

The Implementation of the *European Pillar of Social Rights* (EPSR) in the Post-Pandemic Era

Laura Gómez Urquijo¹

Abstract: *The European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) was to be implemented in a growth and stability period, once the financial crisis was overcome. However, an unexpected and bigger social and economic crisis has developed with the COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of employment opportunities, the precarious working conditions and the intensification of vulnerabilities predict that this crisis will be more harmful to European cohesion than its predecessor. In response to these challenges, the EU institutions have proposed extraordinary funding instruments and have transformed the former economic governance rules aiming at improving employment and growth, environment, but also of the resilience of a more inclusive and fairer society. Our research question refers to how this context can affect the implementation of the European Pillar and Social Rights. To answer this question, first, we will review the instruments provided in the EPSR for its implementation. Second, we will consider how this implementation is conditioned by the transformation of the economic governance rules from the 2008 crisis to the current crisis. Third, we will examine the Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights launched during the European Council Porto Summit.*

Keywords: *Social rights, European Union, economic governance, social cohesion.*
JEL Codes: D630, F590.

Introduction

The economic policy proposed by the European Union (EU) during the 2009 financial crisis and its consequences on social expenses cuts (European Council, 2012) evoked questions about the reinforced framework of economic governance and its coherence with the principles of solidarity and cohesion (Degryse et al., 2013; Armstrong, 2013). Citizens were dissatisfied with both their national governments and the European initiatives. The EU's growing awareness of the impact of its decisions was observed at the later stages of the crisis (Bekker & Klose, 2013). Accordingly, a progressive change was noted in the positions taken by European institutions (European Commission, 2012). The European Commission echoed the public discontent, highlighting the need to offer solutions to the growing political and social difficulties and execute necessary reforms. Economic growth was connected to the intensification of the social dimension, affirming that "strengthening the social dimension should help all member states to reach their growth and employment potential, improve social cohesion and avoid the increase in disparities" (European Commission, 2013). Once the EU was emerging out of the crisis, the *Five Presidents' Report* (European Commission, 2015) tabled social development as an economic imperative. It is crucial to mention the *White Paper on the Future of Europe* in this context. This document postulates five possible scenarios

¹ Laura Gómez Urquijo holds a Jean Monnet Chair on EU Economic and Legal Integration granted by the European Commission. She is Associate Professor of Economics of the European Union at the University of Deusto, where she has performed, among others, the following duties: Head of the Department of Economics at the Faculty of Law, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Law and Director of the UNESCO Chair for Human Resources Training in Latin America. She has been principal researcher in research projects funded by international, national and regional public entities (European Commission, Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Basque Government, Diputación Foral de Bizkaia). She takes part of the research group EDISPe (Economics, Development and Social Innovation for People) and has published more than 50 research contributions on EU policies and its social impact in academic journals, books and conferences.
E-mail: laura.gomez@deusto.es.

according to the extent to which diverse policies are integrated and conferring special consideration to the social agenda (European Commission, 2017a). The European Commission (2017b) offered a *Reflection Paper on the European Social Dimension* to encourage debates on these potential scenarios and ascertain the social advantages and disadvantages of each alternative. The European Commission's concerns were finally crystallized into the proposal for the *European Pillar of Social Rights* (EPSR), which was adopted at the Gothenburg Social Summit in November 2017 (European Commission, 2017c).

The EPSR was presented as a guide to the member states, which were expected to renew their process of convergence toward improved working and living conditions. The initiative is committed to avoiding social fragmentation and social dumping in Europe and reaffirms rights already recognized and present in the *acquis* of the Union. It also connects these social rights to other international declarations of rights protection, such as the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals* established for the 2030 *Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United Nations, 2012). The EPSR aims to guide employment and social achievements in response to current and future challenges; for instance, its Preamble mentions the evolution of the European labour market, the challenges posed by globalization, and the consequences of the crisis on youth and long-term unemployment. The document establishes a rights framework synthesized by the establishment of twenty essential principles. In doing so, it aims to meet public needs and ensure greater social protection. Ten of the rights are devoted to social protection and inclusion, and the rest pertain to employment and labour markets, once again demonstrating the priority accorded to the latter issue by EU social policy.

