

## ETUC ACTION PROGRAMME FOR WELFARE AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Resolution adopted at the Executive Committee Meeting of 15 December 2016

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**The present document outlines the main political priorities of the ETUC in the field of welfare and social protection, and proposes consistent actions on core themes and areas of intervention.**

### **Introduction: The state of welfare and social protection in Europe**

Welfare as a set of social rights, although with different intensity, is rooted in the constitutions of almost all modern European democracies, and social partners have significantly contributed to its definition. The principle is that sustainable economy can develop only when social well-being of all citizens is realised. Social policies represent in fact drivers for inclusive economic development, support to domestic demand, creation of quality jobs. Consistently, between national competence and shared values, the European Union has shaped a Social Model, based on equal treatment and solidarity, enabling better living and working conditions, education and training, health, access to public services for all its citizens, as well as protection against the major risks of life. The enforcement of such a Model has represented a cornerstone of the EU integration process, feeding a sense of belonging to a community where all European citizens are equally protected irrespective of their status, nationality, gender, age, origin.

A renewed commitment to the social dimension of the EU is enshrined in the Treaty of Lisbon and the now binding Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union<sup>1</sup>. However, it is regrettable that social development is subordinated to the economic progress. As a matter of fact, the outlook regarding the protection of European social rights in the area of EU economic governance is rather bleak, and this is mirrored in struggling processes of integration and economic recovery.

Poverty and inequality are worsening. The population living below the poverty threshold and at risk of poverty or social exclusion has constantly increased<sup>2</sup> among several groups: women, children, young people<sup>3</sup>, elderly and retired people, people living in single parent households<sup>4</sup>, those with low education, and migrants.

Work no longer protects against poverty, due to disruptive evolutions (“uberisation”), precariousness, labour market segmentation, wage polarisation, lack of jobs, especially quality ones, increased undeclared work. Low and unsecure salaries do not allow for proper and continuous contributions to the social protection systems. With the European population ageing, the massive unemployment especially among youth, women and migrants, the increasing economic dependency ratio and the lack of substantial interventions for recovery, the social protection systems are under pressure and budget cuts reduce their coverage, adequacy and quality.

In general, social protection policies play a significant role in support of those groups that mostly suffer exclusion from the labour market, atypical employment, incomplete

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<sup>1</sup> Article 3(3) TEU, Article 9 TFEU

<sup>2</sup> Despite the EU target to reduce the number of people experiencing poverty or social exclusion by 20 million by 2020, the number of people at risk of poverty has increased (EP, 2016): from 116 million people in 2008 to 122 million in 2014, or 24.4% of the population (EU-28).

<sup>3</sup> more than 30% of young people aged 18 to 24 and 27.8% of children aged less than 18 were at risk in 2014, Eurostat

<sup>4</sup> 50% of single parents' households, 2014, Eurostat

careers, and poor division of labour, in responding to the economic and social risks they face. It is above all the case for women: if budget cuts reduce social protection coverage and adequacy, women are doubly victimised.

In fact, the EU could have a very strong impact on the social policies of the Member States and candidate countries for EU membership. The EU should introduce substantial initiatives towards greater coordination of principles, systems and rights and upward convergence in the field of social protection, in order to foster greater European integration.

## **ETUC calls for a new Welfare for Europe**

Such a scenario calls for the recognition of welfare as a driver for social rights for all, and as a powerful feature of economic development and quality job creation. Recovery and relaunch urge the reversal of the rhetoric which sees financial sustainability and economic competitiveness as taking priority over the social dimension.

**Sustainable growth is achievable only through promoting social inclusion, mobility and integration within European society, to protect incomes and prevent and combat poverty.** We aim at high standards for all, in particular (but not only) for the most vulnerable who must be guaranteed individual dignity, the opportunity to work and to feel part of the European society.

**Priority attention must be paid to welfare as a founding element of the still valid European social model,** so as to reconnect with EU citizens and residents, and providing people with new trust in the European project.

**It is necessary to boost social protection systems, to ensure their full adequacy, quality, accessibility and coverage.** Everyone must be protected against the major risks of life as set out in ILO Convention 102, such as, inter alia, loss of income due to maternity, paternity, old age and related dependency, involuntary unemployment or part-time, precarious or irregular work, caring and family duties, illness and need for healthcare, disability..., and ultimately from the risk of falling into poverty.

**It is necessary to take stock of the changing paths of work and demography,** with the focus on more and better employment across all ages, skills development throughout the working life, and active ageing as a life-long approach to voluntary longer healthy working lives.

