementation and work to further reduce loopholes and exemptions.<sup>84</sup>
- The **European Labour Authority** should establish a one-stop shop for information for workers on their rights and for companies on their obligations in terms of labour mobility and social security systems. It should provide assistance and information to trade unions and employers to secure the rights of workers in cross-border situations, including in restructuring situations.<sup>85</sup> It should be given an increasing role in the effective enforcement of social rights and regulation.
- A European framework **on information, consultation and board level representation in case of restructurings** should be put forward to strengthen the minimum standards for workers' involvement.



## 3.2.4 Principle 8: Social dialogue and involvement of workers

**“The social partners shall be consulted on the design and implementation of economic, employment and social policies according to national practices. They must be encouraged to negotiate and conclude collective agreements in matters relevant to them, while respecting their autonomy and the right to collective action. Where appropriate, agreements concluded between the social partners should be implemented at the level of the Union and its member states.**

**Workers or their representatives have the right to be informed and consulted in good time on matters relevant to them.”**

Strong trade unions and a strong social dialogue are crucial elements for shared prosperity in Europe and for finding concrete solutions to the challenges workers and employers face. Social partners at both the European and national level must be supported in their capacity building, and the dialogue between the European institutions, trade unions and civil society must be enhanced. Collective agreements should be further extended to non-standard forms of employment, collective bargaining coverage should be widened, and self-employed people should be allowed to unionise. We as socialists and democrats will continue to support workers' right to unionise, to representation, consultation, information and to strike.

## To ensure the implementation of Principle 8 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:

- The **European Social Dialogue** should be restarted,<sup>86</sup> and the role of social partners in the existing **European Semester** at EU and national levels should be reinforced. This could be achieved through institutionalised consultation, attendance at an annual European Parliament plenary<sup>87</sup> or European legislation that establishes an obligation for national governments to consult social partners at the milestones of the European Semester process (via a new directive or amendments to the existing laws<sup>88</sup>), along with certain quality criteria such as appropriate timing, appropriate level of dialogue, meaningful access to information and ensuring material and immaterial capacities of social partners.
- **Social partners should be involved** in all major EU initiatives, such as the European Green Deal.
- European rules on **public procurement** should include a collective bargaining social clause, ensuring respect for labour law and collective agreements. The presence of collective bargaining should be made a key awarding criterion.<sup>89</sup>
- Trade unions and the right to collective bargaining should be strengthened, and the autonomy of social partners respected. The EU and Member States should invest in social dialogue and **capacity building** for trade unions. **Funding** for this should be made available to EU-level organisations such as the European trade union federations.<sup>90</sup> The ESF+ should expand its support to the development of social dialogue, improving the capacity building of social partners at all level and supporting sectoral collective bargaining in all member states.<sup>91</sup>
- Policy recommendations on developing trade unionisation should be included in **national reform programmes**.<sup>92</sup> The right of workers' representatives to access workplaces for the purpose of organising should be guaranteed at European level. The PES supports a strong social dialogue that does not forget self-employed and freelance workers and includes a better gender balance in bargaining teams.<sup>93</sup>
- The EU should extend access to social and labour rights for **non-standard workers**, including for platform workers, as well as **reform/interpret competition law** to give self-employed and freelance workers the right to organise and bargain collectively.<sup>94</sup> For worker representation and organisation, this means extending existing collective bargaining rights to platform workers. [See also Principle 5]

86 PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 4

87 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe, European Commission Work Programme 2019 – 2024, p. 83

88 Council Regulation (EC) No 1466/97 of 7 July 1997 on the strengthening of the surveillance of budgetary positions and the surveillance and coordination of economic policies

89 PES Brochure Combating Inequality in the European Union, 2018, p. 21

90 PES Brochure Combating Inequality in the European Union, 2018, p. 27

91 PES EPSCO Ministerial Declaration An Ambitious ESF Towards a Strong Social Union, 17.04.2018, p. 1

92 S&D Progressive Societies Sustainable Equality Report, 2018, p. 182

93 PES Conclusion Report of the High Level Working Group on the Future of the EU, 2018, p.16

94 ETUC, 15 ETUC priorities for the new mandate of the EU institutions, 07.10.2019; PES Online Brochure Workers' Rights and Social Progress in the Digital Economy, 2017, pp. 12, 83

- The **European Works Council Directive** should be revised to strengthen information and consultation, including the requirement of agreements, of employees and workers in transnational firms, at local, national and European level.<sup>95</sup> For example, the threshold should be lowered to also include workers from transnational firms with fewer than 1,000 employees.<sup>96</sup>
- In general, **workers' participation in companies should be strengthened** through buy-outs and improving the consultation of employees in case of restructuring.<sup>97</sup>
- The EU should adopt a new **framework directive on workers' information and consultation, co-determination, anticipation and management of restructuring.**<sup>98</sup>
- The EU should explore and define a **new model for European companies**, which implements genuine democracy in the management of an enterprise. An enterprise. Such new governance should imply principles and rules of codetermination, workers participation in companies, SMEs, cross-border moves, splits and mergers, transaction and fiscal transparency as well as territorial dialogue.<sup>99</sup> Rules focusing on due diligence, the respect, promotion and enforcement of human rights and responsible business conduct should be introduced on the EU level, possibly with a dedicated directive.<sup>100</sup>

95 S&D Progressive Societies Sustainable Equality Report, 2018, p. 182  
 96, 97 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 82  
 98 S&D Progressive Societies Sustainable Equality Report, 2018, p. 182; PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 82  
 99 PES Conclusion Report of the High Level Working Group on the Future of the EU, 2018, p.17  
 100 ETUC, A Trade Union Input for an Action Plan to Implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, p. 14

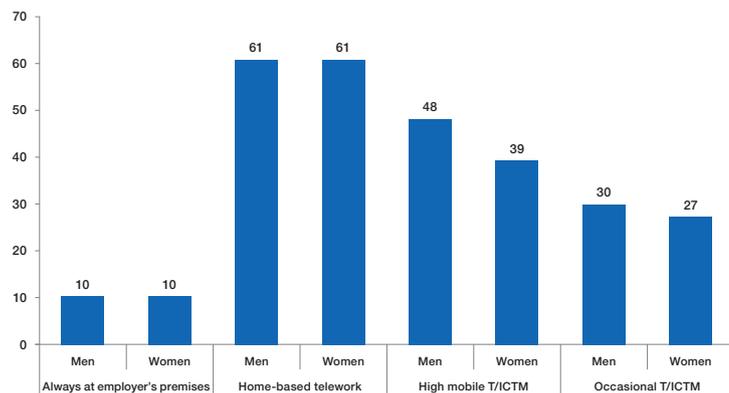


## 3.2.5 Principle 9: Work-life balance

**“Parents and people with caring responsibilities have the right to suitable leave, flexible working arrangements and access to care services. Women and men shall have equal access to special leaves in order to fulfil their caring responsibilities and be encouraged to use them in a balanced way.”**

There is more to life than work and everyone has the right to a balanced private and professional life. The 2019 Work-Life Balance Directive was a major victory for our political family, which took the EU one step closer to more equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men, more flexible working arrangements, and more equal opportunities in the labour market. We must now continue to push for additional concrete initiatives to improve work-life balance in Europe.

**Employees reporting working in their free time to meet work demands daily and several times a week by type of T/ICTM and gender, EU28 (%)**



Source: EWCS 2015, based on answers to the question: "Over the last 12 months, how often have you worked in your free time to meet work demands (at least several times a month)?"

