EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

COMITÉ EUROPÉEN DES DROITS SOCIAUX

PRESS BRIEFING ELEMENTS

Conclusions 2014

Document prepared by the Secretariat not binding the Committee

Press briefing elements: Conclusions 2014 by the European Committee of Social Rights

Below follows a brief presentation of the latest conclusions of the European Committee of Social Rights on state compliance with the European Social Charter, the Council of Europe's main social rights instrument and one that is usually described as a counterpart to the European Convention of Human Rights, which reflects the indivisibility and interdependence of fundamental rights. 43 of the Council of Europe's 47 member states are currently bound by the Charter.

The European Committee of Social Rights is a body composed of 15 independent and impartial members. It rules on the conformity of the law and practice of the States Parties with the European Social Charter. In the framework of the reporting procedure it adopts "conclusions" and in respect of the collective complaints procedure it adopts "decisions".

The conclusions will be made public on the Council of Europe website on 22 January 2015.

Responsibility for the follow-up to conclusions and decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights, to ensure that States Parties remedy the violations identified is vested with the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers. Work in this respect will begin in the first half of 2015.

I. Introductory remarks: general overview of Conclusions 2014

In 2014, the European Committee of Social Rights examined reports submitted by States Parties on the articles of the Charter relating to labour rights: the right to just conditions of work (Article 2), the right to a fair remuneration (Article 4), the right to organise (Article 5), the right to bargain collectively (Article 6), the right to information and consultation (Article 21), the right to take part in the determination and improvement of working conditions (Article 22), the right to dignity at work (Article 26), the right of workers' representatives to protection in the undertaking (Article 28) and the right to information and consultation in collective redundancy procedures (Article 29). The reports covered the reference period 2009-2012.

At its session in December 2014, the Committee adopted some 725 conclusions in respect of the 41 states, including some 252 findings of violations of the Charter. Two States Parties (Croatia and Albania) did not submit their reports and conclusions have therefore not been adopted in respect of those countries.

There were 338 conclusions of conformity, whereas the number of "deferrals" (cases where the Committee was unable to assess the situation due to lack of information) amounted to 135 cases. The Committee received comments from some national trade unions and employers' organisations (Spain, Finland, Sweden, Greece and Georgia).

While the Committee found violations of the Charter in all of the countries examined the

number of violations identified was exceptionally high in countries such as Georgia, where the situation in respect of all provisions examined except one was found not to be in conformity with the Charter, followed by Azerbaijan with 13 out of 16 conclusions of non-conformity and Armenia (12 out of 17).

What follows is an overview of Conclusions 2014 concentrating on certain typical violations identified by the Committee as well as positive developments relating to the articles examined, illustrated with some concrete examples.

II. Illustrations of Conclusions 2014

♦ the right to just conditions of work

Under **Article 2** of the Charter the states undertake to provide for reasonable daily and weekly working hours, for public holidays with pay, and for a minimum of four weeks annual holiday with pay. They undertake to eliminate risks in inherently dangerous or unhealthy occupations, to ensure a weekly rest period and to ensure that workers performing night work benefit from measures which take account of the special nature of the work.

As concerns **reasonable daily and weekly working hours (Article 2§1),** the Committee found that the weekly working hours of certain categories of workers (e.g. workers in health services, surveillance of machines, guardianship of goods) may exceed 60 hours in Spain, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia and Turkey. Besides this, seamen are allowed to work up to 72 hours a week in Iceland, Ireland, Estonia and Italy. In Norway daily working hours can be authorised to go up to 16 hours. Daily working hours of up to 16 hours and weekly working hours of more than 60 hours are excessive and therefore not in conformity with the Charter.

In certain states, more flexibility was introduced in the management of working time, allowing for longer working weeks in some periods to be offset by shorter working weeks in others. Flexibility arrangements as such are not contrary to the Charter. However, their impact on the overall observance of the rights guaranteed by Article 2§1 still remains to be assessed (in Greece, Portugal, the Netherlands), in the light of the criteria established by the Committee In particular, it will have to be assessed whether under flexible working time regimes the maximum limits to daily and weekly working time are maintained, whether or not the employer may unilaterally impose flexibility

measures and whether the reference periods for calculating the average working time are excessive (e.g. longer than 12 months).

