

Resolution 2644 (2026)¹

The 65th anniversary of the European Social Charter: social rights as the foundation of resilient democracies and social justice

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly is convinced that the aim of social progress set out in the Statute of the Council of Europe (ETS No. 1) is one of the main guiding principles of the Organisation and highlights that the European Social Charter (ETS No. 35 – “the Charter”) was drawn up 65 years ago as a cornerstone instrument and the counterpart, in the sphere of economic and social rights, to the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5).
2. The Assembly underlines the paramount importance of the European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No. 163, “revised Charter”) which, for 30 years, has formed the most comprehensive legal framework for the protection of economic and social human rights in Europe. It commends the European Committee of Social Rights for its outstanding contribution to this protection system.
3. The Assembly has been an unwavering supporter of the Charter. It plays a key role in the application by the Council of Europe member States of the rights guaranteed by the Charter, the development of these rights and the contribution that social cohesion can make to democratic security. The Assembly welcomes the fact that, in 2025, following its Resolution 2627 (2025) “Promoting universal health coverage”, the Council of Europe joined the Universal Health Coverage Platform (UHC2030), thus providing an opportunity to promote access to healthcare for all, as guaranteed by the Charter.
4. The Assembly is concerned that the rights guaranteed by the Charter are today under unprecedented pressures, with major financial, administrative and social implications for governments, institutions and citizens, and welcomes the renewed commitment of the member States in favour of these rights and of social justice, as asserted in the Reykjavík Declaration of 2023 and the High-Level Conference on the Charter held in Vilnius in 2024.
5. This social rights-centred approach is in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights of the European Union and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and echoes the Doha Declaration, adopted at the Second World Summit for Social Development in 2025. Such an emphasis is all the more necessary in the light of the International Labour Organization’s 2026 report on employment and social trends, which highlights the persistent structural weaknesses of labour markets and the urgent need to strengthen social rights and protections.
6. Decent living conditions and social justice and cohesion are recognised to be essential at European and international level for democracy to be stable, and anything which undermines them is acknowledged to pose a direct threat to democratic security. For the Council of Europe member States, this means that the Charter is one of the keys to their democratic stability.

1. *Assembly debate* on 29 January 2026 (8th sitting) (see [Doc. 16335](#), report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Mr Paul Galles). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 29 January 2026 (8th sitting).

See also [Recommendation 2304 \(2026\)](#).

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7. In the Assembly's view, acknowledging this is crucial. It therefore welcomes the fact that the Secretary General of the Council of Europe has emphasised the centrality of social rights and social justice to democracy, placing this dimension among the key elements of democratic stability in his roadmap towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe.

8. With this goal in mind, the Assembly values the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter Providing for a System of Collective Complaints (ETS No. 158, "Collective Complaints Protocol") and regrets the fact that only sixteen of the States Parties to the Charter and the revised Charter have ratified it. The collective complaints procedure is the main institutional channel through which civil society – NGOs and social partners – can take part in the Charter system. It is relevant to all the generations in that it provides a channel for the social concerns of the entire population, from the young to the elderly, to be directly raised by those affected. In this connection, the Assembly regards ratification of the Collective Complaints Protocol both as a sign of democratic maturity and a concrete measure to foster democratic participation, expressing confidence in the principles which should guide society for all generations in the years to come.

9. The Assembly welcomes the decision of the Republic of Moldova to host the next High-Level Conference on the Charter in Chişinău on 18 and 19 March 2026. It urges the member States who will meet in Chişinău to agree on measures recognising that investing in social rights is both a moral imperative and a key strategic step in protecting democratic stability by reducing inequalities, strengthening social cohesion and social justice and restoring trust in institutions.

10. The Assembly urges member States to demonstrate to their populations their commitment to addressing the social and economic inequalities in European societies by reaffirming their support for a united and resolute implementation of the Charter. It encourages the ten member States which have not yet ratified the revised Charter – Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Poland, San Marino, Switzerland and the United Kingdom – to take advantage of the momentum provided by the Chişinău conference to add their ratifications.

11. The Assembly also calls again on the four countries which have not yet done so, namely Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom, to ratify the Protocol amending the European Social Charter (ETS No. 142, "Turin Protocol"), which provides for the members of the European Committee of Social Rights to be elected by the Assembly, as already requested in Assembly Resolutions 1824 (2011) "The role of parliaments in the consolidation and development of social rights in Europe" and 2180 (2017) "The 'Turin process': reinforcing social rights in Europe".

12. The Assembly is convinced that for the Charter to have a real impact within member States, parliamentarians must be amongst its strong supporters and in a position to use its provisions in their work. National parliaments are however often overlooked in this respect. It is crucial to think more about the potential they represent.

13. Members of national parliaments are central to the life of the Charter because it is they that line up legislation and national budgets relating to Charter obligations, hold the executive to account in relation to the findings of the European Committee of Social Rights, instigate reforms in areas where shortfalls in the implementation of social rights persist and promote the process of ratifying the Charter. Owing to their dual role as members of the Assembly and their national parliaments, Assembly members have a particular duty to contribute to these efforts.

14. In the light of the above, the Assembly calls on the parliaments of the member States to draw up a programme of activities in the wake of the Chişinău conference to give practical expression to this new drive and, in particular to:

- 14.1. strengthen the capacities and knowledge of parliamentarians and parliamentary research services with regard to the Charter;
- 14.2. systematically integrate the Charter into studies on the impact of draft legislation;
- 14.3. hold parliamentary hearings on progress on the implementation of decisions taken by the European Committee of Social Rights, to which civil society and social partners should be invited;
- 14.4. hold a debate on the ratification of the revised Charter, the Turin Protocol and the Collective Complaints Protocol;
- 14.5. review, one by one, the provisions that they have not accepted, with a view to their adoption;
- 14.6. review, one by one, the reservations adopted on ratification of the Charter and its protocols, with a view to lifting them;

14.7. establish specific co-operation on social rights with the national institutions tasked with protecting human rights.

15. Lastly the Assembly would point out that in order to guarantee that European system for the protection of social rights is clear, consistent and legally certain, particular emphasis should be placed on the interpretation of the Charter by the European Committee of Social Rights. In this connection, the Assembly considers that national authorities, including parliaments and courts, are duty-bound to take full account of the findings, conclusions, decisions and statements of interpretation of the Committee when applying the Charter in order to take the required legal, social and economic measures at national level.