**To ensure the implementation of Principle 9, the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:**

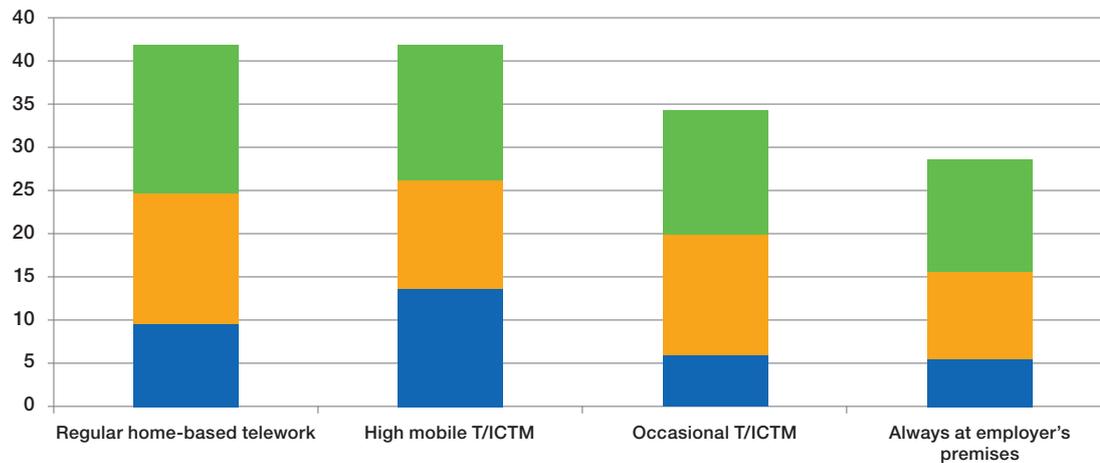
- The **Work-Life Balance Directive** should be followed up and well paid leave for all parents and carers ensured through the programming of relevant financial support from the ESF+ and/or launching of infringement procedures.<sup>101</sup> The Commission should make sure all member states support and transpose the minimum standards of the directive into national legislation, and encourage states to go beyond the directive and extend the scope of parental leave. The Commission should monitor and review the directive's implementation and should take additional measures to address different care needs throughout the life cycle.
- Workers should be given the **"right to disconnect"** to fully enjoy family time and leisure<sup>102</sup> and prevent work-related illnesses.<sup>103</sup>

## 3.2.6 Principle 10: Healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment and data protection

**“Workers have the right to a high level of protection of their health and safety at work. Workers have the right to a working environment adapted to their professional needs and which enables them to prolong their participation in the labour market. Workers have the right to have their personal data protected.”**

Work should be a place of safety. Nobody should have to die or fall ill because of their job, nor have their personal data mishandled. Yet, in 2017, there were over 3,500 work-related deaths in the EU and over 3 million non-fatal accidents.<sup>104</sup> Too many people develop stress-related illnesses, musculoskeletal disorders, allergies, cancer and other life-changing diseases because of their jobs. This has economic repercussions, but, more importantly, the human costs of poor occupational health and safety are unacceptable. Moreover, work places should be adapted to offer more flexibility to workers with disabilities, to enable them to perform their professional tasks, communicate and interact with co-workers.

Percentage of employees waking up repeatedly during the sleep by type of T/ICTM, EU28



Note: Based on proxy of T/ICTM EWCS. ■ Daily ■ Several Times a week ■ Several Times a month  
Source: EWCS 2015

<sup>104</sup> Eurofound, "Accidents at work - statistics by economic activity", 2017, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Accidents\\_at\\_work\\_-\\_statistics\\_by\\_economic\\_activity#Developments\\_over\\_time](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Accidents_at_work_-_statistics_by_economic_activity#Developments_over_time)

<sup>105</sup> PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 4

<sup>106</sup> ETUC position paper on a new EU Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health, 22-23.10.2019

<sup>107, 109</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe - European Commission Work Programme 2019-2024, p. 80

<sup>108, 110</sup> PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 4

<sup>111</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe - European Commission Work Programme 2019-2024, p. 76

## To ensure the implementation of Principle 10 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:

- EU law should introduce common rules that do not lower national standards for decent working conditions, health and safety at work, and proper contracts.<sup>105</sup>
- The EU should develop a new post 2020 **Strategic Framework on Occupational Safety and Health, and a directive on mental wellbeing in the workplace** including a zero-vision for work-related fatal accidents and occupational illnesses, and the recognition of anxiety, depression and burn-out as occupational diseases, establishing as well mechanisms for prevention and reintegration of affected employees into the workforce, and facilitating the adoption of an EU legal instrument that will protect workers from mental ill-health in the workplace the workplace.<sup>106</sup> Risks and reactions to challenges such as the ones faced by the COVID-19 pandemic should be addressed.
- The EU should build on the three recent successful revisions of the **directive on the protection of workers from the exposure to carcinogens and mutagens** and continue to update it with new substances or limit values for the existing ones.<sup>107</sup>
- The EU should adopt a **directive on occupational stress related diseases**, which acknowledges a “right to disconnect”<sup>108</sup> for workers to fully enjoy family time and a directive on mental wellbeing at the workplace, to prevent, promote and deal with mental health issues, leisure and to prevent mental disorders related to work.
- The EU should **prohibit the invasive use of data** such as constant tracking or permanent surveillance at the workplace.<sup>110</sup> In addition, a directive on fair working conditions for **platform workers** should ensure employees’ data protection.<sup>111</sup>

## 3.3 Chapter III: Social protection and inclusion

Europe must proceed with upwards economic and social convergence, 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.<sup>112</sup>

The Pillar needs to provide access to a social protection floor that guarantees universal access to quality health care, including sexual and reproductive health rights, basic income security, portability of all workers' social rights and adequate pensions to everyone in Europe in order to prevent poverty and social exclusion.

Social protection floors at the national level should comprise at least four social security guarantees: access to essential health care, including maternity care; basic income security for children, providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services; basic income security for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability; and basic income security for older persons.<sup>113</sup> A Child Guarantee should ensure no child in Europe is at risk of poverty or social exclusion.<sup>114</sup>

### 3.3.1 Principle 11: Childcare and support to children

**“Children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality. Children have the right to protection from poverty. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to promote equal opportunities.”**

Almost 1 in 4 children in Europe are at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Inequality starts at a very young age, since the opportunities enjoyed later in life are to a large extent determined by one's childhood. This is unacceptable. We must address this problem and give all our children a better future. Europe has a duty to support children and ensure equality of opportunity for all. This is why our political family has campaigned extensively for a European Child Guarantee to ensure that children's rights to free and high-quality health-care, education, quality childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition are respected all over Europe.

**To ensure the implementation of Principle 11 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:**



- A **European Child Guarantee** should be adopted and urgently implemented with a view to tackling child poverty. The Child Guarantee should ensure free quality health care, education, childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition to all children in Europe.<sup>115</sup> The Child Guarantee should be fostered on the same model as the Youth Guarantee, with Council Recommendations framing the objectives on the one hand, and dedicated and adequate EU funding, of at least € 20 billion in the next MFF 2021–2027 to fit its purpose and allow effective implementation,<sup>116</sup>. Additional details on the funding of the Child Guarantee can be found in Annex 1.
- On top of this the EU should build on the experience of programmes like the **European School Fruit and Milk Schemes** and complement them with programmes providing school supplies and parental packages including basic baby care. Funding should be ensured through the ESF+.<sup>117</sup>
- EU action against child poverty must **acknowledge the strong link between children’s welfare and women’s empowerment**, since women’s (especially single mothers’) economic status has a direct impact on child poverty.
- Child Guarantee schemes should contain **local approaches** targeting exceptionally exposed regions in the Member States. Such plans should be made in partnerships with the relevant stakeholders. They should be part of the **National Reform Programmes**, monitoring progress within the context of the Annual Growth Survey, through specific targets for the reduction of the number of children at risks of poverty or social exclusion.<sup>118</sup>
- More detailed proposals for the implementation of the Child Guarantee are included in Annex 1.