These proposals were to be implemented during a growth and stability period once the financial crisis was overcome. However, an unexpected and more extensive social and economic crisis occurred because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of employment opportunities, the precariousness of working conditions, and the intensification of vulnerabilities cause governments to anticipate that this calamity will injure European cohesion more than its predecessor (EAPN, 2020). Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, stated in response to these challenges that “the Recovery Plan turns the enormous challenge we face into an opportunity, not only through its support for recovery but also by investing in our future” (European Commission, 2020a). The European Green Deal and digitization are deemed drivers of employment and growth. They are believed to improve the environment and to showcase the resilience of a fairer and more inclusive society promoted by the European Commission. The present study's research question refers to how this context can affect the implementation of the European Pillar and Social Rights. First, the instruments provided in the EPSR for its implementation are reviewed. Second, the study contemplates how the execution of the EPSR is conditioned by the transformation of the rules of economic governance from the 2008 crisis to the current crisis. Third, the Action Plan for the implementation of the EPSR launched at the recent European Council Porto Summit is scrutinized (European Commission, 2021a).

Tools for the coordination of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) in member states

The limitations of the EPSR have been widely underlined vis-à-vis its scope and lack of enforcement (Bonciu, 2018; Vesan, 2019). It takes the form of a European Commission recommendation to guide the future actions of member states. Thus, in significant terms, it denotes a non-binding legal instrument. The communication undertaken to establish the EPSR (European Commission, 2017c) states that compliance with the initiative is a joint responsibility as most of the instruments

necessary to develop its principles are vested in national, regional, and local authorities and social partners. The EU, particularly the European Commission, can contribute to the development of the recognized rights only by establishing a framework that respects national circumstances. It is explicit that member states or social partners command the primary or exclusive competencies in some areas intrinsic to the EPSR, such as social protection, education, health care, or labour laws, systems that operate on the principle of subsidiarity. Such multilevel governance structures mandate the European Commission's acknowledgment that the main problem in numerous instances is not the recognition of rights but their effective implementation. Cases exist in which citizens cannot enjoy the admitted rights because of the lack of execution of existing legislation. A support strategy is envisaged to overcome this difficulty through the mobilization of the following instruments toward the implementation of the EPSR and its supervision: legislation, social dialogue, financial support from EU funds, and the use of the European Commission's European Semester as a procedure for coordination.

Given the legal nature of the EPSR, the recognized rights are not directly applicable; instead, they must be transposed to national legislation or specific actions. The Communication states that additional legislative initiatives may be necessary to render some of the rights and principles effective. In one sense, this requirement implies a strengthening of EU legislation in the domains established in the EPSR, such as the coordination of social security systems or work-life balance. At the same time, the mandate emphasizes the effective implementation of existing legislation by member states. To this end, it is intended to develop mechanisms to ensure compliance, issue guidelines for their interpretation, or offer non-legislative support measures. The European Commission is also committed to the review of the contribution of social partners by promoting the enhancement of social discourse, as reflected in the declaration entitled *A New Beginning for Social Dialogue* signed by the European Council, the European Commission, and the EU's social partners (European Commission, 2016). From a financial point of view, it is established that the European Commission will work closely with national, local, and regional authorities to ensure that funding is geared toward the priorities established in the EPSR. The European Social Funds, the Youth Employment Initiative, the European Globalization Fund, and the Fund for Aid to the Most Disadvantaged are expressly envisaged to bolster the development of the EPSR.

The European Semester procedure accomplishes coordination of the national implementation of the EPSR. This instrument was launched during the financial crisis as a coordination and supervision tool for national policies, setting out the priorities of member states, and offering recommendations for the revision of their National Reform Programmes (Costamagna, 2013; Bekker, 2015). The Semester initially aimed at exercising control over fiscal discipline but has been progressively incorporated social goals through the setting of objectives and recommendations given to states in areas as employment, poverty or social protection (Zeitlin and Vanhercke, 2018). Nevertheless, the coordination of social objectives has been criticised due to the vagueness of recommendations, the lack of adequate supervision, and the paucity of sanctions in instances of non-compliance in contrast with fiscal discipline through precise objectives, strict supervision, and applied sanctions (Copeland & Daly, 2018; Dawson, 2018; EU Semester Alliance, 2015).