**Social protection must be a critical tool in managing a just and sustainable transition in the economy and the labour market.** Universal coverage of social protection must be provided and adapted to the individual, irrespective of the type of employment relationship.

**Social protection must be based on a renewed solidarity principle,** taking account also of profound changes in working relations, which Member States and the EU must foster among groups, generations, EU nationals and migrants.

**Public authorities,** from the governmental to the regional and local levels, must play a strong role in ensuring quality, universality and accessibility in the provision of public services.

All this means that the EU should positively promote social rights and social protection through its different policy domains, also in areas touching indirectly on Member States' social policies, such as EU economic monitoring measures.

ETUC action on social protection in the coming years will be mainly focusing on **four priorities**<sup>5</sup>:

- Pensions
- Long-term care
- Minimum income schemes
- EU coordination of social security systems

In line with the objectives defined by the Paris Congress, the ETUC permanent social protection committee may need to focus on other specific topics related to these priorities.

The ETUC has already clarified its overall priorities in the Congress documents, the ETUC Action Plan, and the documents concerning the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Semester. In line with these positions, and with specific regard to the four priorities identified in this Action Programme, the ETUC will urge the European Commission and the European Council to integrate and apply the following principles in all EU policies and actions:

- Universal access to public, solidarity-based and adequate retirement and old age **pensions** must be granted to all.

Public pension sustainability must be ensured, mainly by increasing employment rates and quality jobs across all ages, improving working and employment conditions, and by committing the necessary supplementary public spending. The fiscal sustainability of pension systems cannot rest merely on the prolongation of working lives linked to life expectancy, ignoring real job opportunities and quality for elderly people.

Member States must fix the legal retirement age taking into account a series of factors impacting on life expectancy including health (e.g. exposure to arduous work, life expectancy gaps linked to the socio-economic status of workers, educational and integration levels, etc.), dignity and inclusion, as well as labour market conditions and capacity. Adequate public pension income must be ensured to all workers. Public funding must be engaged in order to ensure adequate pensions after a full life at work. Pension system sustainability and pension adequacy, in the given European demographic, employment and economic situation, cannot merely rely on labour income, but rather on greater tax justice and redistribution policy.

Public systems must take account of the situation of millions of workers in Europe, particularly women, youngsters and self-employed, suffering insecure, atypical employment, periods of involuntary unemployment and working-time reduction. Additionally, the gender pension gap is extremely worrying. Public expenditure must be put into compensation systems which ensure adequate pension incomes to those who have inadequate or no pension entitlement at all, due to fragmented and discontinuous contributions.

<sup>5</sup> These areas have been identified as priority consistently with the ETUC action programme, accompanying the Manifesto of the Paris Congress; the seminar on the framework of the ETUC ongoing process to impact the European Semester, Madrid May 2016; the proposals advanced in the framework of the European Pillar of Social Rights (in particular see Priority 6 of ETUC Position on the European Pillar of Social Rights Working for a Better Deal for All Workers, approved Autumn 2016)

European minimum standards for publicly funded pension systems must be identified, with reference to median wage, minimum wage and especially living wage in a given country, as well as to adequacy criteria and prevention of risk of poverty, in order to allow decent living standards for all.

Pension reforms must offer clear and transparent eligibility conditions to all.

- Against the backdrop of a very jeopardised situation across the EU, **the right to quality and professional long-term care** must be established in all EU Member States, with common European standards covering access to care provisions, quality to ensure dignity for all ages and conditions, leave entitlements for carers and compensation for care leave.
- A European Directive on **adequate minimum income schemes** must establish common principles, definitions and methods throughout the EU. Such schemes need to be inclusive and embedded in a broader EU and national policy response to the risk of poverty. They must be designed in combination with other income support schemes, such as unemployment benefits, adequate social protection benefits and social assistance, access to quality services, and with active inclusion policies.
- Measures to ensure **fair and sustainable mobility within the EU** are needed, both improving the coordination of social security systems and properly enforcing portability of rights and benefits linked to supplementary social protection schemes.

From a methodological point of view:

The main challenges and consistent actions recommended to ETUC affiliates, related to these four priorities, are outlined in section 3.

The ETUC priorities on social protection are also pursued within a wider framework of actions, governed by a holistic approach. Further specific activities targeting social protection are proposed in section 4, to be developed within already established frameworks of actions of the ETUC<sup>6</sup>.

