

Employment and Social Affairs Platform II

AGENDA

European Pillar of Social Rights: challenges and opportunities for the Western Balkan economies

19 November 2020

Context

In the Declaration on Improving Social Policy in the Western Balkans, adopted by the Western Balkan Ministers in charge of social policy in November 2018, the Western Balkan partners committed themselves towards strengthening the social dimension within the enlargement process. They also agreed to use the European Pillar of Social Rights (the Pillar) to further promote reforms in the social sectors and thus to align labour markets and welfare systems with those in the EU.

In its Communication ‘*A Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions*’ of January 2020, the European Commission reaffirmed its intention to strengthen the dialogue specifically with the Western Balkans to foster the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

In order to monitor the situation DG EMPL commissions periodic reviews on the state of play in the Western Balkans concerning the implementation of the 20 key principles highlighted in the European Pillar of Social Rights. The reviews of 2020 produced by the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research under the Employment and Social Affairs Platform II project are now available for wider dissemination and further use.

In order to promote the European Pillar of Social Rights, this meeting will aim to showcase the findings to a wide range of national stakeholders, including representatives of the ministries of labour and social policies, education and finance. This meeting will also serve as a first contribution to the strengthening of the EU dialogue with the Western Balkans with a view to promoting the implementation of the Pillar objectives. The specific objectives of the meeting are as follows:

- To promote the Communication a Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions, whereby the Commission committed to strengthen the dialogue specifically with the Western Balkans in order to foster the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

- To promote widely the periodic reviews of the implementation of the 20 key principles highlighted in the European Pillar of Social Rights in Western Balkans in order to show performance and challenges on regional and national level and discuss the way forward.
- To promote the deliverables of the Employment and Social Affairs Platform II and to raise awareness and the standing of the project in the region.

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Thursday, 19 November 2020

10.00 – 10.10 Welcome Remarks and Introduction

- Ms. Majlinda Bregu, Secretary General, RCC

10.10– 10.20 Keynote Speech on the Role of Social Dialogue

- Mr. Markus Pilgrim, Director, Office for Central and Eastern Europe, ILO

10.20 – 10.30 Keynote Speech on Latest Developments in European Employment Policy

- Mr. Jordi Curell Gotor, Director, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

10.30 – 11.00 Introduction to the European Pillar of Social Rights

- Presentation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, Mr. Bernd Wild, DG EMPL
- Regional overview of the Western Balkans with regard to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, Mr. Nand Shani, ESAP II Team Leader

11.00– 11.30 Key Crosscutting Challenges with Regards to the Implementation of the Pillar of Social Rights in the Western Balkan

- Social dialogue: current situation and the way forward, Ms. Ada Huibregtse, Chief Technical Advisor, ESAP 2, ILO
- Skills for the labour market: current situation and the way forward, representatives of ETF, Ms. Lida Kita, Ms. Cristina Mereuta



11.30 – 12.00 Panel Discussion with Officials from the Region

- Ms. Daria Duilovic, Head of Department for Coordination of Education Policy, Ministry of Civil Affairs, BiH
- Mr. Xhavit Rexhaj, Deputy Minister of Education, Kosovo*
- Ms. Ljiljana Pavlovic from the Serbian Association of Employers
- Ms. Natasa Vukasinovic, Social Council Secretary, Montenegro
- Ms. Irena Ivanovska, Advisor for International Cooperation, Cabinet of the President of the Federation of Trade Union, Republic of North Macedonia

12.00 – 12.15 Break

12.15 – 12.45 Examples from the Region on Key Policy Actions on the Pillar of Social Rights

- Education system reform in Albania, Mr. Gerti Janaqi, General Director, Agency for Quality Assurance on Pre-university Education, Albania
- Youth guarantee in the Republic of North Macedonia - lessons for the Western Balkans, Mr. Mladen Frckovski, Head of Labour Market Unit, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Republic of North Macedonia

12.45 – 13.00 Conclusions

Mr. Lluís Prats, Head of Unit DG EMPL
Mr. Nand Shani, ESAP II Team Leader