<sup>115</sup> PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 5; PES Election Manifesto 2019 A New Social Contract for Europe, p.3; PES EPSCO Ministerial Declaration After the UK Referendum: a Call for a More Social Europe, 15.07.2016, p. 2

<sup>116</sup> Implementation of the Child Guarantee would require EUR 5.9 billion (see annex I)

<sup>117</sup> PES Internal Briefing Our children, Europe’s Future, 10.09.2015; PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 93

<sup>118</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 93

### 3.3.2 Principle 12: Social protection

**“Regardless of the type and duration of their employment relationship, workers, and, under comparable conditions, the self-employed, have the right to adequate social protection.”**

A Europe of welfare with strong welfare states, social safety nets, and quality public services is crucial to preventing poverty and protecting those in need. We have a duty to protect people if they fall sick, lose their job, suffer disabilities or fall on hard times. In an ever-changing world of work, fighting inequalities means extending social protection to everyone in Europe, irrespective of their contracts or employment situation. A reliable social safety net must be available to protect everyone, including the unemployed, self-employed, atypical and crowd workers, against the hazards of their working life.



## To ensure the implementation of Principle 12 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:

- The primacy of social rights over economic freedoms should be ensured through a European **social progress protocol**.<sup>119</sup>
- The EU should continue the negotiations on the revision and implementation of the **Regulation on the coordination of social security systems**.<sup>120</sup>
- The EU should follow up on the 2018 Council Recommendation on **access to social protection for workers and the self-employed**. The European Commission should undertake an evaluation of effective social protection coverage of the self-employed across the EU as a basis for a future proposal for a directive.<sup>121</sup>
- A **European social security number** should be introduced to ensure better traceability of citizens' rights, enable national authorities to fight fraud or abuse.<sup>122</sup> This would improve the portability of social rights and entitlements, supporting mobility across jobs and forms of employment.<sup>123</sup>
- **Universal social protection, in which employers contribute their fair share**, and applying irrespective of the type of work and sector should be promoted to mitigate inequalities in the labour market and better reflect diverse and shifting employment conditions. For social security, this means opting for neutral solutions that do not make a hard distinction between employees and self-employed workers.<sup>124</sup>
- Social security, healthcare and training should be extended beyond the employee status.<sup>125</sup> A European **social protection floor** would guarantee universal access to essential quality health services and basic income security, to protect all European workers including self-employed workers.<sup>126</sup>
- Social services should be made truly universal by ensuring better access to essential services such as water, sanitation, energy, public transport, financial services and digital communications.<sup>127</sup> [See also Principle 20]
- **Fair taxation of digitalisation** should be promoted. Social security systems are mainly financed with contributions from labour revenues. While full employment should remain the ground for our pension systems' sustainability, new sources of funding should also be sought through fair taxation, notably on new sources of added value.<sup>128</sup>

119 PES Presidency Declaration Call for the Progressive Revival of Europe, 13.03.2017, p. 3

120, 121, 123 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 79

122 PES Draft Briefing on a EU Social Security Number for the PES Social Europe Network meeting of 25.01.2017

124 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 75

125 PES Brochure Combating Inequality in the European Union, 2018, p. 23

126 PES EPSCO Ministerial Declaration A Social Turn for Europe, 22.10.2017, p. 2

127 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, pp. 79–80

128 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 80

### 3.3.3 Principle 13: Unemployment benefits

**“The unemployed have the right to adequate activation support from public employment services to (re)integrate in the labour market and adequate unemployment benefits of reasonable duration, in line with their contributions and national eligibility rules. Such benefits shall not constitute a disincentive for a quick return to employment.”**

Unemployment is all too often seen as an individual failing and active labour market policies as a budgetary burden, but unemployment it is a problem that must be tackled collectively. As a society we have a duty to help people that lose their jobs and provide opportunities for re-entering the labour market. A reliable social safety net must be available to protect everyone in Europe against the hazards of their working life. Income security is essential.

**To ensure the implementation of Principle 13 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:**

- A complementary **European unemployment benefit reinsurance scheme** should be created to support Member States national unemployment benefit systems in the event of a large increase in unemployment.<sup>129</sup> It should act as an automatic stabiliser and play an important role in reducing inequality between countries, absorbing shocks.<sup>130</sup> To achieve this, the EU’s fiscal capacity should be improved.<sup>131</sup> The setup of the European instrument for temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE), in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, should not preclude the establishment of a permanent scheme, available to protect at least the Euro area from future crises.
- This scheme should also provide allowances where unemployment is prevented through temporarily reduced working hours, combined with training, such as “Kurzarbeit” or “chômage technique”.
- Such schemes should be developed through social dialogue to help to maintain quality employment even in times of downturn and lack of work.<sup>132</sup>
- **The setting of EU-wide minimum standards for national unemployment schemes in terms of coverage, adequacy, the right to training and the duration of entitlements<sup>133</sup> are an important addition to the introduction of a European unemployment reinsurance scheme.** Such standards would ensure that any person seeking employment can benefit from financial support and could set net replacement rate, entitlement period and coverage rate, as well as training and activation targets.
- Unemployment benefits should also be monitored in the social scoreboard. The above mentioned specific targets for unemployment benefits should be set and monitored in a European Semester benchmarking process.

<sup>129</sup> PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 5

<sup>130</sup> PES Brochure Combating Inequality in the European Union, 2018, p. 31

<sup>131</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, pp. 112, 119

<sup>132</sup> PES Conclusion Report of the High Level Working Group on the EMU, 3016, p.36

<sup>133</sup> Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Title X: Social Policy



### 3.3.4 Principle 14: Minimum income

**“Everyone lacking sufficient resources has the right to adequate minimum income benefits ensuring a life in dignity at all stages of life, and effective access to enabling goods and services. For those who can work, minimum income benefits should be combined with incentives to (re)integrate into the labour market.”**

Everyone in Europe should enjoy a decent and secure income. Yet, in 2017, Eurostat found that almost 113 million people in the EU live at risk of poverty or social exclusion.<sup>134</sup> It is unacceptable that some people still cannot afford to warm their homes, pay their rent, feed their children or live out their old age in dignity. As socialists and democrats, we fight to reduce social inequalities, eradicate poverty and improve solidarity. To do this, we need strong welfare states, supported by EU policies on income security.



