



Porto Social Forum 2023: building bridges to a better future

PES Presidency Declaration adopted on 23 March 2023

As Party of European Socialists, we are proud of the landmark advances that our political family has brought in the social agenda in this European mandate. We have brought social issues back to the heart of European policymaking, we have a renewed Youth Guarantee, we established a Child Guarantee and a European Care Strategy. We brought forward legislation for pay transparency and adequate minimum wages. It marked the return of a stronger, fairer Europe, ready to protect its citizens and people living in the EU. At the heights of the pandemic, SURE was put in place to save jobs that would otherwise have been lost in the lockdowns Covid-19 imposed on us. These are all the result of our political family's fight, of our parties and governments, of our PES Commissioners and of the S&D Group in the European Parliament.

In 2017, the Gothenburg Social Summit initiated by then Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven put social issues back on the EU's Agenda. The adoption of the Pillar of Social Rights set the principles of the EU's action in the social field and on employment. Building on this, the 2021 Porto Social Summit hosted by Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa endorsed a fully-fledged Social Action Plan and concluded the Porto Social Commitment, one of the most ambitious tripartite commitments ever reached in the EU. These processes are crucial in our efforts to build a Social Europe that benefits all citizens across the EU.

We, PES, believe that social challenges in these times of change require the full attention of all policymakers. Because Social Summits gathered representatives of Member States at the highest political level, they also achieved the highest political commitments possible. As the European Council has so often overlooked social issues, we need to continue to fight to make workers' rights, gender equality and social protection priorities. We will do so at all levels of government – local, regional, national, and European – in line with their respective competences, having civil society and the trade unions as allies in the process. We have already achieved much in this mandate, but many challenges remain ahead: digitalization and climate change are happening, the war in Ukraine made energy prices soar, and the flawed economic policies of many right-wing governments failed to curb the cost of living. We stand by the workers and citizens in this new reality and support Antonio Costa's proposal to organize the biennial meeting of the Porto Social Forum, with the full support of the European Commission.

It is an opportunity to renew the spirit of debate and convergence of the Summit and to introduce into the debate new concerns and priorities, arising from significant economic, social and political changes. It is laying the groundwork to the Social Summits that will be organised by the Spanish and Belgian Presidencies. The 2023 edition will focus on two major issues:

First, it will highlight the objectives of the European Year of Skills, in line with the Porto Action Plan goals and the priorities of the digital transition. Particular attention will be given to competitiveness, the creation of quality jobs and a focus on reskilling and upskilling to close skill gaps and shortages.



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Second, at a time when there is a strategic debate on the enlargement of the Union and the strengthening of its role as a central actor, it will reaffirm the values of Social Europe and the achievements of the Member States, in terms of employment, social protection and equality.

As members of the Party of European Socialists our priorities are clear:

- We find solutions for creating new quality, well-paid jobs, fighting all forms of discrimination, including gender discrimination also in the workplace.
- We put in place measures that contribute to an equal, democratic and inclusive society, free of gender discrimination and all forms of prejudice, where young people, persons with disabilities, women, seniors, people with a migrant background and everyone can fully participate.
- We take action to eliminate, prevent and respond to all forms of gender-based violence in public and private spaces, online and offline.
- We want to press ahead with the debate on quality work and care economy, so that all work, including in the care sector, ensures a decent standard of living and allows for a real balance between private and professional life, for women and for men.
- We want well-funded public services, including social services, which are essential to make our societies more equal, strong and resilient, particularly in times of crisis. We will continue to push for investments that benefit everyone in our society.
- We act to keep the cost of living in check, to improve living and working conditions, combat poverty and homelessness by ensuring that everyone can have access to quality affordable and green housing.
- We are committed to an ambitious strategy on skills and lifelong learning that enhances the qualifications and competences of workers and better prepares them for the twin green and digital transitions, as well as investing in skills for better participation in the democratic process. We work to ensure that workers upskilling and reskilling efforts are rewarded with better jobs and higher wages.
- We fight for platform workers to make sure they either benefit from all the rights guaranteed to employees or from the full freedom of the self-employed status. As the European Parliament does, we call for the swift adoption of an ambitious Directive that effectively enables this distinction when determining platform workers' status.
- We push for the strengthening of minimum income schemes in the Member States with rights and duties, to provide a safety net people can rely on. We call for a directive on adequate minimum income, that supports the reintegration of people absent from the labour market.
- We support initiatives helping people facing long-term unemployment to reconnect with a work opportunity that makes sense. These principles guide our action when we push for a European Semester that matches economic performance with social wellbeing.
- We affirm the essential role of trade unions and workers' councils in the fight for workers' rights and fully respect their autonomy. We strongly support social dialogue and collective bargaining at national and EU levels, respecting national specificities.
- We want a balanced European Semester with a strengthened social dimension, and support the Commission services' position paper on a Social Convergence Framework based on the proposal of the Spanish and the Belgian governments to introduce a Social Imbalances Procedure.
- We call on the European Commission to complement the EU's green taxonomy with a social taxonomy, providing guidance for stronger social investment.
- We want to reaffirm the central importance of the EU's social values in terms of employment, social protection and equality in the strategic debate around enlargement and the EU's role in the world.

This is the message we want to pass on in Porto: strong and gender-sensitive welfare states, solid democracy, well-funded, accessible and quality public services and workers who enjoy a decent standard of living based on quality jobs are the best ways to prepare our societies and people for future challenges. Together we are building strong well-being societies.