We can argue that the European Pillar of Social Rights contributes to the social character of the European Semester by incorporating a new set of indicators. This Social Scoreboard (annexe to the EPSR) offers an online measurement and consultation tool with more than 90 indicators structured around the following dimensions: equal opportunities and access to the labour markets; dynamic labour markets and fair

working conditions; and public aid, social protection, and social inclusion (European Commission, 2017d). The Social Scoreboard aims to monitor the social progress of the member states in a tangible, comprehensive, and objective manner, understanding the capacity of states to improve and maintain well-being and opportunities, and creating conditions that allow citizens to achieve their full potential and meet their basic needs. We underline the potential of this tool to effect comparative analyses of the circumstances of member states and to design harmonized macroeconomic recommendations to satisfy social objectives. Likewise, the incorporation of these indicators into the assessment of national compliance offers comparative measurements aiming to support the monitoring of social convergence between EU regions. Sabato et al. (2018) accurately assert that the Social Scoreboard is a step forward in the implementation of the EPSR but needs further refinement. The potential of these indicators emanates from the extent to which they compare results, suggest policies to states, and enforce their recommendations.

The influence of a new economic governance framework in the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)

As noted, the European reaction to the 2008 financial crisis was defined by the fiscal discipline required from the reinforced economic governance. As it has been widely concluded, austerity policies arising from that strategy affected the capacity of social systems and led to wider social gaps (Social Protection Committee, 2015; European Commission & Social Protection Committee, 2015; Caritas, 2015; Eurostat, 2017). Social cohesion was determined by the economic governance model in this framework. It is hence extremely meaningful that the European Commission has corrected its direction, prioritizing economic stimulus over budgetary stability in response to the pandemic. As soon as the COVID-19 crisis intensified, the safeguard clause of the *Stability and Growth Pact* (SGP) was activated. For the first time and due to exceptional circumstances, the rules of fiscal discipline were suspended. Thus, the European Commission allows governments to take the measures necessary to assist the most vulnerable sectors and citizens, even if their deficits exceed the limits set in the SGP. The procedures of the SGP are not paralyzed through this interruption because states must continue to provide information and monitor their financial circumstances to return to the path of discipline “where conditions permit”. Consequently, a rapid reaction was observed in injecting public money into the economy and trying to sustain the labour market. Equally, more flexibility was accorded to states for the granting of direct aid or subsidies to companies that faced liquidity difficulties because of the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic. A new exception was thus applied to a key rule of the European internal market based on the strong defence of free competition. This opening of the doors to public spending, albeit under some controls, is undoubtedly a significant change in the EU approach to social needs. The possibility of extending support and public services to the most socially and economically affected by the pandemic offers member states the opportunity of mitigating the more severe consequences of inequality gaps (Stiglitz, 2020; Thill, 2020; Vanhercke et al., 2020).

The mobilization of financial resources by European institutions at a level not achieved at any other moment in the history of the EU must also be noted as a differential factor in addressing the current crisis. Thus, the European Commission, burdened by the debt crisis and the difficulties of fundraising in the financial markets during the previous crisis, is currently driving its largest package of fiscal expansion measures. Among these, the increase in budgetary expenditure to 2% of gross domestic product (GDP) may be highlighted, along with the possibility of raising funds in financial markets and the strengthened Next Generation Europe financial framework,

which will raise the total financial capacity of the Union budget to EUR 1.85 billion (European Commission, 2020a). On its part, the European Central Bank, which was cautious and late in its reaction to monetary stimulus in the previous crisis, has deployed determined expansion measures with great speed and intensity (Darvas, 2020).