This resolution therefore integrates the ETUC priorities on investment, a renewed economic governance, labour market and wage policies. In pursuing the priority objectives and developing proposed actions, the ETUC will act in liaison with FERPA and the ETUC permanent committees responsible for specific matters.

## **ETUC priorities for social protection**

### **a. Pensions: main challenges and priority actions**

The primary mission of pensions is to ensure a decent/dignified standard of living after a professional career. The social adequacy of pensions is a precondition for workers. Under the lens of the economic monitoring of the European Semester, pension systems have been considered as crucial adjustment features for fiscal sustainability of public finances. A wave of reforms across Europe was introduced, with no other aim than realising line cuts in public spending, at the expense of the very purpose of pension policy to allow people a decent and dignified living standard

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<sup>6</sup> See the ETUC Action Plan, approved by the Executive Committee in October 2016;

in old age. The lack of any coherent pension policy meant these reforms resulted in reduction in pension coverage, adequacy and accessibility for millions of Europeans.

The problem of adequacy is a major one. The EC report on Pension Adequacy (2015) seems to acknowledge the increasing poverty rate among pensioners, but suggest no coherent response. On the contrary, the baseline scenario of the 2015 Ageing Report is that despite the rise in the proportion of people aged 65 and over, average public pension expenditure for EU-28 should be no higher in 2060 than in 2013. Such a perspective is unacceptable. The reduction in resources for old age and retirement pensions is worsened by unfair taxation policies which further penalise pension incomes, legal confusion, uncertainty in the new rules and mistrust of the systems.

- The ETUC permanent Social Protection Committee will be involved in monitoring pension system reforms, with mutual exchange of information and experiences to identify European trends. Specific focus will be on the identification of standards for universality and adequacy of pensions: national trends, indexation, pension taxation, protection of purchasing power, replacement rate, poverty threshold. Adequacy standards will be debated referring to median wage, minimum wage and especially living wage, as well as to replacement rate of the individual wage or relative wage position, where relevant....

The ETUC has repeatedly opposed the Commission's approach of linking statutory age of retirement to increasing life expectancy as the main path to increase long-term fiscal sustainability of pension systems. This approach fails to recognise that not all long working lives are also healthy, mainly due to exposure to arduous working conditions; that there is an increasing life expectancy gap also along educational levels; that large numbers of EU citizens are involuntarily unemployed. In addition, such an approach does not address pension adequacy. The ETUC has always affirmed that the most promising way to address the ageing challenge, thus ensuring adequacy and fiscal sustainability of pensions, is to focus on employment across all ages and thus the economic dependency ratio<sup>7</sup>, on substantial reforms for more and better jobs<sup>8</sup>, and solidarity-based systems. Public pension sustainability must be pursued through coherent economic and social policies promoting sustainable and inclusive growth, high-quality jobs, education and training, decent wages and the reinforcement of collective bargaining. These policies alone will bring positive consequences in terms of increasing employment rates.

- The ETUC will continue to oppose the linking of the retirement age to life expectancy with line reforms and recommend focusing instead on raising employment rates.
- The ETUC and the permanent Social Protection Committee will call for active ageing policies, aiming at voluntary, longer, *healthy* working lives as part of a life-cycle approach. Such engagement will intensify following the social partners' negotiations on active ageing and intergenerational approach.

While public pension systems suffer cuts, the Commission has made a policy commitment to privatise and individualise pensions. Different initiatives promote the development of complementary and private systems (second and third pillar pension schemes), also at transnational level, managed by private entities, with the supposed aim of ensuring greater adequacy of pension incomes. Instead of safeguarding and

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<sup>7</sup> "The ageing challenge is often illustrated by the doubling of the old age dependency ratio (population 65+ to population 15-64) from 26% in 2010 to 50% in 2050. Yet the real issue is the economic dependency ratio, defined as the unemployed and pensioners as a percentage of the employed", EU-Commission, White Paper on Pensions 2012

<sup>8</sup> "Many countries have considerable scope for improving the future adequacy and sustainability of their pension systems by raising employment rates, and this not just in the higher age groups, but also for groups with lower employment rates such as women, migrants and youths", EU-Commission, White Paper on Pensions 2012; "Raising employment levels ... is arguably the most effective strategy with which countries can prepare for population ageing", EU-Commission, Demography Report 2008

strengthening public pensions, the only ones able to grant universal coverage and security income, the trend is to give individuals more and more responsibility for ensuring they have a well-deserved, adequate pension income after a life at work, despite already low and insecure wages, through privatisation of pensions. It has been proved that this exposes pension savings to uncertain financial trends, and impact on collective solidarity and security for the mass of pensioners of today and tomorrow.

