



2021PORTUGAL.EU
Parliamentary Dimension

Background Note

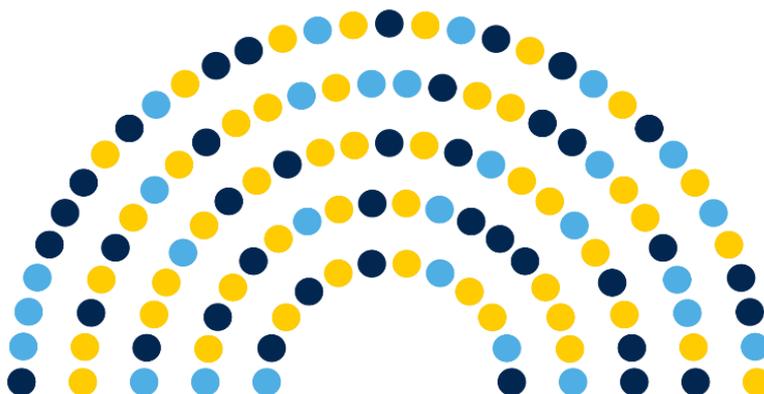
Session II

**Social Europe – what model for the triple economic,
digital and climate transition?**

LXV COSAC plenary meeting

31 May-1 June 2021

Lisbon



BACKGROUND NOTE

Session II

Social Europe – what model for the triple economic, digital and climate transition?

The [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) was signed in November 2017 by the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament and the European Commission during the [Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth, Gothenburg](#). It aims to drive forward a social Europe for all European citizens, with the goal of building a just and social Europe that guarantees the effectiveness of the rights of its citizens, based on three premises:

- equal opportunities and access to the labour market;
- dynamic labour markets and fair working conditions; and
- public support/social protection and inclusion.

Based on these categories, the Pillar lists [20 principles and rights](#) that are the guidelines for building a strong social Europe that is fair, inclusive and full of opportunity, essential for fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems in the 21st century.

The achievement of the objectives of the European Pillar of Social Rights by the Member States is one of the objectives set out in the [Strategic Agenda 2019-2024](#)¹ agreed at the European Council in June 2019 and is also one of the targets included in the [political guidelines for the Commission 2019-2024](#)².

The European Commission (EC) [Communication](#) of January 2020 entitled “A Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions” states that “[t]he *European Pillar of Social Rights* is the European answer to these fundamental ambitions. It is our social strategy to make sure that the transitions of climate-neutrality, digitalisation and demographic change are socially fair and just”.

¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/06/20/a-new-strategic-agenda-2019-2024/>

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/index_en

The [digital transition](#) will contribute to job creation, the promotion of education, competitiveness and innovation by equipping workers with new skills in order to achieve the decarbonisation objective. The climate transition is the shift towards a low-carbon, more efficient and sustainable economy, in line with the [Paris Agreement](#) and the [UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030](#).

Furthermore, according to the above Communication, to achieve the climate transition and the digital transition ensuring “*that no one is left behind*”, and to strengthen social Europe by improving working conditions and social protection and inclusion, the European Commission [has published](#) a number of initiatives, including:

- [European Green Deal](#): It strives to make Europe the world’s first climate-neutral continent by 2050 and, to that end, a proposal for a [European Climate Law](#) was presented to turn the political commitment to reduce emissions for 2030 into a legal obligation;
- [Just Transition Mechanism](#): It is a financing instrument that will seek to ensure that the transition towards a climate-neutral economy happens in a fair way, leaving no one behind;
- [Industrial Strategy for Europe](#): It is intended to help the European industry lead the double transition towards climate neutrality and digital leadership and boost Europe’s competitiveness and strategic autonomy in a context of shifting geopolitical plates and growing global competition;
- [SME Strategy](#): it aims to support and empower SMEs, regardless of their size and sector, in three areas: sustainable and digital double transition, free development of activities inside and outside the single market, reducing bureaucracy and improving access to financing.

The European Commission also presented, in December 2020, the [Digital Services Act Package](#) and, in March 2021, [Europe’s Digital Compass for 2030](#), based on four points: digital transformation of businesses, skills, secure and sustainable digital infrastructures, and digitalisation of public services.

In January 2020, the EC launched a [public consultation](#) of social partners, the results of which informed the presentation of the [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#), which sets out the actions to be taken to implement the 20 principles of the Pillar, with a view to achieving three targets by 2030: to promote the employability of people aged 20

to 64, to promote the participation of adults in training and to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

In this context, it should be noted that the [35th Bi-annual report of COSAC](#) has a chapter on the Action Plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights. Its questions are, among other things, on the participation in the public consultation on the subject, the plan's priority areas and its relationship with the [European Semester](#).

The conclusions of the report will be presented at the LXV COSAC plenary meeting. However, it should be noted that, on this subject, most participating Parliaments/Chambers identified as priorities the areas of “education, training and life-long learning”, “active support to employment” and “social protection”, and reported that they had not adopted any report or resolution on the European Semester concerning the inclusion of matters related to reforms and investment in their recovery and resilience plans.

With a view to economic recovery and to promoting investment in the digital and climate transition, funding for Member States' actions in these areas is guaranteed in parallel by the European Union's [Multiannual Financial Framework](#) and the [NextGenerationEU](#) instrument.

The [High-Level Conference of the Porto Social Summit](#) (Portugal), organised by the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, was held in May 2021 with the aim of defining Europe's social agenda for the coming decade through a commitment to implement the [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#).

The Summit had two moments: the High-Level Conference, focusing on finding the best ways to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, and the [Informal meeting of heads of state or government](#), which discussed ways of giving the highest political impetus to strengthening the European Social Pillar and its implementation and during which the [Porto Declaration](#) on social issues was adopted, aiming at achieving three objectives by 2030:

- At least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 should be in employment;
- At least 60% of all adults should be participating in training every year;

- A reduction of at least 15 million in the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including at least 5 million children.

Possible topics for discussion:

- What is the role of the European Pillar of Social Rights in strengthening Social Europe?
- How can Member States and civil society be encouraged to implement the measures provided for in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan?
- The just transition mechanism as a response to the economic and social effects of the transition;
- The COVID-19 pandemic as a catalyst for economic, digital and climate transition;
- The relationship between digitisation and climate action.

