

COUNCIL OF EUROPE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON  
SOCIAL COHESION

Contribution of the Governmental Committee of the European  
Social Charter to promote the fundamental social rights of citizens  
Excellencies

Dear Ladies and gentlemen

It is indeed a privilege and an honour for me to represent the  
Governmental Committee of the European Social Charter and to  
participate in this Conference devoted to such an important issue as:  
the investment in social cohesion.

I want to congratulate the Council of Europe and the Ministry of  
Public Health and Social Development of the Russian Federation  
for the organization of this important high level meeting.

I also want to greet all participants in this Conference who shared  
and will share their concerns and commitments in the  
reinforcement of stability and the well-being of European citizens.

These principles are also the main goals of the European Social  
Charter which is an international legal instrument aimed to reinforce  
common efforts to improve the standard of living and to promote  
the social rights of citizens.

In fact, the Charter defines legal rights as a mechanism of social justice (equality, non-discrimination, fair labour conditions); it guarantees the protection of vulnerable groups ( children, disable, elderly, migrants and unemployed) and it is an individual's rights regulating instrument instrument (supervisory system mechanism and a collective complaints procedure which allows civil society to participate in this system).

As a member of the Governmental Committee representing my own country, Portugal, and as Vice President of this Committee I have been participating in the monitoring system and sharing the success, obstacles, and different approaches experienced by the different Member States.

In this context I want to congratulate the Hungary, Slovak and Serbia for joining the group of countries which ratified the revised Charter as well as Russia for the progress made in the ratification procedure.

We had been facing an enormous political, economic and social changes during the last years enhance by the recent financial crises and its global impact. Nevertheless it has been possible to overcome the differences between the national traditions, the economic and social policies in each Member State and to reinforce the fundamental democratic principles and the social standards which are the core values of the European social model.

It has been a very demanding task for the European Social Charter, for the European Committee of Social Rights and for the Member States within the Governmental Committee which struggle with political, economic and social constraints at national level.

Regardless the difficulties the Charter and the monitor system have been able to adapt to the new challenges and to the diversity of the Member States and still achieve progress in social rights.

Starting with the revised Charter adopted in 1996 and the different Amending protocols in force, in the last years the whole system has adapted to the economic and social evolution that occurred in the last years. To address these changes, the Governmental Committee had made significant efforts to modernize the supervision system which is now more comprehensive, simple and yet efficient, allowing a lower burden for national public administration.

In 2008, a new system to submit national reports was adopted, the report form was simplified and the rules of procedure of the Governmental Committee were revised last May.

All these changes were adopted during the annual meetings of the Committee and it was possible to get all of them by the unanimous vote of the 40 member states!

On the other hand, the evaluation of national situations considered not to be in conformity with the Charter by the European Committee of Social Rights had been discussed at the light of economic and social criteria. This analysis has been enriched by the participation of Social Partners and national experts.

Bearing in mind the originality of the Charter which is a political instrument for social development and a binding legal instrument, it is possible to acknowledge its contribution to reinforce the European common heritage and facilitate the economic and social progress of the member States.

In this context, it is important that Member States and the Directorate General of Social Cohesion develops multi-disciplinary and innovative policies along with the individual rights approach of the Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs, in order to strengthen the fundamental rights established in the Social Charter. This joint cooperation is strategic to ensure the enjoyment of all fundamental social and economic human rights, and to promote the full respect of human dignity in Europe.

Thank you very much.

**Council of Europe Ministerial Conference** “Investing in Social Cohesion- Investing in Stability and the Well-being of Society”

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