The ETUC has always supported the development of second pillar/occupational schemes, as meaningful instruments of economic democracy and wealth redistribution, under specific conditions. They must be put in place and monitored by social partners in the framework of specific agreements; pension funds must be regulated by social and labour law; and their governance structures must reflect workers' interests. However, such schemes are only complementary and cannot replace public pension schemes. These must be strengthened and safeguarded, as the only ones capable of guaranteeing universal coverage and income security.

- The ETUC will continue opposing such policies, which risk draining resources from public systems and do not offer any guarantee to workers with regard to future income from savings, while promoting and lobbying for stronger, efficient, sustainable and adequate public systems for all.
- The role of social partners in the governance of occupational pensions funds based on collective bargaining, however, must be enhanced to promote the protection of workers in supplementary pension schemes.
- The ETUC permanent Social Protection Committee will organise internal coordination among trade union experts, to support the ETUC secretariat in monitoring proposed developments on second and third pillar pensions (implementation of IORPP II, Proposal for a Pan-European Personal Pensions), with specific attention to governance, guarantees and risk assessment schemes.

## **b. Long-term care: main challenges and priority actions**

Demand for adequate, public and universal long-term care services is on the increase. There is a projected shortage of 1 million long term care workers in Europe by 2020. A common approach should be implemented urgently<sup>9</sup>, as a consistent response to the social and healthcare needs of the increasingly ageing population, aimed at accessible, adequate, professional and quality service provision for all dependants. Whereas the right to access long-term care is quite jeopardised across the EU Member States, in terms of its recognition, nature of service, quality, accessibility..., it should be an established right, embodied in a common European framework. This should be supported by empowering programmes both at national and EU level, specific investment plans and actions aimed at granting adequate, public and universal health and social services. Besides being a ground for investment, quality-job creation and inclusive growth, it must ensure dignity and quality and affordable services to all dependants, through integrated provisions at a cost that does not place long-term care out of reach.

Based on the right of any dependant individual to live in dignity, an integrated strategy is necessary and should imply interventions tailored to individual living context, wherever possible. In a wider perspective, better living conditions and greater inclusion and participation in social and community life may also imply reorganising elements such as mobility and accessibility, removing all kinds of barriers, to take advantage of technological developments, for example, in the fields of domotics, to redesign housing policies, and to bring dependants closer to their families.

Tailored policies are needed for caregivers, to recognise their work outside the informal economy, and for training and protection.

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<sup>9</sup> *Social Protection Committee's 2014 joint report on long-term care*

A balance is required between the needs of the persons concerned, the services provided by care institutions and those provided informally by relatives. Informal care arrangements by relatives (almost exclusively women) should not substitute but rather complement formal care. Service quality and accessibility must go hand in hand with the social recognition of those (mainly women) who provide care at home. Family caregivers should be supported by adequate measures (including working-time flexibility and leave), to be developed through collective bargaining, in such a way so as not to reinforce traditional gender roles. The burden of informal care arrangements by relatives must not fall solely on women.

- The ETUC, in liason with Ferpa, will engage in an internal discussion on the methodology for a proper legislative framework at European level for long-term care and the allocation of adequate public resources.
- The ETUC social protection committee will organise to supply and systematise data on the care of dependants (a European project has been submitted to this end)
- The ETUC will propose again the development of new targets to be set by the EU Council (similar to the Barcelona target) but with monitoring tools, possibly within the European Semester.
- The ETUC Social Protection Committee will coordinate with other ETUC permanent committees and lobby for a resourced, comprehensive and proactive European employment strategy for the care sector. Priority will be on quality, regular, declared and professional jobs, education, training, skill updating and recognition of competences, vital to improving the quality, affordability and accessibility of long-term care, while considering that formal care at the state does not substitute but rather complements informal care arrangements by relatives (almost exclusively women) and communities. Therefore, specific focus will be on the need to compensate family carers whose careers are interrupted, as well as appropriate leave schemes.
- The ETUC will make the case for long-term care as a source of more and better jobs and inclusive growth, with a predominant role for public authorities as investors, regulators and guarantors in the provision of public services conforming to criteria of efficiency, accessibility and high quality. The aim must be to maximise the collective return on allocated resources, in terms of social benefits.