As noted above, this expansive policy can become a tool for the alleviation of growing inequalities depending on the extent to which it can sustain cohesion and expenditure. The current environment thus represents an opportunity for the implementation of the EPSR. However, no quantitative analysis is yet possible because the allocation of funds is incomplete. The Recovery and Resilience Fund (Regulation (EU) 2021/24) is the largest instrument of the Next Generation EU, offering EUR 312 billion in transfers and not loans. It will allocate 70% of its national disbursements by 2021-22, considering populations and, in reverse, per capita GDP and unemployment. The remaining 30% will be allocated by 2023 and will be calculated based on production losses. Some preliminary studies forecast corrective distributions to equalize divergences between states (Watzka, 2020; Watt, 2020).

The *Temporary Support Instrument to Mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency* (SURE) (European Commission, 2020b) is another emergent tool that can also potentially correct inequalities. This mechanism was launched at the onset of the crisis and offered loans to finance public expenditure related to the maintenance of jobs to assist vulnerable workers, paying particular attention to youth and women. Similarly, the *Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe* (REACT-EU) initiative may be highlighted. It will allocate funds according to the socio-economic conditions of member states, using indicators such as the level of youth unemployment. This scheme will involve investments to support health care systems and sustain jobs, among other projects. In particular, it will support youth employment, SMEs, and self-employed individuals and facilitate plans to reduce work time.

In addition, new flexibility is afforded for the management of funds by member states. During the 2008 financial crisis, the *Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance* established certain conditions. European structural and investment funds could not be received by governments that did not comply with the rules of fiscal discipline. As mentioned above, the suspension of the requirement for submission to these rules implies an ensuing suspension of the conditionality affecting the receipt of the structural and investment funds.

In a similar fashion, the *Coronavirus Response Investment initiatives Regulation* (EU) No 1301/2013 and (EU) Regulation No. 508/2014 stated that to address the crisis, member nations could independently determine the channelling of funds through the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, or the European Aid Fund for the Most Disadvantaged Persons (FEAD). The EU cohesion policy established for 2021–2027 also grants member states increased flexibility to transfer resources between funds in exceptional circumstances at any time during the program period. The extraordinary situations could span events such as serious economic recession or other occurrences that cannot be completely controlled by national governments and that exert significant adverse effects on public finances (European Commission, 2020c).

The abovementioned tools are directly related to the amelioration of social cohesion. Apart from these instruments, governance mechanisms to guide the implementation of reforms at the national level must also be noted. For instance, the 2021 *Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy* (European Commission, 2020c) envisages that the European Semester and the Recovery and Resilience Fund will be intrinsically united. Member states would then submit national reform plans that incorporate their recovery and resilience agenda, which would outline the reforms and investments to be

executed in the years to come. The *Sustainable Growth Strategy* indicates that member states should address challenges that reinforce growth potential, health systems, economic and social resilience, and regional cohesion. It also anticipates that changes would be introduced to the procedures established for the European Semester. Such a restructuring would represent a pivotal opportunity for recovery plans to reflect real needs and specific challenges confronted by states and thus contribute effectively to the enhancement of societal cohesion.

The contribution of the Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)

The launch of the Action Plan for the implementation of the EPSR (European Commission, 2021a) faced two initial deterrents: first, it occurred more than three years after the approval of the EPSR; second, it was introduced in March 2021 in the midst of actions to overcome the consequences of the pandemic. In trying to address these circumstances, the Action Plan stresses that a strong social Europe is the foundation of the prosperity of its citizens as well as a competitive economy.

Accordingly, the European Commission proposed three headline targets for achievement by 2030 in alignment with the timescale set by the United Nations' 2030 Agenda. First, the number of people at risk of poverty must be reduced by 15 million, of which at least five million should be children. Second, the employment rates of people aged 20–64 should increase from 72.5 percent in the third quarter of 2020 to 78 percent, and the figure for young people not engaged in employment, education, or training should be brought down to 9 percent from 12.6 percent in 2019. Third, 60 percent of the workforce should participate in training programs every year to achieve the benchmark of 80 percent adults who command basic digital skills. Some criticism regarding the lack of ambition of the target of poverty reduction ensued rapidly because the 2020 Strategy aimed to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty by 20 million and when, in fact; 91 million Europeans were at risk of poverty before the COVID19 outbreak (Hochscheidt, 2021). Social agents also regret that the target age group for basic digital skilling has been limited to 74 years. In the current scenario, digital skills are also crucial for the social inclusion of elderly people. The lack of specific goals apropos the reduction of school dropout rates (contrary to the Europe 2020 Strategy) is further indicated as a cause for concern (Social Platform, 2021).

