

# Towards a Pillar of Social Rights — Income Fairness and Social Justice at Work

ADOPTED AT THE EPP CONGRESS - MALTA,  
29 -30 MARCH 2017



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Jobs, careers and companies evolve. New technologies, innovative production models and globalisation change our economic fabric. **This also impacts the way we work.** Increasing flexibility, diversity and entrepreneurship in 21st -century labour markets are crucial drivers of long-term economic growth and job creation in this changing economy and must be combined with security, ensuring all citizens have access to dignified work and adequate social rights.

Europe needs a **dynamic workforce**, including both young and old, women and men, to support competitiveness and foster job creation in the global and digital economy. Protectionism leads to poverty — ultimately, import tariffs and tariff wars are paid in jobs and higher prices. At the same time, people want to be able to make full use of the possibilities offered by new technologies and production models to improve their work-life balance and skills.

Simultaneously, the changing economy drives an increasing **diversity in employment forms and relationships**. The difference between self-employment and employment has become vaguer in many new activities. Entrepreneurship, innovative production models and digital transformation increasingly contribute to our future welfare. We must ensure all business models also contribute to our social models.

We recognise that increased flexibility and diversity at times also challenge **employees' and employers' need for security**: for employers, security to be able to count on flexible employees in order to be competitive in an ever-changing world market; for employees, job security, active support for employment, income security and protection, opportunities for professional development and life-long learning and a healthy work-life balance.

Whereas digitally trained and high-skilled workers experience high levels of job security, **certain industries and jobs are under pressure**. At the same time, an increasing number of people **combine a primary with a secondary job**, whether in employment or self-employment, or involuntarily work in non-standard forms of employment or according to atypical contracts. These people sometimes experience **difficulties in exercising their rights** at work or in accessing social entitlements. This affects women in particular, who face an 18% pay gap, a higher concentration in part-time work and more career interruptions due to care.

The European People's Party is convinced that the competitiveness of the European economy is crucial for securing Europe's future. Therefore, **economic competitiveness and social progress must be balanced** in a highly competitive **European Social Market Economy**, aiming at full employment and social progress, and at a high level of protection for, and improvement of, the quality of the environment. A quality job is not only a source of income; it is also a driver of empowerment and integration and a protection against poverty. Effective social protection ensures that when confronted with setbacks, people have a fall-back position and concrete opportunities to re-enter employment. This ultimately benefits the entire economy. We want jobs that pay, with decent income and working conditions, and access to effective social protection for everybody who works.

Therefore, the European People's Party:

- Welcomes the proposal by the European Commission for a European Pillar of Social Rights, in order to strengthen the social dimension of the EU and stimulate convergence; calls on all Member States, social partners and stakeholders to actively shape the development and implementation of this initiative;

#### **Fair income and protection**

- Stresses that all work must be rewarded commensurately and that adequate social protection must extend to all employees, regardless of employment forms and employment relationships, including those in self-employment or in work intermediated by digital platforms, in order to ensure adequate income security and protection;
- Calls, therefore, on the European Commission and the Member States to tackle and counteract the abuse of zero-hour contracts;
- Calls on the European Commission and the Member States to update existing legislation to require all businesses, including digital platforms and other intermediaries, to report all work undertaken through them, in order to ensure adequate social security contributions and coverage;
- Calls, therefore, on the European Commission and the Member States to effectively prevent and tackle undeclared work and to transform such work into declared work, in order to improve working conditions and social protection; welcomes in this regard the European Platform to Tackle Undeclared Work to improve cooperation and information exchange between national inspectorates;

#### **Supporting those in need**

- Stresses that a broad safety net for people living on small pensions or suffering unemployment is crucial for ensuring personal empowerment, independent living and social security, and ultimately benefits the entire economy; calls, therefore, on the Member States to help those in need and provide them with adequate social protection;

#### **Free and fair labour mobility**

- Supports freedom of movement in the European Union as a source of prosperity and job creation; calls on the European Commission and the Member States to stimulate freedom of movement and increase public support;
- Calls, therefore, on the European Commission and the Member States to ensure full preservation and portability of social entitlements accumulated in different activities during one's career, including in other Member States, in order to increase employment opportunities and labour mobility, facilitate professional transitions and improve career security;
- Calls, therefore, for the application of the same rules on remuneration for the same work undertaken in the same place, regardless of gender or nationality;

#### **Improving work-life balance**

- Calls on the European Commission and the Member States to present legislative proposals on flexible working time arrangements and carers' leave, including in other Member States, in order to promote better work-life reconciliation, leave opportunities to care for family members and appropriate protection;
- Calls on social partners to work out adequate possibilities to avoid permanent availability and burnout while also enabling flexibility;

#### **Stimulating social dialogue**

- Stresses that social dialogue is crucial in order to balance competitiveness with fairness; urges, therefore, the European Commission, Member States and social partners to further stimulate social dialogue with the aim both to develop a new future-proof 'social contract' jointly agreed by the social partners and to prepare the future of the European Social Market Economy.

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The publication of this document received financial support from the European Parliament.

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