



All Workers Count



Posted by: European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI)



**2014 Election Manifesto #allworkerscount
#publicserviceswork #closingthegap**

In 2014, a new term for the European Parliament and the European Commission meant an opportunity to change course by building a different economic and social Europe – one that puts the backbone of its development at its core: Europe’s workers and employees.

Core labour rights and decent working conditions – once held high – had been undermined and under constant pressure and threats. Relentless drives for more competitiveness of companies and firms had led to working conditions and pay deteriorating, with social protection coming under severe strain.

It was clear that ‘Securing a genuine social union’ for workers and employees had to be a central theme of CESI’s 2014 EU election manifesto. CESI warned that Europe should finally take sufficient notice of the social impacts and the human factors in its policies, and called for social and labour market

developments to lead economic policy direction – and note the other way round. CESI also underlined the importance of ensuring a full respect of fundamental rights granted to European workers and employees under the EU's Charter.

Since summer 2014, what has been achieved?

Towards the beginning of its mandate, little significant legislation came out of the European Commission, leading to the European Parliament's Employment & Social Affairs Committee keeping itself busy almost exclusively with own-initiative reports. Under the so-called Refit and Better Regulation Agenda, and encouraged by a Council of Ministers in which certain national delegations continued to block new social and employment legislation, the European Commission even scrapped some legislative proposals already on the table, such as on a new Maternity Leave Proposal which would have given thousands of young mothers better protection.

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In late 2015, CESI became hopeful when the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker – out of the blue for most – vaguely mentioned plans plenary for a new 'European Pillar of Social Rights' before the European Parliament's Strasbourg. It is possible that he himself did not know well back then what this would actually mean and that he was pressured by a public that was increasingly antagonised by ever increasing social inequalities in Europe. In the end Juncker's services in the European Commission worked about a preliminary vision of what a European Pillar of Social Rights could look like: A "reference framework" with 20 key principles and rights to support fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare

systems in Europe, ranging from (more) equal opportunities on the labour markets to fair(er) working conditions and social protection.

After an exceptional, year-long public consultation process, the 20 principles and rights were presented **in their final form in April 2017**. The principles and rights clearly lay out what the European Commission expects from Member States. They are also accompanied by new EU legislative initiatives for better work-life balance for working families and carers, better social protection for all, and better rules on labour contracts for all – including people earning their living in non-traditional and new forms of employment that are often still unregulated and open to abuses of workers.

A lot remains to be done before 2019

The European Commission put its cards on the table with their proposal for the European Pillar for Social Rights, and what has been tabled can yield a more social Europe. However, this does not mean that work has finished. It is too early to judge the social legacy of this term. The European Parliament and national ministers in the Council need to agree on quality legislative texts on the proposals submitted by the European Commission. The national governments in Europe's capitals need to take ownership of the objectives of the Pillar of Social Rights and make policies to achieve them. And the European Commission needs to keep the pressure high on these governments. In fact, it is up to all actors, governments, authorities, social partners and civil society organisations to seize the Pillar politically, administratively and legally and help put it into practice.

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governments in fact, it is up to all actors, governments, academics, social partners and civil society organisations to seize the Pillar politically, administratively and legally and help put it into practice.

In sum, the stage is set, but an awful lot remains to be done until Europe's workers can see again enough benefits to regain trust and confidence in the EU and once again fully embrace European integration.

CESI hopes for this best – Yet, realising the Pillar of Social Rights will cost Member States money: Better childcare, education, training and health are expensive. But the European Commission did neither foresee nor allow additional financial resources for the Pillar of Social Rights. In fact, many conservative actors in the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council of Ministers remain committed to little tolerance for additional public expenditures.

How to achieve social progress for workers if there is no more money to invest in people? CESI has for long argued that much expenditure in childcare, education, training and health is vital investment which increases social equality and even pays off economically.

Unfortunately, not everyone in the European institutions is convinced. This is why getting more European decision-makers to commit to more public social investments will be a part of CESI's election campaign for 2019.

Standout MEPS



Maria João Rodrigues

Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats

Elected into the European Parliament in 2014, Maria João Rodrigues has been a front-runner in the European

Parliament for better working and living conditions in Europe. As rapporteur of the Parliament's report on the European Pillar of Social Rights, her ideas contributed to inspire the final shape of the Pillar – even if some of her vision laid out in her draft committee report got watered down during

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negotiations with more conservative MEPs. If it had been up to Ms Rodrigues, the Pillar would have received more teeth, including new financial means to work towards the objectives of the Pillar.
