

**Agenda item 7: ETUC and EU Matters
7b Pillar of Social Rights**

<p>A</p>	<p>HISTORY OF THE DOCUMENT & POINTS FOR DECISION</p> <p>This cover note updates the Executive Committee on a developments regarding the EU Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). The Executive Committee is invited to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the report • make use of the ETUC position on the EPSR (<u>attached</u>) in discussions at national level on the EPSR.
<p>B</p>	<p>BRIEF OUTLINE</p> <p>The April 2016 EPSU Executive Committee had a first exchange on the EPSR consultation launched by the European Commission (EC) in March this year. Although there were a number of questions regarding the direction of the consultation, it was agreed that EPSU should engage in the process in cooperation with ETUC and other organisations. Since then EPSU has sought to integrate into the discussions our policies on investment, public services (Protocol on Services of General Interest (SGI) and fundamental rights. EPSU's local and regional government committee also had an exchange on the EPSR at its meeting in September.</p> <p>Dedicated hearings of the social partners</p> <p>As part of the broad consultation on the EPSR, the EC has organised two 'dedicated hearings' of the European social partners – on 6 June and 14 October – and a third is expected towards the end of the year. A number of national 'hearings of social partners are also taking place (see EC website below for details)</p> <p>The first two EU level hearings have followed the same format and addressed three themes: taking stock of EU social acquis, future of work and welfare systems, and role of EPSR and Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). Discussions in both the June and October hearings have been broadly similar with the employers only indicating support for policy initiatives on flexicurity. Indeed as BusinessEurope says in its response to the EPSR:¹ <i>“As European employers, we believe that a genuine and appropriate social dimension of Europe depends on achieving more progress in terms of ownership and implementation of labour market reforms.... Our proposal to achieve this is for the pillar to become a vehicle to support structural reforms at national level, by devising benchmarks to support this.”</i></p> <p>The ETUC on the other hand adopted at its Executive Committee meeting in September a comprehensive position on the EPSR (circulated to members and <u>attached</u>). The position aims to serve as guidance for affiliates participating in the EU and national level hearings. The position covers seven priority areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A fairer economy for quality job creation 2. A pay rise for fairness at work and economic justice 3. Improved enforcement of existing rights and establishing new rights 4. Fair mobility 5. Secure labour market transitions 6. Social protection and strong public services 7. Institutional change to ensure equal emphasis on promoting Social Europe <p>The ETUC position includes a number of points relating to public services, investment, and fair and progressive taxation. It also refers explicitly to the Protocol on Services of General Interest (SGI). In both the June and October meetings organized by the Commission EPSU stressed these points in discussion.</p>

¹ See BusinessEurope <https://www.besuisseurope.eu/publications/european-pillar-social-rights-besuisseurope-contribution-debate>

	<p>The EC for its part has not yet given any indication of what it expects from the EPSR in concrete terms. On the EC website page on the EPSR President Juncker is quoted as saying “<i>We have to work urgently on the European Pillar of Social Rights. And we will do so with energy and enthusiasm. Europe is not social enough. We must change that.</i>” How this will be done however remains uncertain.</p> <p>There are concerns that the EPSR will not deliver new social legislation but rather become a benchmarking exercise related to the European semester. This risk is reflected in the joint Opinion on the EPSR from the Employment and Social Protection Committees that was endorsed by the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) on 13 October. The Opinion recognizes that there is a need to put a stronger and more future-oriented focus on the employment and social dimension but also that ...”<i>Many of the issues that the Pillar deals with are already part of the social acquis, the EES (European Employment Strategy) and the social OMC (Open method of Coordination), as currently embedded in the European Semester, including the Employment Guidelines, and could be dealt with in this context... Indeed, the Pillar offers an opportunity to develop and strengthen those instruments.</i>”</p> <p>Public consultation</p> <p>In parallel with the dedicated hearing of the social partners, the EC is running a public on-line consultation. There have been different opinions about whether it is useful for ETUC affiliates and/or individual trade union members to also respond to the consultation. We do expect however that ETUC will provide affiliates with a template and we will circulate this when available.</p> <p>European Parliament (EP)</p> <p>The EP is currently drawing up a report on the EPSR. The ETUC is coordinating lobbying activities. The draft report of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee (EMPL) has been published and will be approved by the EMPL Committee on 8 December and by plenary on 17 January 2017. It is hoped that a strong resolution from the EP will strengthen ETUC’s position.</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>EPSU will continue to engage in the EPSR consultations pressing for a broad and ambitious social agenda. The EC has announced that a Conference on the EPSR will be organised on 23 January 2017. A white Paper might possibly follow.</p> <p>EPSU will organise a meeting of affiliates in 2017 to examine any proposals that emerge from the EPSR consultation process.</p>
C	<p>GENDER EQUALITY ASPECTS</p> <p>The Pillar of Social Rights refers to a number of issues linked to gender equality, notably work-life balance issues.</p>
D	<p>LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME</p> <p>Social policy features in particular in the EPSU work programme sections on public services and workers’ rights.</p>
E	<p>BUDGET IMPLICATION(S)</p> <p>EPSU will organise a meeting in 2017 of the public services network to address the possible outcomes of the EPSR and take stock of social policy (see item 9b)</p>
F	<p>LIST OF RELATED DOCUMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC information on the EPSR and timetable of consultations http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/towards-european-pillar-social-rights_en • Joint EMCO/SPC Opinion on the EPSR http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12605-2016-INIT/en/pdf • EAPN contribution to the consultation http://www.eapn.eu/last-chance-for-social-europe-eapn-statement-on-european-pillar-of-social-rights/