The right to **public holidays with pay, guaranteed by Article 2§2**, is generally respected by the member states, with the notable exception of the United Kingdom, where there is no specific entitlement to leave on public holidays. Different approaches apply on the other hand in different countries as regards the forms and levels of compensation awarded for work performed on public holidays. In this respect, the Committee considered that compensation corresponding to the regular wage increased by 50%-75% was not adequate (the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Greece).

As regards **the right to paid annual holidays (Article 2§3)**, some positive developments were registered in particular in Denmark and the United Kingdom. However, the Committee found certain situations of non-conformity on different grounds (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, the Netherlands and Belgium).

The Committee noted the efforts made by many states **to eliminate risks in inherently dangerous or unhealthy occupation** (**Article 2§4),** for example in Finland where the Committee decided to close its examination of the follow-up of the collective complaint No. 10/2000, STTK ry and Tehy ry (decision on the merits of 17 October 2001). The Committee considered however that Bosnia and Herzegovina and Italy had no adequate prevention policy. Even where such a policy existed, the Committee found in certain cases that not all workers exposed to residual risks were entitled to adequate compensatory measures, such as reduced working hours or additional paid leave (Greece, Austria, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russian Federation), or the state had failed to prove that this entitlement was the case (Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain, United Kingdom).

Most of the non-conformity **findings under Article 2§5** relate to **the excessive postponement of the weekly rest day**, namely the lack of adequate safeguards to ensure that workers may not work for more than twelve consecutive days without a rest period (Armenia, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Georgia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Slovak Republic, United Kingdom).

Workers' right to be provided, when starting employment, with written information covering the essential aspects of the employment relationship or contract (**Article 2§6)** appears to be in general well respected in the member states.

The lack of free compulsory medical examination for all **night workers** remained the principal ground of non-conformity with **Article 2§7** in a few states (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine).

♦ the right to a fair remuneration

Article 4 guarantees the right to a fair remuneration, such as remuneration that will give workers and their families a decent standard of living, or an increased remuneration for overtime work. The right to fair remuneration also encompasses equal pay for the work of equal value without discrimination on the ground of gender as well as a reasonable period of notice of termination of employment. Moreover, under Article 4, States Parties undertake to permit deductions from wages only under conditions and to the extent prescribed by national laws or regulations or fixed by collective agreements or arbitration awards.

Relatively few States in Europe have ratified **Article 4§1** of the Charter **on the right to remuneration such as will give workers and their families a decent standard of living.** It is the Committee's case-law that, in order to ensure a decent standard of living, the lowest net wages paid must be above a minimum threshold, set at 50% of the net average wage. There is a presumed conformity when the net lowest wages paid are above 60% of the net average wage, whereas if these wages are between 50% and 60% of the net average wage, it is for the State Party to show that they ensure a decent standard of living. The Committee found that, whilst some States in Europe meet the minimum threshold in the private sector (Denmark; Norway and Sweden), in the industries covered by collective agreement (Austria; Iceland and Italy) or for specific types of workers (immigrant workers in Andorra; experienced workers in Ireland), most fail.

Reasons are either a statutory minimum wage (Andorra; Azerbaijan; Belgium; Greece; Lithuania; Luxembourg; the Netherlands; Portugal; the Slovak Republic; Romania; Spain and the United Kingdom), or lowest wages paid (Austria and Germany), which are too low in comparison with the average wage. This is *a fortiori* the case where subsidised employment or reduced rates of the statutory minimum wage exist (Belgium, Greece; Ireland; the Netherlands and the United Kingdom). As for the public sector, the Committee found that the minimum threshold is mostly met for tenured civil servants, whereas problems remain concerning contractual staff (Greece and Spain).

Recently adopted austerity measures have impacted the assessment (Greece) or would have to be assessed in the next cycle. Some positive changes during the reference period

were deemed insufficient to remove this ground or further grounds of violation (Italy, Romania and the Slovak Republic). The Committee found the follow-up given to its Decision No. 66/2011 to be inadequate (Greece).

