



**PES Presidency Declaration**  
**On the European Pillar of Social Rights**  
*Adopted by the PES Presidency on 16 June 2017*

At a time when many European citizens question the European project and its achievements, the best way for the EU to show its relevance is to further protect its citizens. We are convinced that the EU provides a unique opportunity for all citizens. For jobs, for prosperity, for social protection, for equality, for young people. However, our societies are facing many challenges and difficulties exploited by the right-wing parties, as well as by populists who want to put an end to the European project. Years of crisis and severe austerity have made Europe's citizens pay a very high price, while globalization, digitalization, social and environmental dumping create strong pressure towards lower social standards. To counter this trend, now is the time to build a strong and effective Social Union for the whole EU, with the help of the pillar of social rights. Social integration and progressive answers are an absolute necessity for the EU to fulfil its obligations vis-à-vis its people, and to rebuild trust in Europe and in the European project.

Europe must proceed with upwards economic and social convergence, ensure a fair distribution of economic wealth and deepen social cohesion across the Union as its main priorities. It must reinforce its commitment to fight poverty and social exclusion, and to eradicate child poverty. Therefore, we must continue promoting an ambitious and protective European social model that strengthens cohesion throughout the EU. Today more than ever, we want to make this a tangible reality in all Member States.

We welcome that the Commission has taken a first step and put a proposal for a European Pillar of Social Rights on the table on 26th April 2017. Still, a list of principles will not suffice. We will fight to make sure the pillar delivers on the Commission's promise of a social triple A. The European Pillar of Social Rights should mark a clear social path for Europe, paving the way for a true Social Union.

This is why, we, the PES Presidency, support the Conclusions the PES Social Europe Network put forward on the European Pillar of Social Rights. The European Pillar of Social Rights will only be a success if it effectively consolidates European social standards, if it extends their protection to new forms of work and if it is given the means to reach its objectives throughout the EU. The European Pillar of Social Rights must provide a strong binding framework and clear objectives that effectively sets ambitious social standards in EU law, in order to fight inequalities, ensure decent jobs and support social cohesion within all Member States. We are ready to make full use of the treaties' social potential and to consider additional instruments for the Eurozone.

**1. 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. In addition, it should further reaffirm the fundamental principle of equality between women and men. The principles of non – discrimination and equality at work are essential and need to be defended as such, by

combating discrimination in accessing employment and promoting measures that favour a more equal sharing of family responsibilities, through a balanced approach towards maternity, paternity, parental and carers' leave and a better work-life balance.

**2. 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, with a well-funded implementation of the skills guarantee and continued efforts for the Youth Guarantee.

**3. 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. A child guarantee should ensure no children in Europe is at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

**4. For a future-proof Pillar of Social Rights, it is important to address the changes employment experiences and to cover new forms of employment**, in particular those created in the digital economy, the care sector or the transport sector to name a few. The changing world of work requires us to extend social protection to such new forms of employment and the pillar should foresee the modalities of such extension—granting social protection for all. A directive on decent working conditions could be envisaged in this endeavor.

**Finally, we will be vigilant to prevent the European Pillar of Social Rights from merely becoming another initiative without actual impact.** Effective instruments are needed to bring a positive change in the life of Europeans. These instruments should include legislative updates, improvements of governance, and measures (such as a convergence code with social and fiscal objectives) to reduce disparities between countries. It also needs the strengthening of financial resources and fiscal instruments and social investments, making full use of the flexibility of the Stability and Growth Pact. In a longer term perspective, the pillar should mark the starting point towards the adoption of a Social Progress Protocol. The joint Proclamation by the European Parliament, Council and Commission can and should be the starting point in this direction. It must be accompanied by immediate measures, through a Social Action Plan. This would reaffirm our common objective of social progress and clarify that neither basic economic freedoms nor competition rules take precedence over fundamental social rights. Fundamental social rights must take priority.

With populism on the rise across Europe, the EU must act as an effective social shield for its citizens. In order for the European Pillar of Social Rights to install a new balance between economic policies and social priorities, durably placing social progress at the top of the EU's agenda, the discussions on the future of Europe in the coming months and actions to reform the Eurozone so that it can deliver on sustainable growth and upwards social convergence will be crucial. Europe is actually deciding its path now. In close cooperation with all levels of government, from local to European, and together with our social partners and representatives from civil society, we are ready to make the Social Union a reality. **We will promote our vision in the perspective of the European Social Summit in Gothenburg of 17 November 2017 which will be hosted by the Swedish Government. We are fully committed to ensuring its success, reaffirming the importance of a strong social Europe.**

**Annex: PES Vision for a European pillar of social rights – 04052017 FINAL**