## To ensure the implementation of Principle 14 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:

- A **European poverty reduction strategy** should be adopted, linked to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and including binding quantitative targets on poverty reduction, rough sleeping, energy poverty and other indicators. The strategy should be integrated in the European Semester to track its implementation. It should be designed to take into account five policy areas: children, housing, minimum income, basic social protection and social integration of migrants.<sup>135</sup>
- **National minimum income schemes** should be supported to ensure that no one is left in poverty and homeless,<sup>136</sup> and ensure universal access to essential quality health and care services and basic income security for all citizens.<sup>137</sup>
- An **EU framework directive for a decent minimum income** to enhance income support for the most vulnerable (“social protection floor”) should be adopted.<sup>138</sup> The EU should put in place minimum standards to guarantee basic income security to protect all European workers including self-employed people.<sup>139</sup>
- Income inequality should be further addressed in the **European Semester** by establishing an **income inequality benchmark indicator** based on the three best performing European countries’ average Gini coefficient (around 0.25), and foster more progressive national income tax systems where relevant.<sup>140</sup> Developments in household incomes and inequalities in income and wealth should be analysed within European Semester country reports, and Eurostat should be requested to supply more timely social statistics, including on poverty and inequalities.<sup>141</sup>
- Efforts should be made to end age discrimination in social benefit schemes, including minimum income schemes. This should include providing young people with access to minimum income schemes.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Eurostat, People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, 2017, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php/People\\_at\\_risk\\_of\\_poverty\\_or\\_social\\_exclusion](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion)

<sup>135</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 77

<sup>136</sup> PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 5

<sup>137, 138</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, pp. 77–78

<sup>139</sup> PES EPSCO Ministerial Declaration A Social Turn for Europe, 22.10.2017, p. 2

<sup>140</sup> S&D Progressive Societies, Sustainable Equality Report, 2018, p. 187

<sup>141</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 78

<sup>142</sup> PES Brochure Combating Inequality in the European Union, 2018, p. 36

### 3.3.5 Principle 15: Old age income and pensions

**“Workers and the self-employed in retirement have the right to a pension commensurate to their contributions and ensuring an adequate income. Women and men shall have equal opportunities to acquire pension rights. Everyone in old age has the right to resources that ensure living in dignity.”**

Every European should enjoy a decent and secure pension. Yet, 1 in 7 EU pensioners are at risk of poverty, a rate that has been rising gradually since 2013. In addition, women generally face a higher likelihood of pension poverty than men.<sup>143</sup> We socialists and democrats fight for decent pensions that allow the oldest to live in dignity, supports intergenerational solidarity and reduces social and gender inequalities.

**To ensure the implementation of Principle 15 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:**

- A **European framework** should raise the lowest pensions and ensure that every citizen receives a decent pension, while respecting differences in national systems.<sup>144</sup> Access to health, longterm care and care services and to decent adapted housing should be guaranteed for all elder persons.
- EU action on pensions should be preceded by a gender impact assessment in order to assess how to properly tackle the gender pension gap, which amounts to 35 % on average in the EU.
- A pay transparency directive and the active promotion and inclusion of women in the labour market should tackle the **gender pay gap** and lower it by two percentage points each year, for it to be eliminated by 2030.<sup>145</sup> This will also have a positive impact on closing the gender pension gap. The EU should also include specific funds for older female workers' professional training in its pension strategy.
- A system of care credits could provide pension benefits to women and men that opt for career breaks or part-time work in order to take care of family members. However, these credits should not discourage women from engaging in paid work or foster a system in which women's caring for dependents 'replaces' the welfare state.

<sup>143</sup> Eurostat, 1 in 7 pensioners at risk of poverty in the EU, 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20190115-1>

<sup>144</sup> PES Vision for a European Pillar of Social Rights, Conclusions of the PES Social Europe Network, 04.05.2017

<sup>145</sup> PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 3; PES Brochure Combating Inequality in the European Union, 2018, p. 36; PES EPSCO Ministerial Declaration A Social Turn for Europe, 22.10.2017, p. 1



### 3.3.6 Principle 16: Health care

**“Everyone has the right to timely access to affordable, preventive and curative health care of good quality.”**

Social and economic inequalities are felt very harshly when it comes to health. Everyone in Europe should have a timely access to quality public healthcare and a high level of health protection. Timely access to affordable and equitable preventive and curative health care of high quality is essential for the wellbeing of every society. This has been undermined by liberalisation of public services and austerity policies across the EU. The PES believes that public health and healthcare systems are best equipped to deliver accessible services at affordable cost for all. We also support fair and transparent medicine pricing and access policies, improved access to vaccination for all children, and access to sexual and reproductive health rights. Moreover, health promotion and disease prevention are the most effective way to ensure good physical and mental health throughout life.



## To ensure the implementation of Principle 16 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:

- The EU should strive to **reduce health inequalities** by giving absolute priority to the fight against all forms of social inequality. The healthy choice must be the easy choice in every area of people's activities, including nutrition, physical activity, work and education conditions. Cuts to public services during the last "austerity decade" in many Member States have exposed vulnerable social groups to even greater health risks. We need to reverse this negative trend. We need to protect our public services and help them deliver the highest quality services at an affordable cost to all citizens, regardless of their material status. Universal access – not only to medical treatment but also to preventive care and early diagnosis, in particular broad cancer screening programmes – is crucial. This should include health promotion and disease prevention.<sup>146</sup> The EU should combat age discrimination in access to health care and care services; the EU should also **defend the principle of equity of access for all**. We have a duty to further work towards ensuring senior citizens receive all the quality and adequate care needed in order to support the process of healthy ageing.
- A European **emergency health fund** should be created to address: 1) emerging and unforeseen health threats with cross-border elements and 2) temporary support to public health programmes in areas with limited financial resources or in the event of an economic crisis (i.e. to avoid the negative impact of cost containment measures in a country in recession).<sup>147</sup>
- **Fair and transparent medicine pricing**<sup>148</sup> should be ensured through the creation of a dedicated, protected IT system with which to exchange information between national administrations about medicine prices in each member state to inform decision-making.<sup>149</sup>
- Healthy living should be promoted at the European level to tackle the main risk factors of **preventable diseases**.<sup>150</sup> For example, the EU should scale up **research on the causes of cancer** through large-scale and long-term epidemiological studies.<sup>151</sup>
- To bring about an **end to communicable diseases**, such as HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis and TB, the EU should act more strongly to reach out to vulnerable people, for example by decriminalising and destigmatising drug consumption. To succeed, the EU must combine health instruments with social instruments and work across health, social, and education policies.<sup>152</sup>
- The EU should develop a **strategy on patient safety**, including enhanced research on new antibiotics.<sup>153</sup>
- The EU should work to ensure access to **sexual and reproductive health and rights**.<sup>154</sup> Access to sexual and reproductive health rights should be ensured and covered in the **EU Health Programme**, which should support voluntary and pro-choice family planning. This should entail the full range of universal and quality services, including affordable contraceptives, legal access to abortion and information services with a focus on prevention and comprehensive sexuality education for all teenagers, young girls and boys.<sup>155</sup>