The Committee's conclusions were occasionally confirmed by findings of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ECSCR) (Spain and the Slovak Republic) and the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) (Greece, Lithuania and the Netherlands).

While the situation as regards an increased remuneration for overtime work (Article **4§2)** is in conformity in the majority of states, the Committee has observed that a number of states fail to guarantee the right to increased time off in lieu of overtime (Finland, Belgium, Slovak Republic, Turkey, Poland, Czech Republic, the Russian Federation).
In the particular case of the Netherlands, the Committee observed that because of the legislative developments that have abrogated the notion of overtime, workers may be asked to work extended hours without any of these counting as overtime and therefore not being remunerated at an increased rate, a situation which the Committee considered to be contrary to the Charter.

As regards equal pay for work of equal value **(Article 4§3)** the unadjusted pay gap (the overall gender pay differential in all occupations) has been around 15% on average in the EU in 2012, with some very high figures, e.g. in Estonia (30%) and among the non-EU states in Armenia (35% in 2010).

Under Article 4§3 the right of women and men to equal pay for work of equal value must be expressly provided for in the legislation, which is not the case in Georgia.

In relation to the enforcement of equal pay principle, the Committee has examined whether the domestic law of the states provides for appropriate and effective remedies in the event of alleged wage discrimination. It also examined whether in equal pay litigation cases the pay comparisons across companies are possible. For example, the Committee has considered that the situation in the Netherlands complies with Article 4§3, because in equal pay cases comparison can be made with a typical worker (someone in a comparable job) in another company, provided the differences in pay can be attributed to a single source.

Under the Committee's case-law, the **reasonable period of a notice of termination set out in Article 4§4 of the Charter** should be determined mainly in accordance with the

length of service. While it is accepted that a period of notice be replaced by severance pay, such pay should be equivalent to the wages that would have been paid during the period of notice. The protection of Article 4§4 of the Charter applies during probationary periods and covers all workers, regardless of their type of employment, and regardless of the ground for the termination of employment.

Regarding the reasonable period of notice in the private sector, the Committee found some cases of conformity (Greece and Lithuania), but also laws requiring no period of notice for some (Georgia; Lithuania; Malta; Slovenia; Turkey and Romania) or even most (Armenia; Azerbaijan and Bulgaria) grounds of termination. Occasionally, immediate dismissal was limited to serious misconduct (Andorra; France; Lithuania; the Republic of Moldova; the Netherlands and Sweden), in line with the Committee's case-law.

Most States in Europe, however, provide for insufficient periods of notice, depending on types of workers (Greece), industry (Iceland and Italy), or grounds of termination. As to the coverage of all workers, the Committee found that periods of notice and/or severance pay are inadequate in fixed-term (Poland and the Russian Federation) or temporary (Estonia and Norway) employment. For the vast majority of States in Europe, periods of notice do not cover probationary periods, or in such cases are of inadequate length. Regarding the reasonable period of notice in the public sector, the Committee found instances where the law requires no period of notice for termination for tenured civil servants (the Republic of Moldova in some cases) or requires a period of notice which is of inadequate length (Georgia; Ireland; Norway and the Republic of Moldova in other cases).

The Committee further considered that the protection afforded by the period of notice and/or severance pay should not be left at the disposal of the parties to the employment relationship (as occurs in Portugal for tenured civil servants, and Spain and the Russian Federation in some cases). It found the follow-up given to its Decision No. 65/2011 to be inadequate (Greece). Some positive developments during the reference period were deemed insufficient to remove this ground or other grounds of violation (the Czech Republic; Greece; Ireland; Italy; Lithuania; Moldova; Norway; Portugal; the Slovak Republic; Spain and Slovenia).

Article 4§5 of the Charter **is intended to ensure that workers and their dependants are not deprived of their means of subsistence**. For most States in Europe, the unassignable and/or unattachable portion of the wage was found by the Committee to be too low in

that respect. This was *a fortiori* the case where that portion of the wage is reduced even further for certain grounds of deduction, such as for the recovery of maintenance payments (Azerbaijan; Estonia; Iceland; Poland and Ukraine). Andorra; Belgium; the Czech Republic and Germany were, however, in conformity.

