

**Social Standards: title?**

*DRAFT STRUCTURE & KEY MESSAGES*

*Outcome of TF meetings of 25 February and 16 March*

**Introduction: why do we need social standards?**

* Situation today (divergence and worrying trends: poverty, inequality, precariousness) vs EU principles (art. 9 and others), values and targets (Europe 2020 and beyond, e.g. SDGs): need ambitious actions NOW to move away from divergence towards fostering upward social convergence/not lowering current standards
* Reasoning:
* Rights-based approach/social arguments: ensuring fundamental rights (EU law and case law, international standards), a life in dignity and full participation in society for all
* Economic arguments: have more resilient societies and best performing economies (economic case for social spending drawing on academic and international evidence: IMF, OECD, ILO, for example effects on productivity, internal demand, etc.)
* “political” arguments: people are losing faith in the EU, social concerns must be rebalanced if people are to regain faith in the European project.
* Role of the EU / role of member states / role of CSOs (partnership, awareness raising against stigma and no take up, etc.)

**Key messages**

1. **What social standards?** (reference to existing position papers and members’ work)
   1. **key general *criteria* for adequate and inclusive social protection systems**

* Importance of adequacy and quality (not minimum/floor, hierarchy of benefits, positive VS negative activation, conditionalities, etc.)
* Holistic support – across areas (integrated) and across ages (lifecycle) for all (all groups).
* Equal opportunities/antidiscrimination (remove barriers to enjoyment of rights: access and high-level of take-up)
  1. **concrete elements of adequate and inclusive employment and social protection systems**
* Adequate income support
* Non-discriminatory universal access to quality and affordable care, social, health, education and lifelong learning services
* Quality employment (besides wages other elements important such as work life balance, stability of contracts and protection of employment rights, access to social security, progression in employment, etc.)

1. **How?** (role of the EU / role of member states)

* “Transversality”: coherence and complementarity of policies (between social and economic policies and more broadly)
* Binding instruments (legislation when possible: equal opportunities, etc.)
* Integration into existing policy framework (semester, etc.)
* Benchmarking and detailed indicators
* Financing of social policies and services: MS need to have money to finance services, social protection and social investment):
  + Budgetary flexibility / golden rule
  + Taxation (tax wealth where it is, tax heavens, progressive taxation, tax justice)
  + EU funds (e.g. 20% of ESF earmarked for social inclusion)
* Participation and empowerment of beneficiaries and civil society (not only in design, but also in implementation and monitoring)