

Main messages from the Tripartite Social Summit, 24 March 2021



EU leaders and social partners met, via video conference, at the tripartite social summit to discuss the question “**how to achieve a fair and sustainable recovery?**” The summit participants intervened on the following three topics:

- handling the health, economic and social crisis while maintaining emergency measures;
- the contribution of social partners at EU and member state level for an economic and social recovery;
- the road to Porto Social Summit.

The **President of the European Council** Charles Michel said: “As we maintain vital emergency measures for workers and businesses, we also need to prepare for the future. The massive recovery package approved last July will be vital to power forward our climate and digital ambitions. The contribution of social partners in the framework of social dialogue will be crucial for the implementation of national recovery plans. At the Social Summit in Porto we will put social Europe at the top of our political agenda. We want sustainable growth that is measured in more than GDP. We want a prosperous Europe that protects our environment, invests in skills, and innovates and improves well-being.”

The **President of the European Commission** Ursula von der Leyen said: “Recovering from this deep crisis we need to focus on creating new quality jobs and equipping people with the necessary skills. To achieve this, I strongly believe in the importance of social dialogue, which is a central pillar of our social market economy. The Porto Social Summit organised by the Portuguese Presidency will be an opportunity for everyone, trade unions and employers, but also civil society and institutions, to renew our joint commitment on the Social Europe we want to build.”

From the side of the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU, **Portugal’s Prime Minister** António Costa added: “The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan is a crucial response to the present crisis, but also a response to the concerns of our citizens. We cannot turn our backs on those suffering most in this crisis, but we must also see this Action Plan as a tool for the future, linking it with our strategic agenda for a social and economic recovery propelled by the climate and digital transitions. It is essential that political decision-makers, social partners, civil society and citizens work in concert to get the recovery moving. And it is to promote this combining of efforts and commitments that the Portuguese Presidency is organising a Social Summit, to be held in Porto in May.”

The **General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation** (ETUC), Luca Visentini, noted: “Europe needs a fair, sustainable recovery from the pandemic, with a socially just transition to a green and digital economy.

This requires a strong industrial strategy to create quality jobs, the EU and Member States to back the Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights and commit to a fairer, more equal Europe at the Porto EU Summit. New legislation on minimum wages, pay transparency, platform work, due diligence, must be agreed soon. Member States need to make full use of EU support to prolong job and wage protection until recovery is complete and extend it to cover all working people. The EU must guarantee that spending on recovery will not result in austerity. Half of the EU SURE funds to protect jobs and wages are unused. If member states do not use the loans in the EU recovery funds, investment will be reduced by 40%. It would be a wasted opportunity to build back better.”

BusinessEurope’s President, Pierre Gattaz, representing employers, (BusinessEurope, SGI Europe, SMEUnited), said: “Europe faces the biggest economic challenge since world war II. European policymakers focus on limiting the circulation of the virus, immediate support measures for enterprises and workers hit by the restrictions put in place and accelerating vaccination programmes. EU financial support has been essential in the last year to weather the crisis. This still remains necessary to avoid insolvency of viable enterprises, and is particularly important for SMEs which saw their debt rising because of COVID restrictions. The Recovery and resilience facility will be crucial for future growth and employment. It is crucial to make good use of EU recovery funds to invest them effectively and efficiently, crowding-in private investments and developing necessary physical and social infrastructures. Moreover, more attention must be paid to the non-financial part of the EU recovery plan. Lean regulation is a costless way of supporting the recovery and improving competitiveness. Enterprises cannot absorb additional regulatory burden on top of the crisis.”

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