### **c. Minimum income: main challenges and priority actions**

Minimum income schemes, at an adequate level, should be introduced to enable people to live with dignity, to be included in society, and to take up employment opportunities. Ensuring a minimum income plays a key role in reducing severe poverty, but not alone. Adequate minimum income protection has proved to be economically sound: Member States with such social welfare policies are amongst the most competitive and prosperous, as they act as economic stabilisers, within comprehensive social protection systems. Minimum income schemes should be designed to go hand in hand with active social and labour inclusion, in combination with a series social protection benefits and assistance services. Minimum income schemes need to be inclusive and embedded in a broader EU and national policy response to active inclusion. A European framework directive should establish common principles, definitions and methods to grant this right across the EU.

- The ETUC Social Protection Committee will undertake an internal debate, to take stock of national provisions, and of existing European level activities (EMIN projects, I and II). This will aim to highlight national specificities and different positions, so as to agree to a common proposal (a European project has been submitted to this end)
- The ETUC Social Protection Committee will present the main terms of the debate to the ETUC Executive Committee, covering: the combination of such income support schemes with active inclusion; their synergies with the right to adequate

social protection benefits, in all branches of social security; its integration with inclusive and adequate social assistance systems, including disability and old age dependency. The document will summarise the methodology developed to propose a European directive for minimum income schemes.

#### **d. A European dimension for social protection**

Stronger, improved, right-based coordination of social security systems across the EU must be reaffirmed as a public responsibility. The EU must play a crucial role not only in removing obstacles to the substantial enjoyment of social protection across borders, but also in promoting greater coordination of principles, systems and rights.

- The ETUC Social Protection Committee will monitor the proposals in the Commission's mobility package (announced in July 2015) with specific regards to the possible revisions of Regulation 883/2004 on the EU coordination of social security systems.
- The ETUC will promote actions for the full portability of social protection rights across the EU, and will therefore work to develop greater coordination of rules.
- The ETUC will work to coordinate the trade union group in the Advisory Committee for the Coordination of Social Security Systems, also supporting affiliates in better liaising with national public authorities involved, and with the Advisory Committee on Free Movement of Workers. The ETUC will also press for better cooperation between the Advisory Committee for Social Security and the Administrative Commission established through Regulation 883/2004, in order to have an active exchange on draft reports of the Administrative Commission.
- The ETUC Social Protection Committee will support the ETUC secretariat in liaising with national experts in social security coordination and with the EURES trade union advisers, to monitor and contribute to the different initiatives the Commission has launched in this respect (EESSI, etc.), identify common challenges, weaknesses, and priority demands concerning national standards, as well as identifying obstacles to mobility.
- Such actions will be developed in strict and coordinated exchange with the ETUC secretariat and the ETUC Permanent Committee on mobility, migration and social inclusion as well as with the IRTUCs Coordinating Committee<sup>10</sup>.

#### **Social protection in a holistic perspective: action for welfare and social protection in the framework of European policy domains and action programmes**

A holistic approach is necessary, and implies the promotion of social protection and social services throughout the mainstream policies of the EU, where the ETUC has already identified its priority areas and is already actively engaged.

Within these different frameworks of action, work on the four social protection priorities will be complemented with focuses on further specific features, such as healthcare and unemployment protection<sup>11</sup>.

Such actions will pay attention to the gender perspective, and have the third pillar of the ETUC action programme of the 2015 Paris Congress as overall reference.

**I. Ensuring the priority of social rights over economic freedoms by implementing a "Social Progress Protocol".** Fundamental social rights have come under severe pressure from several ECJ rulings which de facto subordinated them to economic freedoms. The ETUC strongly calls for a Social Progress Protocol, to be enshrined at the level of EU primary law, clarifying the primary status of fundamental rights, which

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<sup>10</sup> Coherently with priority area of action n. 8 of the Action Plan: For an inclusive and fair labour market

<sup>11</sup> which, according to ILO Convention 102, is one of the risks that must be borne by the Social Security.



must be respected in the daily activities of the Union and have priority over economic freedoms.

- The ETUC permanent Social Protection Committee will play a role in developing and promoting such a Protocol.

**II. The fixing of key employment and social objectives should include a relaunch of the headline targets post-EU 2020** on employment rates, poverty reduction, education etc., but this time based on a concrete action plan for achieving the goals.

- The ETUC will take part in the debate on the EU contribution towards the SDGs and the Agenda 2030, ensuring coherency with the existing frameworks at European (Semester, EPSR, ...) and international level (ILO Convention 102, ILO Social Protection Floors). In doing so the ETUC will coordinate with the ITUC.

