



**Preliminary assessment of the  
European Pillar of Social Rights –  
An important step towards  
a more social Europe**

May 2017

# European Commission's Recommendation on the European Pillar of Social Rights

On 26 April 2017, the European Commission published the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) (Pillar). COFACE Families Europe welcomes this proposal as it is a long awaited European social policy framework that shows the EU's intention to strengthen the implementation of existing social rights across Member States. The aim of this Pillar is to serve as a guide towards efficient employment and social outcomes when responding to challenges and to better implement social rights. In order to increase resilience in the Economic and Monetary Union, the European Commission decided to propose a Pillar that is applicable only in the euro area, however it is open for other Member States to join on a voluntary basis. The Pillar includes 20 principles under three chapters: Equal Opportunities and access to the labour market; Fair working conditions and Social protection and inclusion.

COFACE Families Europe participated actively in shaping the future Pillar, starting with the organisation of a reflection seminar held in Brussels on 27 September with a wide-range of speakers providing different perspectives from EU to the local level. On the occasion of the seminar, we also published the discussion paper [Laying the foundations for a European Pillar of Social Rights](#).

We also submitted our response to the Public Consultation and published our [Recommendations on how to make the European Pillar of Social Rights a useful social policy framework for all families in Europe](#). In these recommendations, we focused on building a solid architecture for the future European Pillar of Social Rights and to ensuring the Pillar principles can build long-term goals for Europe. We drew out the policy principles which in our opinion were most relevant to address the immediate needs of families and challenges related to demographic changes: Skills, Education and Life-long learning; Gender equality and work-life balance; Long-term care; Childcare; Disability and Access to essential services.

**We are delighted to see that most of our recommendations were considered and appear in the final text of the Pillar.** In the following, we will make a brief assessment of how our recommendations are included in the European Pillar of Social Rights:

## 1. Education, training and life-long learning

In our recommendation, we stated that the Pillar should provide guidance to Member States on making their school system more inclusive to all children, and we highlighted that systematic segregation of vulnerable children, early school leaving and the lack of early childhood education and care services are the most concerning trends in the area of education. It is very positive that the Pillar reaffirms the right of everyone to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to participate successfully in society.

## 2. Gender Equality and Work-life balance

We welcome that the final text of the Pillar includes two separate principles on Gender Equality and Work-life Balance which strengthen and complement each other. In our recommendation, we called for sufficient leaves schemes and flexible working arrangements for women and men, high-quality, affordable and accessible care services as well as for support towards a fiscal system that promotes non-discrimination of different family forms. The Pillar explicitly mentions the right of parents and people with caring responsibilities to suitable leave, flexible working arrangements and access to care services. It is also very positive that the Pillar emphasises the equal access of men and women to these measures in order to share better their caring responsibilities.

### 3. Disability

In our recommendation, we called for mainstreaming disability across the Pillar by broadening the scope of the initially proposed principle on disability to cover adequate social protection floor, a fully inclusive education system, open labour market, accessible community-based support services, and the health system as well. We are happy to see that the Pillar indeed goes beyond focusing solely on social benefits to persons with disabilities and reaffirms the right of persons with disabilities to be included in society and in the labour market and to receive income support and support services to ensure they can live in dignity.

### 4. Long-term care

In our recommendation on long-term care we highlighted the need for community-based solutions, including home-based care, as well as a flexible system in which people with care needs can use a combination of formal and informal care to decrease the current pressure on family carers. The Pillar reflects very well our priorities by stating that 'Everyone has the right to affordable long-term care services of good-quality, in particular home-care and community-based services'.

### 5. Childcare

We highlighted in our recommendation, that all children should have access to a variety of available, affordable and high-quality child services in the communities, including early childhood care and education, which is a prerequisite to reduce the risk of child poverty. We are glad to see that the Pillar stands for the very same: providing affordable and good-quality early childhood care for all children and introducing specific measures to enhance equal opportunities and be protected from poverty.

### 6. Access to essential services

In our recommendation, we highlighted that besides social and health services, financial inclusion and the access to financial services are also key to achieve social inclusion. We are delighted to see that the final text of this principle includes explicitly the right to financial services and digital communications and further mentions that support should be provided for those in need of access to these services.

Undoubtedly, the most important question still remains, how to ensure in the coming years that the European Pillar of Social Rights will bring positive change to people's life along the 20 principles and transforms great principles into actions?

We hope to see both legislative and non-legislative measures under each of these principles, similar to the recently proposed Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers. Furthermore, without allocating adequate funding, the European Pillar of Social Rights will hardly be able to live up to the expectations of European citizens.

We call on the European Institutions to ensure by strong governance and adequate resources the successful realisation of the 20 principles and work towards making a more social Europe a reality.

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