146 PES Health Ministers' Declaration For a Progressive Health Agenda, 12.03.2018, pp. 1-3

147 PES EPSCO Ministerial Declaration A Social Turn for Europe, 22.10.2017, p. 2

148 PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 5

149 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 81

150 PES Health Ministers' Declaration For a Progressive Health Agenda, 12.03.2018, pp. 1-2

151, 153, 155 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 80

152 PES Health Ministers' Declaration For a Progressive Health Agenda, 12.03.2018, p. 4

154 PES Health Ministers' Declaration For a Progressive Health Agenda, 12.03.2018, p. 5

- Working together in the EU is crucial to ensure that **vaccination programmes** are effective and that a high vaccination coverage is reached.<sup>156</sup> The EU should adopt **regulation 1) on the minimum harmonisation of vaccination calendars** in the EU; 2) on the drawing up of a list of essential and non-essential vaccines for which vaccination is compulsory or voluntary; 3) further **enhancing research** in vaccination; 4) **obliging manufacturers to ensure continuity of supply**.<sup>157</sup>
- The EU should adopt a **directive to address the issue of medicines shortages** by obliging pharmaceutical companies to ensure the availability and the continuity of supply of medicines in order to ensure the continuity of healthcare for patients.<sup>158</sup>
- The EU should **review the pharmaceutical system to address the shortages of essential medicines**, to move towards patient-driven research and improve transparency of research data and costs. A permanent **health technology assessment mechanism** should be introduced at the EU level. Voluntary cooperation initiatives among member states aiming at facilitating access to medicines would be of added value in this regard and should be encouraged.<sup>159</sup>
- The EU should introduce legislation on **user-friendly information to patients**.<sup>160</sup>
- The EU should harness digital innovation to support health policy goals and citizens' empowerment.<sup>161</sup> For example, to make the best use of technological advances, the EU should create an **online EU health patient record** and develop an **EU certification of online health apps**.<sup>162</sup> E-health services and mobile health devices and services should be fully accessible and safe to use for disabled patients and for those less at ease with digital tools.
- To combat risk factors for preventable diseases, the EU should progress much further in the area of the reformulation of food products.<sup>163</sup> An **EU initiative on healthy nutrition** should be developed, and various possible tools should be considered, such as: 1) a regulation limiting the **salt, fat and sugar content** in transformed products; 2) a regulation introducing easy to understand **nutritional labelling**; 3) a Council recommendation on the introduction of **food taxes** on unhealthy products; 4) a Council recommendation on the **reduction of access to junk food**; 5) a Council recommendation encouraging **school programmes** on healthy behaviours in relation to food, and 6) restrictions on **marketing practices** towards children.<sup>164</sup>
- To address the harmful use of alcohol, the EU and member states should enhance cooperation with regard to **cross-border advertising, labelling and trading of alcoholic beverages**.<sup>165</sup>

<sup>156</sup>, <sup>159</sup>, <sup>161</sup> PES Health Ministers' Declaration For a Progressive Health Agenda, 12.03.2018, p. 4

<sup>157</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, pp. 80–81

<sup>158</sup>, <sup>160</sup>, <sup>162</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 81

<sup>163</sup>, <sup>165</sup> PES Health Ministers' Declaration For a Progressive Health Agenda, 12.03.2018, p. 5

<sup>164</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, pp. 81–82

### 3.3.7 Principle 17: Inclusion of people with disabilities

**“People with disabilities have the right to income support that ensures living in dignity, services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in society, and a work environment adapted to their needs.”**

Equality is a fundamental value of the EU and a core priority for socialists and democrats. Discrimination, and social exclusion have no place in a progressive Europe, and we have a moral obligation to end it. Unfortunately, many people still face discrimination at work, at school and in their encounters with public authorities because of their disability. We believe that the EU can have enormous added value in this field and that we need additional concrete EU initiatives to ensure equal opportunities for everyone in Europe – it is a question of empowerment and of human rights.

**To ensure the implementation of Principle 17 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:**

- **The European Accessibility Act should be fully implemented<sup>166</sup>, and reviewed to better identify technical specifications for access and to cover buildings and transport.**
- **New anti-discrimination legislation is needed, including the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.**
- **The EU should encourage and facilitate a dialogue on quotas for people with disabilities in all public institutions.**
- **Schemes offering fiscal incentives or premiums for the employment of people with disabilities in the private market should be reinforced and extended.**



- A **European disability strategy** to improve the participation of people with disabilities in the labour market and in our society, ensuring everyone can live in dignity and enjoy the same decent and fair opportunities. Furthermore, a harmonised European disability law in accordance with the UN Disability Convention should be developed.<sup>167</sup>
- A **European fund** should be created to **support civil society organisations** that are protecting minorities and vulnerable groups within a member state.<sup>168</sup>
- The definition of **“most vulnerable groups”** in the ESF+ must include people with disabilities in order to effectively improve their wellbeing.
- **Erasmus+** should be made more accessible to people with disabilities.<sup>169</sup>

167 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 77

168 PES Congress Resolution For a Stronger Democracy in Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 4

169 PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 134

### 3.3.8 Principle 18: Long-term care

**“Everyone has the right to affordable long-term care services of good quality, in particular home care and community based services.”**

High-quality and properly funded public services are needed to ensure effective and timely access to longterm care across Europe. This must be combined with flexible and properly paid care leave arrangements for workers caring for family members.

**To ensure the implementation of Principle 18 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:**

- The PES will continue to demand investment in **affordable, high quality and accommodating care services for children, the elderly and other dependants.**<sup>170</sup> Increased public investment in quality long-term care could contribute to improved pay and working conditions in an area dominated by women.
- The EU must take measures to recognise, reduce and redistribute the unpaid long-term care work disproportionately done by women and guarantee the right to unionise.
- An integrated care model must be considered and included at EU level. To have effective and efficient long-term care, it is extremely important to consider **integrated care systems**, which includes coordination between health systems and social service systems. Most vulnerable people, especially people with disabilities, elderly and dependent, need both health care and social care. Thus, synergies must be created.



### 3.3.9 Principle 19: Housing and assistance for the homeless

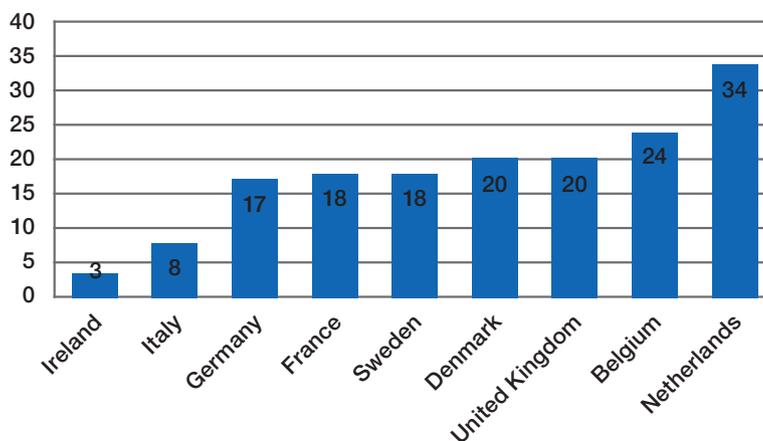
**“Access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality shall be provided for those in need.”**

**“Vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction.”**

**“Adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless in order to promote their social inclusion.”**

1 in 4 European households spends almost half of its disposable income on housing, and rent prices are rising faster than income. Yet, since the economic crisis in 2008, investments in affordable housing are steadily decreasing. The 2019 PES European Parliament elections manifesto called for a “Plan for Affordable Housing in Europe”. Such a plan should support the construction of new affordable housing and the renovation of the existing housing stock. The PES was happy to see that the challenge of affordable housing was visible during the European elections campaign, in particular thanks to PES Common Candidate Frans Timmermans, as well as during the Commission hearings. We now want to see additional concrete initiatives at the EU level to improve the housing situation for the most vulnerable.

