



**PROTECTING SOCIAL RIGHTS IN TIMES OF WAR IN UKRAINE**  
**EVENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON THE EUROPEAN**  
**SOCIAL CHARTER,**  
**3 July 2024**  
**Vilnius, Lithuania**

## BACKGROUND

To take stock of the implementation of the Reykjavik Declaration<sup>1</sup> as well as of the Committee of Ministers' operational decisions on reform of the European Social Charter system<sup>2</sup>, the Council of Europe is organising a **High-Level Conference on the European Social Charter** on 3-4 July 2024 in Vilnius (Lithuania). The Conference is organised under the Lithuanian Chairmanship to the Committee of Ministers with assistance of the Department of Social Rights; the Committee of Ministers Rapporteur Group on Social and Health Questions (GR-SOC) was entrusted with leading the preparation. At the conference, Ministers responsible for social policy will explore further steps to be taken to improve social rights protection and longer-term measures to be taken by the Council of Europe in respect of the Charter. The event will feature plenary sessions, keynote speeches and parallel events.

The full-scale war launched against Ukraine by the Russian Federation in February 2022 affected the lives of millions of Ukrainians who fled abroad, became internally displaced people, whose houses were destroyed, with their social and economic rights violated. The war has also immensely influenced the social and economic landscape of the Council of Europe member States. It is of utmost importance to **safeguard the social human rights in times of war**. The crisis caused by the war against Ukraine should not have as a consequence the reduction of protection of the rights recognised by the Charter, both within Ukraine and beyond its borders.

The case of Ukraine shows that, despite the challenges, horrific destructions and suffering, the EU integration process remains active and the reforms in the area of social rights remain high on the agenda of the Ukrainian Government.

The Council of Europe is implementing a **project “Enhanced social protection in Ukraine”** (project) within the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine “Resiliency, Recovery and Reconstruction” for 2023-2026. The project provides support to the national authorities of Ukraine in the launching and implementation of the reforms in the social rights sphere aiming to provide decent level of social protection to the population affected by war. The project works closely with national authorities and social partners.

Thus, prior to the High-Level Conference on the European Social Charter an **event on safeguarding the social human rights in times of war taking into account Ukrainian example** will be organised. The event will also serve to showcase cooperation activities implemented by the Council of Europe in the area of social rights in support of member States efforts to implement the European Social Charter.

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<sup>1</sup> [Reykjavik Declaration – United around our values](#), Reykjavik Summit 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, 16-17 May 2023.

The Reykjavik Declaration “United around our values” adopted at the Fourth Summit of the Council of Europe in May 2023, reiterates the crucial role of social justice for democratic stability and security and full commitment to the protection and implementation of social rights as guaranteed by the European Social Charter system. Furthermore, it proposed that a high-level conference on the European Social Charter be organised as a step to take further commitments under the Charter where possible.

<sup>2</sup> [http://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680a8412f](http://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680a8412f)

## AGENDA

Venue: Conference hall “Zeta” of the Radisson Blu Hotel Lietuva, Vilnius

(Konstitucijos Av. 20, Vilnius, LT-09308, Lithuania)

Moderator: Mr Rafael Benitez, Director of Social Rights, Health and Environment, DGI, Council of Europe

