

Press release – European Pillar of Social Rights: call for highest possible common standards

Common EU-wide social rights, as proposed by the European Commission, the “European Pillar of Social Rights”, should be pegged at the highest level and not lead to a “race to the bottom”, MEPs stressed in a debate on Wednesday.

The Pillar’s three key parts – equal opportunities in access to the labour market, fair working conditions and social protection – were presented by Commission First Vice-President Frans Timmermans, who stressed the need to promote “upward convergence” among EU member states by reforming working and social conditions on the best available model.

In the ensuing debate, MEPs mostly agreed with the proposals, although several speakers called for more ambitious legislation at EU level. They also felt that more needed to be done to fight poverty and youth unemployment. Others pointed out that social security systems, which are costly, are the responsibility of national governments, and therefore opposed shifting more powers to EU level.

Commissioner Marianne Thyssen wrapped up the debate by reiterating that the pillar is the start of the process and provides guidance for better employment, while the details will have to be hammered out in consultations with social partners, and debates between the European Parliament, the EU Commission and the member states.

Procedure: Commission statement