Percent of total housing stock that is socially rented housing



## To ensure the implementation of Principle 19 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:

- Housing is a human right and as such should be protected in the EU. The housing sector should be excluded from the application of competition rules, as are the education or health sectors. That would ensure that Member States can protect this right and offer affordable and quality housing to all.
- An **EU plan for affordable housing** should be developed to better coordinate EU policies and intervention mechanisms to support housing policies.<sup>171</sup>
- **EU funding for affordable housing construction and low-carbon renovation** should be improved, for example, with increased financing via the European Structural and Investment Funds, InvestEU and the European Investment Bank.<sup>172</sup> Especially for low-income households, energy prices have become an additional burden. These households have to be supported first through the “Renovation Wave” announced in the European Green Deal.<sup>173</sup>
- Member States should use their **ESF+ budget, notably the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD)** dedicated to the most vulnerable groups, to effectively combat the most severe forms of poverty with the greatest social exclusion impact, such as **homelessness**. More attention should be devoted to preventing homelessness amongst people with disabilities, as research shows that they are overrepresented among homeless people.<sup>174</sup>
- The **capacity and the knowledge of subnational entities to access EU funding** and the ability to combine different funding streams should be improved. Subnational entities should also be supported to learn how to create sufficiently big housing associations and aggregators as intermediaries to use EU funding.<sup>175</sup>
- **EU state aid rules** should be reformed and clarified in order not to hinder social housing. Specifically, the **Services of General Economic Interest Decision** should be revised with regards to the narrow target group of social housing. The definition should be broadened so as to enable the implementation of sustainability goals such as “social mix” and “social cohesion”.<sup>176</sup>
- A European **strategy for affordable, social and public housing** for all should be developed, and investments in social infrastructure should be **excluded from fiscal rules**.<sup>177</sup>
- EU legislation **on procurement** has an effect on housing provision. Specific qualitative criteria which go beyond the financial bid should be introduced and better taken into account when it comes to tenders for public housing projects.
- **Affordable and quality housing indicators** should be included in the **European Semester**,<sup>178</sup> investment in social housing should be monitored, and the situation in **cities and urban areas** should be examined specifically.<sup>179</sup>

171 PES Election Manifesto 2019 A New Social Contract for Europe, p. 2; PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 89  
172 PES Draft Briefing on Plan for Affordable Housing in Europe for the PES Social Europe Network, October 2019, p. 4; S&D Progressive Societies, Sustainable Equality Report, 2018, pp. 187 & 111–112  
173 COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS The European Green Deal  
174 European Disability Forum, European Semester 2020: a first reaction from EDF, p. 4.  
175 PES Draft Briefing on Plan for Affordable Housing in Europe for the PES Social Europe Network, October 2019, p. 4; PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 89  
176 PES Draft Briefing on Plan for Affordable Housing in Europe for the PES Social Europe Network, October 2019, p. 4; PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, pp. 89–90  
177 S&D Progressive Societies, Sustainable Equality Report, 2018, pp. 187 & 111–112  
178 S&D Progressive Societies, Sustainable Equality Report, 2018, pp. 187 & 111–112; PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, pp. 89–90  
179 PES Draft Briefing on Plan for Affordable Housing in Europe for the PES Social Europe Network, October 2019, p. 5; PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, pp. 89–90

- The EU should **encourage and support projects which address homelessness** in an integrative manner, by focusing on simultaneously improving the health, well-being and social support networks of homeless people. An example of such an initiative is the Housing First project which uses an approach that has proven to lead to a decrease in long-term homelessness. It aims at ensuring that homeless people are given housing regardless of whether they comply with treatments they might need, leaving them with a high degree of choice and control.<sup>180</sup>
- The Eurostat definition of the **housing overburden rate** should be revised from 40 % to a reference threshold of 25 %.<sup>181</sup>
- The EU should set clear **targets to reduce rough sleeping** in Europe.<sup>182</sup>
- The EU should introduce **anti-speculation policies** targeting the explosive growth of short-term apartment rentals and the accumulation of housing property owned by investment and vulture funds. Particularly it should be ensured that short-term rentals through online platforms have to pay the same taxes and insurance contributions as regular hotels and hostels.<sup>183</sup>
- **Knowledge-sharing** between policy-makers should be encouraged, for example via an EU best practice database and an exchange program for urban housing professionals of cities.<sup>184</sup>
- Better, standardised and locally-disaggregated **data on the housing sector** should be collected Europe-wide.<sup>185</sup>
- Policies to reinforce the offer of housing adapted for the elderly should be explored.
- The EU should carry out **systematic gender impact assessments**, monitor the specific situation and needs of homeless or at-risk women, noting in particular that women have a higher risk of energy poverty than men and that with respect to unfit housing, lone women with children are often worse affected than the rest of the population.

<sup>180</sup> Nicolas Pleace, Housing First Guide Europe [https://housingfirsteurope.eu/assets/files/2017/03/HFG\\_full\\_Digital.pdf](https://housingfirsteurope.eu/assets/files/2017/03/HFG_full_Digital.pdf)

<sup>181</sup> S&D Progressive Societies, Sustainable Equality Report, 2018, pp. 187 & 111-112

<sup>182</sup> PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 5

<sup>183</sup> S&D Progressive Societies, Sustainable Equality Report, 2018, pp. 187 & 111-112; PES Draft Briefing on Plan for Affordable Housing in Europe for the PES Social Europe Network, October 2019, p. 4; PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, pp. 89–90

<sup>184, 185</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 90

### 3.3.10 Principle 20: Access to essential services

**“Everyone has the right to access essential services of good quality, including water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications. Support for access to such services shall be available for those in need.”**

Too many inequalities remain between European citizens, countries, regions, and cities when it comes to access to essential services. A person’s economic status or place of residence should not determine whether they enjoy the amenities necessary for a decent life in the 21st century. The European project must continue to bring us closer together on the same path of social progress and shared prosperity. This is the essence of the EU’s cohesion policy and must remain a political priority. The PES is committed to making sure that public services have the means to provide effective and universal access to social services, healthcare, affordable housing and essential services. We want to stop liberalisation and privatisation, especially in public services, and support social innovation and the social economy. Member States, as well as local and regional authorities, must be given the budgetary flexibility to invest in social measures and infrastructures, as well as the means to deploy reliable social security systems.



## To ensure the implementation of Principle 20 the PES and its partner organisations support the following policy proposals:

- The **increasing liberalisation of essential services in Europe must be stopped**.<sup>186</sup> Public services must be provided with sufficient means in order to allow access to essential services.<sup>187</sup>
- Free and easy access to public services must be ensured for all in the process of **digitalisation**. Particular attention should be paid to ensure that non-digital access to public service and essential services (notably access to banking services) remains available at least for those who are not at ease using digital tools, for example, the elderly or those with low literacy levels.
- The EU should provide the **budgetary flexibility** to invest in social measures and infrastructures, as well as the means to deploy reliable social security systems.<sup>188</sup> Investments in infrastructure, public investment, national MFF contributions, and the co-financing of EU funded investments should be excluded from the national public deficit targets of the Stability and Growth Pact.<sup>189</sup>
- The European Fund for Strategic Investment's contribution to **social investment** should be increased, with more investment in social infrastructure.<sup>190</sup>
- The EU should promote **fair taxation of the digital sector**. Social security systems are mainly financed with contributions based on tax labour revenues. While full employment should remain the ground for our pension systems' sustainability, new sources of funding should also be sought through **fair taxation**, notably on new sources of added value.<sup>191</sup>
- EU legislation should ensure that wherever private platform companies replace public services, the **responsible level of governance** (local, regional, national or European) has access to, and control over, the algorithms used.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>186</sup>, <sup>188</sup> PES Congress Resolution Social Europe, Lisbon 2018, p. 6

<sup>187</sup> PES EPSCO Ministerial Declaration A Social Turn for Europe, 22.10.2017, p. 2

<sup>189</sup> PES Congress Resolution Progressive Economy, Lisbon 2018, p. 5; PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 10

