

16th Meeting of the COE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET Collaborative Platform
on Social and Economic Rights

**Defending the Social Acquis: The Role of the European Social Charter in
Resisting Deregulatory Trends in Labor Law**

7 October 2026
(09:00 – 17:30 CEST)

Venue: Novotel Wien Hauptbahnhof, Vienna Austria

DRAFT PROGRAMME

08:30 – 09:00 | Registration and welcome coffee

09:00 – 09:30 Opening session

*Moderated by Tanya MONTANARI, Coordinator of the Platform, Department of Social Rights,
Council of Europe*

Opening remarks

- **Margarita GALSTYAN**, Head of Cooperation Unit, Department of Social Rights, Council of Europe
- **Siobhan MCINERNEY-LANKFORD**, Head of Equality, Inclusion and Sustainability Unit, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
- **Sandra KONSTATZKY**, Austrian Ombud for Equal Treatment
- **Austrian Ombudsman Board** (TBC)

**09:30 – 10:30 Session 1: Current challenges to labour rights protection in Europe: the
current trends and risks posed to social rights and the world of work**

The objective of the session is to establish a shared picture of the main pressures on labour rights and the European social acquis, drawing in particular on the evidence and experience of academia, available research, and NHRIs and Equality Bodies' experiences.

Moderated by Sandra KONSTATZKY, Austrian Ombud for Equal Treatment

Speakers

- **Karin LUKAS**, Scientific Director of the Vienna Forum for Democracy and Human Rights, Austrian member of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and former President and member of the European Committee of Social Rights

- **Tadas LEONČIKAS**, Head of Employment Unit, Eurofound
- **Ludovica BANFI**, Project Manager, Justice, Digital and Migration Unit, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
- **Merran HULSE**, International Reporting and Engagement Manager, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission: national perspective on labour-rights trends identified through monitoring, complaints and advice to public authorities

10:30 – 11:00 | Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:30 Session 2: Simplification and the social acquis: where should the red lines be?

The objective of the session is to examine where deregulatory approaches may come into tension with social rights, equality and non-discrimination standards, and to identify safeguards that should not be weakened. NHRIs and Equality Bodies should help define practical “red lines” from their national experience.

Moderated by Sophie HALE, Human Rights Officer, European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)

Speakers:

- **Georgios STAMATIS**, Member of the Parliament, Greece, PACE Resolution on “European guidelines to counter social dumping and labour exploitation”
- **Olivier DE SCHUTTER**, Member of the European Committee of Social Rights, Professor, Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium) and Political Studies Institute of Paris (France)
- **Sophia REISECKER**, Member of the European Economic and Social Committee, Vice-President of the Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC) and Head of the Department for the EU, Corporations and International Affairs, GPA Union, Austria
- **Sarah BRUCKNER**, AK Wien, Austria
- **Signe ANDREASEN LYSGAARD**, Chief Advisor on Business and Human Rights, Danish Institute for Human Rights

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 15:15 Session 3: A changing world of work: AI, new forms of work and climate-related risks

The objective of the session is to explore how technological and climate-related changes are reshaping working conditions and whether existing labour-rights, equality and occupational safety and health frameworks remain adequate. The session should bring forward concrete risks observed by NHRIs and Equality Bodies and identify emerging gaps in protection.

Moderated by Mariam RECHCHAD, Policy Officer, European Network of Equality Bodies (EQUINET)

Speakers:

- **Luis C. MELERO GARCÍA**, Legal Specialist in International Labour Standards, NORMES, ILO (Convention No. 193 on decent work in the platform economy adopted in June 2026)
- **Oliver PHILIPP**, Policy Officer, Future of Work, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) (digital transformation in the workplace)

- **Marouane LAABBAS EL GUENNOUNI**, Researcher, ETUI (Climate-related risks, including heat stress)
- **Lenka VESTENICKÁ**, Human Rights Officer, Slovak National Centre for Human Rights: evidence from national monitoring and casework on climate-related impacts such as heat stress

15:15 – 15:45 | Coffee break

15:45 – 16:45	Session 4: The European Social Charter and the Charter for Fundamental Rights as a Framework for Protecting Labour Rights
----------------------	--

The objective of the session is to move from identifying risks to considering how European human-rights instruments can provide effective protection in practice. The session should draw on NHRI and Equality Bodies experience in monitoring implementation, advising authorities, addressing violations and engaging with European monitoring mechanisms, and identify ways the European Social Charter and the EU Fundamental Rights Charter can better support their work.

Moderated by Margarita GALSTYAN, Head of Cooperation Unit, Department of Social Rights, Council of Europe

Speakers:

- **Olivier DE SCHUTTER**, Member of the European Committee of Social Rights, Professor, Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium) and Political Studies Institute of Paris (France)
- **Gabriel TOGGENBURG**, Head of Charter, Rule of Law and Democracy Sector in the Institutional Cooperation and EU Charter Unit, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
- **Abigail BOOTH**, Senior Advisor, Swedish Institute for Human Rights: experience on monitoring of social rights at the national level and engagement with international treaties on social rights
- **Olena KOLOBRODOVA**, Deputy of the Commissioner for Social and Economic Rights, Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights of Ukraine

Discussion themes:

- The role of the regional human rights treaties in defining minimum social rights guarantees
- Implementation of ECSR conclusions at national level
- Cooperation between monitoring bodies and national actors

16:45 – 17:25	Session 5: The Role of NHRIs, Equality Bodies and other organisations in Safeguarding Labour Rights, including monitoring and accountability: recommendations from national structures
----------------------	---

Moderated by Patrycja POGODZINSKA, Legal research, Equality, Inclusion and Sustainability Unit, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

Moderated discussion on the role of NHRIs, Equality Bodies and other organisations in safeguarding the human and social rights standards in Europe.

17:25 – 17:30 Closing remarks
