



The European Pillar of Social Rights: Ambiguities, Possibilities, Implementation

A public conference organized by the Amsterdam Centre for European Studies (ACES)

5 October 2018

Venue: Allard Pierson Museum, Nina van Leerzaal, Oude Turfmarkt 129, 1012 GC Amsterdam

The European Pillar of Social Rights, jointly proclaimed by the EU Parliament, Council, and Commission in November 2017, represents the most comprehensive effort in a generation to advance the social dimension of European integration. Developed at the initiative of Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, the Pillar is intended to guide the EU and its member states in responding to current and future societal challenges; to serve as a ‘compass’ for renewed convergence of social and employment outcomes, especially within the eurozone; and to revive citizens’ confidence in the Union by ensuring ‘better enactment and implementation of social rights’.

The Pillar comprises twenty ‘principles and rights essential for fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems in 21st century Europe’, covering equal opportunities and access to employment; fair working conditions; and social protection and inclusion. Some of these principles and rights reaffirm the existing EU social acquis, while others require new legislation at EU and/or national level to become legally binding. Already, however, the Pillar has triggered a number of new legislative proposals and recommendations on issues such as work-life balance, the creation of a European Labour Authority, and access to social protection, while also informing the policy messages, monitoring framework, and country-specific recommendations of the ‘European Semester’ of socio-economic policy coordination.

The broad scope and ambitious goals of the European Pillar of Social Rights, together with the political commitment and momentum behind its enactment, offer great potential for revitalizing the EU social agenda. At the same time, however, there are considerable ambiguities surrounding this initiative. What is the relationship, for example, between social ‘principles’ and ‘rights’, and who will be responsible for their implementation and enforcement, especially in areas where the EU lacks legislative competences? Through which pathways and

instruments will the Pillar be implemented, and how can these be coordinated and monitored to achieve its overarching goals? To what extent can the Pillar be expected to give rise to justiciable rights for individual citizens, and how should its principles be interpreted by EU and national courts?

This one-day conference will bring together leading EU scholars and policy makers to discuss these questions, focusing on prospects and pathways for realizing the potential of the European Pillar of Social Rights. It is aimed at policy practitioners and the general public, as well as scholars and students. The conference will be divided into three main parts:

- The first will address the nature and significance of the Pillar, focusing on its origins, ambiguities, and possibilities.
- The second will deal with pathways and instruments for implementing the Pillar and the relationship between them, with particular attention to legislation, EU funding, and the European Semester.
- The final panel will discuss the legal status and meaning of social rights, together with the prospects for using the Pillar to advance their monitoring and justiciability.

Conference organizers:

Frank Vandenbroucke (University Professor, University of Amsterdam)

Jonathan Zeitlin (Distinguished Faculty Professor of Public Policy and Governance, University of Amsterdam, and Academic Director of ACES)

Registration

If you want to register for the conference, please send an email to Gijs van der Starre, g.vanderstarre@uva.nl.

The conference is organized by the Amsterdam Centre for European Studies (ACES), which aims to become a world-leading interdisciplinary centre of excellence in research, education and public debate on contemporary Europe, the European Union, and its member states.

The conference is co-organised with:

- The Amsterdam Centre for European Law and Governance (ACELG)
- The Amsterdams Instituut voor ArbeidsStudies (AIAS)/Hugo Sinzheimer Instituut (HSI).



Programme

9:45 Introduction and Welcome

10:00 – 11:45 **Panel 1: What Is the European Pillar of Social Rights? Origins, Ambiguities, Possibilities**

Chair (tbc)

Speakers **Frank Vandenbroucke** (University of Amsterdam)
Sacha Garben (College of Europe, Bruges)
Jonathan Zeitlin (University of Amsterdam)

11:45 – 12:00 Break

12:00 – 12:45 **Panel 2: Implementing the European Pillar: Pathways and Instruments**

Chair Frank Vandenbroucke

Speaker **Sebastiano Sabato**: *Strategy, Synergy, Scoreboards*

12:45 – 13:45 Lunch

13:45 – 15:45 **Panel 2 (continued)**

Speakers **Elise Muir** (KU Leuven): *Legislation*

Jeroen Jutte (DG Employment, European Commission): *The European Semester*

Iain Begg (LSE European Institute): *EU Funding*

15:45 – 16:15 Break

16:15 – 17:30 **Panel 3: Advancing Social Rights through the European Pillar: Monitoring and Justiciability**

Chair Christina Eckes (University of Amsterdam, tbc)

Speakers **Annette Schrauwen** (University of Amsterdam)
Oliver Gerstenberg (University College London)

17:30 – 18:30 Drinks