<sup>190</sup> PES EPSCO Ministerial Declaration An Ambitious ESF Towards a Strong Social Union, 17.04.2018, p. 2

<sup>191</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 80

<sup>192</sup> PES Working Document For a More Progressive Europe – European Commission Work Programme 2019–2024, p. 138



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# 4 CONCLUSION: FURTHER THAN THE PILLAR

**“All EU initiatives, such as the European Green Deal, must be completely compatible with social progress. Without it, such initiatives will not have the support of the people.”**

The Commission’s announced roadmap for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights will contribute to a defining moment for the EU’s credibility and ability to deliver on social promises. All EU initiatives, such as the European Green Deal, must be completely compatible with the European Pillar of Social Rights. Without social progress, such initiatives will not be able to count on people’s support. Specific policy proposals matching the principles of the Pillar need to come into force and with this publication we show that we are not short of proposals, we want to see these proposals reflected in the ongoing Commission consultation on the social roadmap, and in the future social roadmap itself. Their realisation is essential for the Pillar to positively influence the lives of citizens in the EU. We therefore stand ready to support all efforts in the direction of a stronger, more daring Social Europe. Together, we can show that Europe can be an effective social shield for its citizens and strengthen the European social model.

Nevertheless, individual policy proposals will not be enough for this to happen. Next to its social roadmap, the EU will need to amend its governance towards increased social focus, provide more space for social investment and finally give its social objectives the same legal weight as economic freedoms.

## 4.1 A more social European Semester

One of the tools to push social issues back on the agenda is the European Semester. During the previous European Commission, under socialist Commissioner Pierre Moscovici, the Semester's focus became more sustainable. Member States have more leeway for their welfare systems to be effective, thanks to the additional flexibility provided in the implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact. Social indicators are now better taken into account in the Commission's country specific recommendations.

For its next steps, the EU must realise its commitments. The Pillar of Social Rights and the UN SDGs must be fully reflected in a rebalanced, forward-looking European Semester. Wages, the gender pay gap, poverty, and the transition to a carbon neutral economy must be acknowledged as real challenges for Europe and addressed in the EU's socio-economic governance.

Both Commissioners Nicolas Schmit and Paolo Gentiloni have clearly stated their willingness for the Semester to evolve in the direction of a new sustainable growth model for the EU, one that focuses more on decent living, social justice and the well-being of every citizen. The 2020 Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy marks a change from the growth-only focus of its predecessor. A new narrative is taking shape, it will be essential to make sure that actions, policies and decisions reflect it



## 4.2 Towards a social progress protocol

We cannot ignore that the efficiency of the European Semester – originally a tool for austerity – is based on the mandatory rules of the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), which all Member States have to comply with. The Excessive Imbalance Procedure was put in place as the ‘sword of Damocles’, hanging over member states in the form of sanctions against non-compliant countries. Obviously, such efficiency will never be the same in the social component if the objectives of the Social Pillar and of the Sustainable Development Goals are not mandatory. Therefore, social and ecological objectives must be given the same legal enforceability as that of fiscal consolidation and financial stability. In order to do so, the **EU should adopt a sustainable development and social progress pact**.

We have a social project for Europe. We need to make sure that in the EU neither economic freedoms nor competition rules take precedence over fundamental social rights. Building on the European Pillar of Social Rights, a social progress protocol should be added to the treaties.

During the last institutional mandate, we supported the idea of a social progress protocol put forward by trade unions on several occasions<sup>193</sup>. Because they are enshrined in the treaties, the freedom to provide cross-border services and the freedom of establishment have too often taken precedence over workers’ rights, as the famous European Court of Justice’s Laval and Viking cases have shown. With a social progress protocol, we can make sure that workers’ and social rights are as protected as economic freedom is in the

treaties. It is the way to ensure that workers’ rights will not remain second class rights in the EU. We therefore call for such a social progress protocol to be integrated as a fundamental principle in the EU treaties at the occasion of the next treaty change.

The joint Proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights by the European Parliament, Council and Commission is the first step in this direction and it must mark Europe’s long-awaited social turn. The European Charter of Fundamental Rights was integrated in the treaties after its proclamation in 2000. Now that the European Pillar of Social Rights has been proclaimed, we want it to follow the same path<sup>194</sup>. It has to be integrated in the treaty framework. This will be one of our key demands in the opening debate and the **Conference on the Future of the European Union**.

## 4.3 Providing space for increased social investment

The European Pillar of Social Rights states the ambitions of the EU in terms of social objectives. Although the existing framework exerts pressure for improving national standards, effective instruments are paramount to positively change the life of Europeans. Our toolkit for the Social Pillar implementation must include the strengthening of financial resources. The next Multiannual Financial Frameworks and in particular the upcoming European Social Fund will be essential tools to meet these ambitions.<sup>[1]</sup>

Social investment will be equally important. In 2013, at the initiative of PES Commissioner Laszlo Andor, the European Commission defined social investment as policies designed to strengthen people's skills and capacities and support them to participate fully in employment and social life, notably in the key policy areas of education, quality childcare, healthcare, training, job-search assistance and rehabilitation. This is today strongly echoed in the Pillar of Social Rights.

Yet, the responsibility for strong welfare societies rests mainly with national governments. Therefore, Europe must ensure strong welfare states which support the changing needs of society. It is thus essential that public services are given sufficient means to allow effective access to social housing, healthcare and essential services, as foreseen in the European Pillar of Social Rights.

EU fiscal rules must allow for the better promotion and enablement of social investments, support for economic demand, and job creation that leads to sustainable development and full employment. Member states need to recover and use the fiscal space for social investment and to support social security

systems, social services, healthcare and domestic demand on both the national and the European level.

In addition, in times of macroeconomic shock like the current one, the SGP has proven to be a straitjacket, which does not allow Member States the necessary fiscal space they need to absorb the imbalances and cushion the social consequences. This was the reason for the activation by the European Council of the general escape clause to freeze the adjustments that Member States must make in order to meet their fiscal targets and be allowed to spend "as much as they need". This overly restrictive nature of the SGP is the second reason why the sustainable development and social progress pact is urgent, so that economic and financial objectives are made compatible with the goals of ensuring and protecting socio-ecological rights of citizens in the European Union architecture. Therefore, this pact should be adopted to complement the Stability and Growth Pact and resolve its fundamental contradictions in terms of social and ecological justice.

Building on our political family's recent success in introducing flexibility in the Stability and Growth Pact, we call for a revision of the fiscal rules to exempt public, social and green investment spending from calculations of public budgets. This has to be a transparent process, ensuring predictability and equal treatment of budgets.

We have to be aware about the devastating social effects of the COVID-19 crisis, in particular on vulnerable groups, and that they will further increase inequalities and social divergences and undermining social and employment standards in Europe. In this context, we need a decisive and coordinated European

response to protect and cushion the social consequences of the current crisis, and to demonstrate that the EU is an indispensable project based on social justice, solidarity and integration. Therefore, the ESF+ budget should be doubled in the MFF 2021–2027 to 210 billion euros as the best real correction mechanism in the medium term to reduce social divergences and the most effective and sustainable way to support vulnerable groups, including women, children, youth, elderly, migrants and people with disabilities. Moreover, the implementation of the European Child Guarantee with a budget of 20 billion euros is urgent, ensuring access to free quality healthcare, education and childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition for all children in need.