10:00 – 10:30	<b>Registration of the participants. Welcome coffee.</b>
10:30 – 11:00	<b>Opening remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Mr Michael O' Flaherty</b>, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights</li><li>• <b>Ms Monika Navickienė</b>, Minister of Social Security and Labour of Lithuania</li><li>• <b>Ms Oksana Zholnovych</b>, Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine</li><li>• <b>Ms Aoife Nolan</b>, President of the European Committee of Social Rights</li></ul>
11:00 – 12:30	<b>SESSION 1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOCIAL RIGHTS IN TIMES OF WAR</b> <p><i>The full-scale war launched against Ukraine by the Russian Federation in February 2022 affected the lives of millions of Ukrainians. More and more Ukrainians are becoming vulnerable because of destructions caused by military actions lasting for more than 2 years. The war in Ukraine also has a fall-out effect on the social and economic landscape in Europe and beyond. Safeguarding social rights during war becomes a crucial assignment for the Ukrainian authorities and for all countries that ratified The European Social Charter. This session is aimed at providing a general overview of the importance of protecting social rights in times of war with a specific focus on Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. It will address the following specific issues: The current situation and challenges in the social policy in Ukraine; the on-going reforms in the social protection area that are changing the entire (outdated) model; the support provided by Lithuania to Ukraine in the context of social policy in times of war; the support provided by the Council of Europe Development Bank to the recovery, reconstruction of Ukraine.</i></p> <b>Keynote speech</b> <p><b>Ms Alla Fedorova</b>, member of the European Committee of Social Rights</p> <b>Speakers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Ms Oksana ZHOLNOVYCH</b>, Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine (tbc)</li><li>• <b>Ms Galyna TRETIAKOVA</b>, Head of the Parliament Committee of Social Policy and Protection of Rights of Veterans (online)</li><li>• <b>Ms Tetiana LOMAKINA</b>, Advisor-Commissioner of the President of Ukraine on Barrier Free Issues (tbc)</li><li>• <b>Ms Justina JAKŠTIENĖ</b>, Vice-Minister of Social Security and Labour (tbc)</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Representative</b> of the Council of Europe Development Bank (TBC)</li> </ul> <p><b>DISCUSSION</b></p>
12:30 – 13:30	<b>Lunch break</b>
13:30 – 14:40	<p><b>SESSION 2. THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER AS A STEPPING STONE TO ALIGN WITH THE EU ACQUIS: THE POTENTIAL OF SOCIAL RIGHTS FOR A SMOOTHER ACCESSION</b></p> <p><i>On 14 December 2023, the EU leaders agreed to open accession negotiations with Ukraine and reconfirmed their commitment to continue strong support to the country and its people as long as it takes. The cooperation with Ukraine in the area of social policy based on gradual alignment with EU acquis and practices, and with international norms and standards, including European Social Charter, is actively on-going despite the challenges caused by war. Enhanced dialogue has been launched by the Ukrainian authorities with many counterparts from the Council of Europe member States in the social policy area. The aim of the session is to present how the enhanced implementation of the European Social Charter as a social constitution of Europe can assist in the EU integration process. It will explore which features the Charter and EU standards have in common, and address the following specific issues: Support to Ukraine in enhancing the implementation of the Charter and aligning national legislation with EU acquis; the key takeaways from the Lithuanian experience in the approximation to EU acquis; how cooperation projects and experience sharing with other countries, such as Germany, Sweden, Moldova, and others can help to make this process smoother.</i></p> <p><b>Keynote speech</b></p> <p><b>Dr. Giuseppe Palmisano</b>, Council of Europe consultant (Italy), Professor in International Law of University of Roma Tre, former President of the European Committee of Social Rights</p> <p><b>Speakers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Representative of the European Commission (tbc)</b></li> <li>• <b>Ms Iryna POSTOLOVSKA</b>, Deputy Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine on European integration</li> <li>• <b>Ms Rita ŽEMAITYTĖ-TACK</b>, Senior Adviser, International Cooperation Unit, Ministry of Social Security and Labour</li> <li>• <b>Representative of Germany</b></li> <li>• <b>Representative of Sweden</b></li> <li>• <b>Representative of Estonia</b></li> <li>• <b>Representative of Moldova</b></li> </ul> <p><b>DISCUSSION WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM HIGH-LEVEL PARTICIPANTS OF OTHER COUNTRIES</b></p>
14:40 – 15:00	<b>Coffee break</b>
15:00 – 16:10	<p><b>SESSION 3. PROTECTION OF CHILDREN’S RIGHTS IN THE BROAD CONTEXT OF WAR</b></p> <p><i>The impacts of war are uneven, and they greatly affect children as the most vulnerable group. The aim of the session is to present the immense work done by the Ukrainian stakeholders and the</i></p>

	<p><i>international community for the effective protection of the social human rights of Ukrainian children affected by war in different pillars: return of illegally deported children to Russia from the temporary occupied territories of Ukraine; protection and support to children who were relocated to the Council of Europe members states; efforts to building a system of better care and protection for all children in Ukraine; support to Ukrainian children who found temporary protection in Lithuania and the key challenges faced, as well as upcoming plans.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mr Dmytro LUBINETS</b>, Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights (video address)</li> <li>• <b>Ms Regina JENSDOTTIR</b>, Head of Division and Council of Europe Co-ordinator for the Rights of the Child, Human Dignity and Gender Equality Department, DG II, Council of Europe</li> <li>• <b>Ms Iryna TULYAKOVA</b>, Head of the Coordinating Center for the Development of Family Education and Childcare</li> <li>• <b>Representative</b> of the Family and Child Rights Protection Group of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour or the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service (tbc)</li> </ul> <p><b>DISCUSSION</b></p>
16:10 – 16:25	<p><b>Closing remarks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Claus NEUKIRCH</b>, Director of Directorate of Programme Co-ordination, Council of Europe</li> <li>• <b>Ms Oksana ZHOLNOVYCH</b>, Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine (tbc)</li> </ul>