**III. Social protection priorities must be put forward within a fairer European Economic Governance**<sup>12</sup>. The EU needs renewed macroeconomic policies, including fiscal policies that promote recovery and growth. This means releasing resources for development of social policies, creation of quality jobs, and activation policies.

There is a need to acknowledge the costs of social recession and increase public expenditure for social protection and social services, in line with demographic, employment and poverty trends. Additional resources for welfare must be made available, also by combatting illegal and informal economy, rethinking taxation frameworks and by ensuring fair redistribution of wealth, as alternatives to unfair fiscal pressure on labour. The European Semester represents a framework to advance our demands.

- The ETUC permanent Social Protection Committee will be actively engaged in running the project 'ETUC Semester 2.0 – Enabling a trade union influential presence in the EU semester'. The aim is to enable trade unions to be more influential in the process, notably the country reports, the national reform programmes and the country-specific recommendations. The collaboration with the TUSLO (Trade Union Semester Liason Officers) will be enhanced.
- In the development of such action, the focus on the main priorities outlined above will be integrated with inputs and remarks concerning the access to public, quality and universal health-care and adequate social benefits. Access to healthcare and hospitalisation are a prominent issue in the austerity context, as patients bear increasing burdens, as a result of lower costs met by public services and the privatisation trends in the health sector.
- A training will be organised by the ETUC and the ETUI on the mechanisms of the European Semester in February 2017, specifically focusing on the field of social protection
- The ETUC will promote a more developed exchange with the Council Social Protection Committee (SPC) in its policy advisory role for EPSCO, designing a framework to provide trade union inputs in a consistent manner and on a regular basis (such as contribution to the SPC reports, activities aimed at monitoring social conditions, social protection performance, and development of social indicators)

**IV. The social dimension calls for substantial investments**<sup>13</sup>. The ETUC strongly demands fiscal policies that promote economic growth and job creation, fair and progressive taxation, the "golden rule" in investments and a second EFSI (Juncker II) with a strong accent on public/collective investments in social infrastructure. The overall aim is to highlight the crucial role of welfare in growth and job creation (the focus on a European framework for establishing the right to long-term care in all Member States is consistent with its potential to trigger inclusive growth).

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<sup>12</sup> Ref. Priority Area 1 ETUC Action Plan and actions - Building an alternative and democratic governance for Europe

<sup>13</sup> Ref. to Priority Area 2 of the ETUC Action Plan: Investment for sustainable growth and quality jobs

- The ETUC permanent Social Protection Committee, with national experts and the collaboration with the ETUI, will develop briefing papers to make the case for public investment in welfare, social and especially care services, to improve their quality, coverage and accessibility, while creating quality jobs, integration and economic growth.

**V. Within the European Pillar of Social Rights, touching upon different policy areas, social protection represents an important part of a wider framework.**

Although the ETUC welcomes the initiative to establish a European Pillar of Social Rights in principle, the Commission's proposals are not nearly ambitious enough - including the suggestions concerning pensions, long-term care and minimum income schemes.

The EPSR must go beyond the status quo. The identification of benchmarks and standards for European upward convergence represents an opportunity for social protection assessment and priorities to emerge<sup>14</sup>.

- The ETUC will maintain its commitment to a right and solidarity-based approach to social protection, contributing to the development of a European Pillar of Social Rights. The members of the ETUC Social Protection Committee are and will be constantly involved in policy inputs and concrete proposals throughout the whole process. After the end of the consultation period, further work will be required in the next steps of the process (EC conference, ...).
- In elaborating aspects and items of the EPSR, the work on the main four priorities identified above may be complemented with specific attention to benefits and services aimed at preventing poverty and exclusion and providing inclusive assistance. Links will be established on crucial matters such as preventive aspects of health and safety legislations.
- The ETUC will actively engage in the debate on the identification of benchmarks and standards for European upward convergence. A European project has been submitted, including: a trade union assessment of national social protection systems and their performance; increased mutual knowledge; systematisation of the debate on the jeopardised reality of social protection in Europe in a critical view.
- Affiliates, through the members of the ETUC Social Protection Committee, will discuss about the development of a policy monitoring activity, both at European and national level, enabling identification of the links between economic, legislative, labour market policies and their impact on social protection. Such action will be designed and developed in coordination with other ETUC permanent committees and their priorities
- Policy and legislative developments on access to and adequacy of social protection for atypical workers will be discussed.

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<sup>14</sup> Ref. to Priority Area 7 of the ETUC Action Plan, and related actions - A social pillar for Europe