# 5 ANNEX 1: THE CHILD GUARANTEE IN PRACTICE

**“One in four children in Europe is at risk of poverty or social exclusion and nearly one in ten is suffering from severe material deprivation .”**

## What is the Child Guarantee?

The EU is confronted with a major child poverty problem, with one in four children at risk of poverty or social exclusion and nearly one in ten suffering from severe material deprivation or growing up in a context of social exclusion. This is not acceptable. Therefore, the PES is committed to the setup of a European Child Guarantee.

The Child Guarantee aims at guaranteeing access for every child in poverty in Europe to:

- Free healthcare
- Free education
- Free childcare
- Adequate nutrition
- Decent housing

The Child Guarantee should be part of a European integrated plan to combat child poverty including the Child Guarantee and programmes offering support and opportunities for the parents to come out of social exclusion situations and to integrate into the labour market.<sup>195</sup>

## Where does the Child Guarantee come from?

In 2013, at the initiative of Commissioner Laszlo Andor, the Council adopted recommendations on investing in children<sup>196</sup> setting out a common framework for tackling child poverty. The recommendations highlighted the need to address access to adequate resources, to affordable quality services and to ensure children’s right to participate. Yet the implementation of the recommendations remained fragmented and slow. The S&D group and the whole PES family has put forward the idea of a Child Guarantee under the previous institutional mandate, which the European Parliament fully endorsed in its resolution of 24 November 2015<sup>197</sup>. In 2017, the Parliament further requested the European Commission to start a feasibility study on the Child Guarantee, which is ongoing, and put forward proposals to earmark funding to tackle child poverty in the future ESF+ programme and to secure and additional 5.9 billion euros for the Child Guarantee. In light of the current coronavirus crisis and its impact on social and economic conditions in general and the increase in child poverty it will generate, the S&D has proposed that the Child Guarantee be funded with at least 20 billion euros in the next MFF 2021–2027 in order to become effective. Both financial proposals are currently being negotiated with the Council as part of the broader discussion on the EU’s Multiannual financial framework 2021–2027.

Additionally, in 2017, the three EU institutions proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights including Principle 11 on childcare and support to children. The Pillar of Social Rights restates children’s right to protection from poverty.

### Where do we stand?

After the 2019 European elections, our political family successfully pushed our priorities into the Commission's agenda. The Child Guarantee is now a clear priority for the Commission, acknowledged by its President Ursula von der Leyen<sup>198</sup>. Commissioner Nicolas Schmit already stated his intention to make a proposal on the Child Guarantee at the beginning of 2021 in the European Commission's communication on a Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions<sup>199</sup>.

- To make the Child Guarantee a reality, it is essential to secure adequate funding, along the lines put forward by the S&D Group in the European Parliament (5.9 billion euros and an earmarking of the ESF+ funds).
- A framework for the implementation of the Child Guarantee providing guidelines and identifying common objectives and best practices should also be set through dedicated Council recommendations.

### A European Child Guarantee: What for?

We want to ensure the Child Guarantee brings tangible solutions to children and families in need, without stigmatisation, to promote equal opportunities from infancy onwards. Different measures are already in place in Member States to support children and their families and fight child poverty. They cover a relatively wide range of policy areas. **Here are a few examples of measures, which could be supported, extended or promoted through the European Child Guarantee:**

#### *Free healthcare*

- Universal health coverage or cost-sharing ceilings could be introduced for all types of healthcare treatments for children, including primary and dental care, possibly coupled with subsidies for spectacles and hearing aids (as is the case in France and Sweden, for example).
- “Maternity packages” with baby supplies sent to new parents could ensure that all infants have access to care products and clothes, regardless of family income (a policy currently in place in Finland<sup>200</sup>).



### *Free education*

- Free public transport for children or free school transport could make getting to and back from school more affordable (this type of policy is in place in Luxembourg<sup>201</sup>, Portugal and Slovakia<sup>202</sup>).
- Compulsory text books could be provided to children for free (for example in Portugal<sup>203</sup>, Luxembourg<sup>204</sup>), or made available in sufficient quantities in the school library.

### *Free childcare*

- Free or relatively low-cost childcare could be made universally available to children from the end of the parental leave (6–18 months) until they start school (as is the case in Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden<sup>205</sup>). At the moment, only 34% of children under the age of three years attend Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC),<sup>206</sup> which could impact inclusion and parental labour market participation negatively.

- Professionalisation of childcare staff and the introduction of national quality frameworks could help improve ECEC quality.<sup>207</sup> In some EU countries, at least one staff member per group of children in centre-based ECEC must have a tertiary education qualification (this policy is in place in Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, France, Germany, Portugal, Croatia, Slovenia, Greece and Bulgaria<sup>208</sup>).

### *Adequate nutrition*

- Universal and free school lunches of good nutritional quality for all children of mandatory school age is one way to combat child hunger and deprivation without creating stigma (this policy is in place, for example, in Finland<sup>209</sup>, Sweden<sup>210</sup>, Estonia and Slovakia<sup>211</sup>).

### *Decent housing*

- Priority access to social housing could be given to families with children, especially large or single parent families (like the policy in Spain).
- Financial support could be offered to young families to buy or rent homes (a policy in place in Lithuania<sup>213</sup>).

195, 197 European Parliament resolution of 24 November 2015 on reducing inequalities with a special focus on child poverty (2014/2237(INI))

196 2013/112/EU: Commission Recommendation of 20 February 2013 Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage

198 Mission letter from European Commission President – elect Ursula von der Leyen to Dubravka Suica, Vice-President-designate for Democracy and Demography,

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/political-guidelines-nextcommission\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/political-guidelines-nextcommission_en.pdf), p.10

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200 Kela (2019), “Maternity package”, <https://www.kela.fi/web/en/maternitypackage>

201 European Commission (2018), European Semester Country Report Luxembourg 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2018-european-semester-country-report-luxembourg-en.pdf>, p. 31

202, 203 Minutes from the meeting of PES Employment and Social Affairs Ministers, 15 March 2019

204 European Commission (2018), European Semester Country Report Luxembourg 2018, op. cit., p. 31

205 Ibid, p. 9

206 Ibid.

207 Ibid., p.7–8; For more information on how to improve the quality of ECEC, see the 2014 European Commission proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and

Care: <https://bit.ly/2pg1fkU>

208 European Commission (2019), Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, op. cit., p. 14

209 Yle (2018), “Finland mulls adding snack to free school meal offering”, <https://bit.ly/2mQEIQe>

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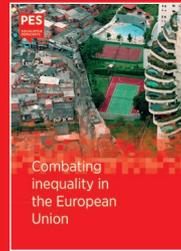
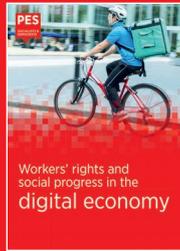
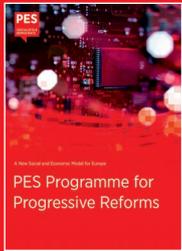
212 European Commission (2019), Mechanisms Supporting Single Parents across the European Union, <https://bit.ly/2pkVuT9>, p. 6

213 European Commission (2018), “October developments in child and family policy in EU member states”, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?newsid=9231&langid=en&catid=89&furtherNews=yes&>

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For any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Antoine Mertzseisen, PES adviser on Social and Employment Policies ([Antoine.Mertzseisen@pes.eu](mailto:Antoine.Mertzseisen@pes.eu)).

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Party of European Socialists (PES)

10-12 Rue Guimard

1040 Brussels

Belgium

T **+32 2 548 90 80**

[info@pes.eu](mailto:info@pes.eu)

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