Article 4§5 of the Charter implies that the determination of deductions from wages should not be left at the disposal of the parties to the employment relationship. This was found to be the case where any derogation from the unassignable and/or unattachable portion of the wage is prohibited (Austria and Estonia). However, possibilities to forfeit, assign or attach the wage are often too extended, and could deprive workers paid the lowest wages and their dependents of their means of subsistence (Azerbaijan; Cyprus; Ireland; Norway; Portugal; the Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom). Some positive changes during the reference period were deemed to be insufficient to remove this ground or further grounds of violation (Estonia; Italy; the Republic of Moldova; Norway; Portugal and Slovenia).

The Committee's conclusions were sometimes corroborated by similar observations of the UN ECSCR (Spain, the Russian Federation and Ukraine) and the ILO CEACR (the Slovak Republic and Turkey).

♦ the right to organise

Article 5 guarantees workers' and employers' **freedom to organise**.

Concerning the forming of trade unions and employers' organisations, the Committee found the minimum membership requirements to be too high and therefore to undermine the freedom to organise (Armenia, Latvia, Serbia and Georgia). In this respect, since the last cycle Lithuania has amended its legislation by lowering the minimum threshold and consequently brought the situation into conformity with Article 5 of the Charter.

As to the freedom to join or not to join a trade union, the Committee found non-conformity due to the lack of adequate and proportionate compensation in domestic law in view of the discrimination suffered by a trade union member (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine).

As regards representativeness, the Committee found the situation in most countries to be in conformity. It however found that in some countries the criteria used to determine representativeness were not adequate (Georgia, Portugal and Ukraine).

In respect of Belgium, the Committee noted positive developments bringing the situation into conformity through the adoption of the Act of 30 December 2009, according to which the victims of discrimination based on union membership can now claim compensation proportional to the real damage and discrimination on the ground of trade union membership is prohibited at all stages of the employment relationship.

The Committee found on several occasions that police personnel do not enjoy the right to join trade unions or restrictions on the right to be excessive (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ireland and Malta). On the personal scope issue, the Committee notes a positive development in respect of Romania, who through the adoption of a new legislation in 2011, the Law on social dialogue, removed the requirement of Romanian citizenship for representation within the Economic and Social Council and therefore brought the situation into conformity with Article 5 of the Charter.

♦ the right to bargain collectively

The exercise of the right to bargain collectively and the right to collective action represents an essential basis for the fulfillment of other fundamental rights guaranteed by the Charter.

Under **Article 6§2 of the Charter**, the States Parties **undertake to promote machinery for voluntary negotiations** between employers or employers' organisations and workers' organisations, with a view to the regulation of terms and conditions of employment by means of collective agreements. The Committee found that the situation is not in conformity with Article 6§2 of the Charter in 9 countries on the ground that machinery for voluntary negotiations is not adequately promoted. These countries are: Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Slovak Republic.

In respect of Spain, the Committee concluded that the situation is not in conformity with Article 6§2 of the 1961 Charter as legislation which affects the right to bargain collectively and allows employers unilaterally not to apply conditions agreed in collective agreements was enacted without the consultation of trade unions and employers' organisations.

Under **Article 6§3** of the Charter, the States Parties undertake **to promote the establishment and use of appropriate machinery for conciliation** and voluntary arbitration for the settlement of labour disputes. The Committee found that Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria and Georgia were in breach of their obligations under this Article due to the absence of conciliation or arbitration procedures in the public service.

Moreover, in respect of other countries like Malta and Portugal, the Committee concluded that the situation is not in conformity because compulsory recourse to arbitration is permitted in circumstances which go beyond the conditions set out in Article G of the Charter.

With respect to **the right to strike, under Article 6§4** the States Parties undertake to guarantee the right of workers and employers to collective action in cases of conflicts of interest, including the right to strike.

The situation is not in conformity with the Charter in Bulgaria, Denmark and Ukraine where civil servants are denied the right to strike. Specific breaches of Article 6§4 of the Charter are still encountered in Ireland, where there is an absolute prohibition of the right to strike of police officers (see Decision on the merits of Collective Complaint No. 83/2012 European Confederation of Police (EuroCOP) v. Ireland), and in Sweden where the statutory framework on posted workers constitutes a restriction on the free enjoyment of the right of trade unions to engage in collective action (see Decision on the merits of Collective Complaint No. 85/2012 Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) and Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) v. Sweden).

