

## **ENNHRI Statement on the European Pillar of Social Rights**

In 2016, the European Commission launched a consultation on the development of the European Pillar of Social Rights. All relevant stakeholders including social partners, citizens, civil society organizations and State authorities were given an opportunity to make an assessment of the present EU social 'acquis', to reflect how new trends including technological development and demographic changes impacted on societies, and to provide their views on the European Pillar of Social Rights as a part of deeper and fairer Economic and Monetary Union.

The core function of NHRIs is to promote and protect human rights. This also enables them to improve the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights at the national level via training and awareness raising, individual assistance, investigations and inquiries, monitoring, research and reporting, advising governments and parliaments, and engaging with regional and international human rights systems.

ENNHRI members have been actively engaging in the area of economic and social rights and attach great importance to the European Social Charter as one of the instruments that can be used to ensure the implementation economic and social rights, together with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights European, the Convention on Human Rights, the United Nations core human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Labour Organisation Conventions.

In 2013, ENNHRI organised an [Event on Austerity and Human Rights in Europe](#), which assessed the impact of public spending decisions in times of economic crisis on the enjoyment of social and economic rights. [ENNHRI Working Group on Economic and Social Rights](#) was also established in order to strengthen the capacities and activities of ENNHRI members working in this area. ENNHRI members also contribute to [the Platform on Economic and Social rights, jointly operated by the Council of Europe, the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency \(FRA\), EQUINET and ENNHRI](#). Through the working group, ENNHRI members have been also carefully following developments of the European Social Pillar.

In 2016, ENNHRI members published [ENNHRI Statement of Support for the Turin Process to strengthen Social Rights in Europe](#) where they encouraged the endorsement of the Turin Process by State Parties through the adoption of concrete measures at national level. ENNHRI members have additionally worked towards the ratification and implementation of the revised European Social Charter and have used the decisions of the European Committee on Social Rights to promote human rights in various areas of their work.

As the [EU priorities for cooperation with the Council of Europe \(CoE\) in 2016-2017](#) include 'regular dialogue and cooperation with CoE on the interaction between the European Social Charter and the laws and policies of the European Union, taking

into account the respective legal and political architectures and competences of the EU and CoE', **ENNHRI encourages** the EU and Council of Europe to establish close cooperation to work towards a cohesive framework for the protection of economic and social rights throughout the European region, which is also in line with 'Turin Process'.

**ENNHRI recommends** that, the First preliminary outline of the European Pillar of Social Rights to be strengthened by taking steps to reform the European Union's social acquis to reduce and eliminate the divergences between that acquis and the jurisprudence under the European Social Charter, as well as other international human rights standards and comments of relevant treaty bodies, such as the UN Committee on CESCR.

**ENNHRI supports** explicitly the adoption of a set of compliance criteria providing EU Member States with clear guidance for to how to effectively meet their human rights obligations when faced with economic crisis or challenges, including obligations emanating from the European Convention on Human Rights and European Social Charter, and those enshrined in international human rights treaties. Ideally, such criteria would not only guide states in times of economic crisis and austerity, but also with regard to regular budgeting and fiscal policies. Finally, **ENNHRI reiterates** its commitment to engage fully with the EU, states, and civil society in the pursuit of these priorities.

**ENNHRI calls** on the EU to i) carry out a systematic and regular ex ante human rights impact assessment of social policy measures including in austerity packages, ii) to make sure that measures do not lead to human rights violations, iii) to integrate human rights institutions and experts in the process of macro-economic decision-making.

#### **About ENNHRI**

ENNHRI, the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions, works to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights across wider Europe. National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) are independent bodies with a constitutional or legal mandate to promote and protect human rights. They are a key element of a strong and effective national, regional and global human rights framework. NHRIs are accredited by reference to international standards, the UN Paris Principles, to ensure their independence, pluralism, impartiality, and accountability. ENNHRI supports NHRIs throughout Europe, including on establishment and accreditation, exchange of good practices, capacity building, and engagement with regional human rights mechanisms. ENNHRI's Secretariat is based in Brussels.