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THE PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS – a step towards a social Europe?

In March 2016 the European Commission has launched a public consultation on the establishment of a “European pillar of social rights”. Its results will feed into a proposal for readjusting the European Monetary and Economic Union at the beginning of 2017. Trade unions and social NGOs have long been calling for legally binding instruments to strengthen social rights and social security in Europe. Both, the EU’s last Annual Growth Survey and its report on Employment and Social Developments put to evidence the persistent social disparities within and between the EU member states.

How can we improve in this situation social rights and social protection in the EU? How can upwards social convergence within and between member states be reached? Under which conditions may the announced European pillar of social rights achieve substantial social progress?

To discuss these and other open questions the German Trade Union Federation (DGB), the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB), Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour (AK EUROPA), Diakonie Deutschland and SOLIDAR cordially invite you to a conference. It will take place on

26 May 2016

in the Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the EU

Rue Montoyer 47, 1000 Brussels

Programme

10:00 Registration

10:30 Welcome address

Klaus Müller, Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the EU

10:45 **Panel 1: The European pillar of social rights – Expectations**

What should the pillar include and how can it contribute to a better protection of rights and a sufficient provision of social services? How can this pillar become attractive for non-Euro countries?

Thomas Händel, MEP GUE/NGL, Chair of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee of the EP

Manuela Geleng, Director DG EMPL, European Commission

Susanne Hoffmann, Head of Department in the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Berlin

Annelie Buntenbach, Member of the DGB National Executive Board

Heather Roy, Secretary General EURODIACONIA

Discussion

12:15 Lunch break

13:00 **Panel 2: Social minimum standards and upward social convergence**

The idea of harmonizing social standards between member states has long been abandoned. Instead there have been discussions about minimum standards and upward social convergence. How can be ensured that minimum standards are not being considered as downward convergence? Which concrete approaches are inducing common efforts towards better standards?

Frank Vandenbroucke, Professor, University Leuven

Anne van Lancker, European Minimum Income Network (EMIN), former MEP

Garance Pineau, Deputy Director for International Social Affairs, Mouvement des entreprises de France (MEDEF)

Bernhard Achitz, Secretary General ÖGB

Discussion

14:30 Coffee Break

15:00

Panel 3: Social investment versus the Stability and Growth Pact

With the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) the European Commission has made a step towards stimulating mainly more private investment. Up until now the Juncker plan has not shown the expected results yet and lacks ambition. Unfortunately as well, the Commission ignores the necessity to shape the fiscal requirements at EU level favorable to more investment. Has the European Commission abandoned the social investment programme? What should the Commission do to mobilize the member states to provide sufficient investment in social infrastructure?

Udo Bullmann, MEP S&D Group, Rapporteur EFSI

Nicolas Schmit, Minister for Labour and Social Affairs Luxemburg

Conny Reuter, Secretary General SOLIDAR

Christof Cesnovar, AK EUROPA

Discussion

16:30

Final keynote: key demands for a social Europe

Jan Marinus Wiersma, Senior Visiting Fellow, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, former MEP

Simultaneous interpretation German - English is provided.

Please register until Friday, May 20: event.nrw@lv-eu.nrw.de

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