The Committee considered that the restrictions on the right to strike of employees working in various sectors such as the energy supply services, telecommunication, nuclear facilities, transport, are not justified in 7 countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Italy, Republic of Moldova, Slovak Republic and Ukraine.

As regards the entitlement to call a strike, France was found to be in breach of the Charter as only representative trade unions have the right to call strikes in the public sector. In other situations, the Committee concluded that the requirements for calling a strike are excessive. This concerned Armenia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary and Portugal.

The Committee considered that the requirement to notify the duration of strikes to the employer or his representatives prior to strike action is excessive in Bulgaria, Italy and the United Kingdom. The Committee concluded that the situations in Armenia, Ireland and the United Kingdom are not in conformity with the Charter as workers are not protected in the event of calling a strike.
In the case of Germany, the Committee changed its earlier position as regards the prohibition of strikes not aimed at achieving a collective agreement. It considered that that the specific German approach of leaving conflicts of rights to be determined by courts while requiring that collective action must be directed towards resolving conflicts of interest is thus in principle in conformity with the provisions of Article 6§4 of the 1961

Charter, as long as excessive constraints are not imposed upon the right of workers and employees to engage in collective action in respect of conflicts of interest. The Committee reserved its position in case specific situations might indicate conflicts of interest other than those aiming at concluding collective agreements which cannot be solved by a competent court.

In respect of Norway, the Committee concluded that the intervention of the Government to terminate the collective action and impose compulsory recourse to arbitration in the oil sector conflict in 2012 was not in conformity with Article 6§4 of the Charter. The Committee found similar situations of non-conformity in the case of Iceland where the legislature intervened in order to terminate collective action in circumstances which went beyond those permitted by Article 31 of the 1961 Charter and Spain as the legislation authorises the Government to impose compulsory arbitration to end a strike in cases which go beyond the conditions permitted by Article 31 of the 1961 Charter.

The Committee reconsidered its position as regards the powers granted to the Public Conciliator in Denmark (the "linkage rule"). The Committee concluded that the situation is in conformity with Article 6§4 of the Charter in view of the specific features of the Danish trade unions system where trade unions are organised according to professions and considering that the activities of the Public Conciliator are subject to judicial scrutiny.

♦ the right to information and consultation

Article 21 protects **the right of workers to be regularly informed concerning the economic and financial position of the undertaking**, and to be consulted in good time on propositions which could substantially affect their interests, particularly the employment situation in the undertaking. Recognising the importance of harmonisation with EU norms where these guarantee comparable protection, the Committee has adopted the thresholds laid down in Directive 2002/14/EC, which represent an acceptable practical limit to the application of Article 21 to undertakings of a certain size. All categories of worker must be included in the calculation for the purpose of these thresholds. In the case of France, certain schemes which subsidised contracts for new employees up to 24 months, such as the CUI-CAE and the CUI-CIE, were found to also deny these same workers an effective right to information and consultation because they are not counted for the purposes of the threshold.

The right also requires an effective enforcement mechanism, such as a labour inspectorate, and remedies to ensure the right to information and consultation. For example in Spain during the reference period 4303 inspections were carried out by the

Labour Inspectorate and 1434 injunctions were used against employers. However, Spanish Trade Unions submitted comments which complained of recent measures which have restricted trade union access to information, and the Committee has requested further information in order to examine these issues fully in the next cycle.

Some countries failed to provide sufficient information concerning both the scope of national law and its practical application. Where States repeatedly fail to provide up to date reports the Committee cannot find conformity as it does not have access to all the necessary information. This was the case with regard to Italy and Norway, which have now been found to be in breach of Article 21 as they failed to establish that the right was adequately protected.

♦ the right to take part in the determination and improvement of working conditions

Under **Article 22** States Parties must **adopt or encourage measures to enable workers to contribute to the determination and improvement of working conditions**, the protection of health and safety in the undertaking, the organisation of social activities in the undertaking, and to the supervision of these matters. All of these matters are equally vital to the maintenance of a healthy and productive working environment which respects the human rights of the employees.

A large number of states failed to provide information on social activities and working conditions as well as health and safety. There was also often a lack of information concerning the legal remedies available when the measures put in place to ensure the abovementioned rights are violated.

The committee therefore deferred its conclusions pending receipt of further details in respect of 7 countries, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, the Russian Federation and Serbia. The situation in Estonia had previously been considered to be not in conformity due to a lack of legal remedies; however, pending further information the Committee has decided to reserve its position on this issue.

Owing to certain grave or repeated failures to provide information concerning all subsections of Article 22 in the reports, the Committee made 6 findings of non-conformity on the basis that it had not been established that some or all of the obligations concerned were fulfilled. The countries concerned are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Italy, Norway and Turkey.

The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Portugal answered the questions posed by the Committee in the previous round and following their response the previously deferred

conclusion has become positive. Cyprus accepted Article 22b on 5 October 2011 and this was the first report on its situation, which was found to be in conformity.

♦ the right to dignity at work

Under **Article 26§1 and 26§2** of the Charter, States are required **to protect workers respectively from sexual and moral harassment**, by taking appropriate preventive and remedial measures. In particular, employers must be liable for harassment involving their employees or occurring on premises under their responsibility, even when third persons are involved. Victims of harassment must be able to seek reparation before an independent body and, under civil law, a shift in the burden of proof should apply. Effective judicial remedies must furthermore allow for adequate reparation for pecuniary and non-pecuniary damage and, where appropriate, reinstatement of the victims in their post, including when they resigned because of the harassment.

On the basis of these criteria, the Committee considered that, in several countries, employees did not enjoy adequate protection from sexual harassment (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Ukraine) or from moral harassment (Azerbaijan, Finland, Georgia, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Netherlands, Turkey, Ukraine). In most cases, however, this finding was based on the lack of relevant information in response to the questions previously raised.

♦ the right or workers' representatives to protection in the undertaking

Article 28, guarantees the right of workers' representatives to protection in the undertaking and to certain facilities.

The protection granted to workers' representatives shall be extended for a reasonable period after the effective end of period of their office. However, the Committee found numerous situations of non-conformity where the protection afforded to workers' representatives did not extend to a period after the mandate (Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Lithuania, Norway and Romania).

The facilities granted to workers' representatives may include for example access to all premises, authorisation to distribute information sheets or financial contributions. In this respect, the Committee found that most of the countries were in conformity with the Charter. It is only in three cases that the Committee found situations of non-conformity as it considered the facilities granted to workers' representatives to be inadequate (Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine).

♦ the right to information and consultation in collective redundancy procedures

Under **Article 29** the Parties undertake **to establish an information and consultation procedure** which should precede the process of collective redundancies. The obligation to inform and consult is not just an obligation to inform unilaterally, but implies that a process (of consultation) be set in motion, meaning that there is sufficient dialogue between the employer and the worker's representatives on ways of avoiding redundancies or limiting their number and mitigating their effects through support measures.

The Committee found that the situation in the majority of States Parties was in conformity with this requirement, an exception being Georgia, where the legislation only covers the obligation of the employer to notify about collective redundancies, but does not guarantee the rights of workers and their representatives to be consulted in good time before the redundancies take place.

III. Europe restarted in Turin

The year 2014 was marked by the high-level international conference on the European Social Charter, organised in Turin on 17 and 18 October, which paved the way to what has become known as the "Turin Process".

The Conference provided a focal point for discussion of the imperative for, and practical aspects of, the reinforcement of the Charter as a key instrument to protect and promote social and economic rights across Europe. The aim of the Conference was to bring together the political decision-makers of the member States of the Council of Europe and its institutions and those of the European Union in a convivial and stimulating context to discuss ways of improving the implementation of the rights enshrined in the Charter, bearing in mind the far-reaching social and economic changes which have occurred since 2008, sometimes having a dramatic impact on the satisfaction of individuals' everyday needs.

Events in the framework of the "Turin Process" will continue to be organised, beginning with a conference in Brussels on 12-13 February 2015, organised in the context of the Belgian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe, which will focus on continued discussion of the reinforcement of the Charter and protection of social rights.