The Action Plan envisions diverse activities to be undertaken by the European Commission, national governments, and regional authorities for the achievement of the established objectives. The European Commission's engagement in the development of specific initiatives such as a quality framework for training, an action plan for social economy, a legislative proposal on the working conditions of platform workers, the implementation of the working time directive, a transformation agenda, or higher education could first be cited. Other actions are more diffuse, foreseeing an "engagement process with relevant actors to ensure shared commitment to the Pillar". The Action Plan formulated some clear and concrete recommendations for initiatives that should be taken at the national level to extend social protection in line with the European Council's *Recommendation on Access to Social Protection*. Governments were advised to submit their plans by 15 May, 2021. However, most recommendations were vague exhortations without a precise target and timeline, for example, "The Commission encourages member states to promote labour standards, decent work and social inclusion worldwide and to work toward achieving the UN 2030 Agenda."

Some academics and social organizations have also highlighted certain important lacunae in the Action Plan. Specifically, critics have noted the omission of the announced initiative on unemployment reinsurance and the lack of clarity about

the continuity of the aforementioned SURE initiative to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on employment (Carr, 2021). The European Confederation of Trade Unions (ETUC) is also engaged in lobbying for its expectations and demands vis-à-vis the implementation of the EPSR (ETUC, 2020a, 2020b). Among other asks, the ETUC wants the EPSR to constitute an integral part of the EU's broad post-pandemic recovery strategy and to deliver on its promises of strengthening social dialogue, collective bargaining, and workplace democracy. The Social Platform (2021) asserts that the Action Plan incorporates numerous positive initiatives in diverse policy fields but does not foresee action on all 20 EPSR principles. Thus, the European Commission risks imposing a hierarchy between the rights and principles encompassed in the EPSR.

Apart from the different opinions articulated on its scope, the Action Plan must also be scrutinized for its capacity to specifically address issues through adequate economic inputs and the coordination of actors (Sabato et al., 2018). The Action Plan underlines that EU member states should utilize the unprecedented funding offered for the pandemic under the Next Generation EU initiative to support reforms and investments congruent with the EPSR. National recovery and resilience proposals represent a unique opportunity for member countries to endorse social, green, and digital reforms “implementing the relevant country-specific recommendations of the European Semester”. Accordingly, the Action Plan is integrated with the coordination of current economic policy apropos the deficiencies mentioned above with respect to the achievement of social aims.

For this reason, the evaluation of the success of the EPSR's implementation is directly defined through the functioning of the European Semester and its announced reforms. The Social Platform (2021) has observed that the Action Plan does not detail prospective European Semester reforms to strengthen capacities to supervise the implementation of the EPSR after the exceptional 2021 cycle. The objective requires a two-pronged approach: on the one hand, the socialization of the European Semester must be intensified as previously stated (Zeitlin & Vanhercke, 2018) to economic and social priorities; on the other hand, the supervision of national responses to the EPSR and the Action Plan goals must be extended through a reinforced Social Scoreboard. A revision is announced, but the Action Plan offers no details about procedures. Upgrading the Social Scoreboard could better contribute to policymaking through a more comprehensive inclusion of all EPSR principles under its supervision. Similarly, population groups could be disaggregated during data collection to add new indicators as required.

Finally, it must be emphasized that the Action Plan encourages all actors to engage in the implementation of the EPSR. The institution of this vision requires the shared commitment of EU institutions, trade unions, employers, and civil society along with national, regional, and local authorities. The EPSR thus embraces the recently introduced *Conference on the Future of Europe* (European Commission, 2021b). This participatory tool aims to enable European citizens to shape EU policies and prioritizes the construction of a more inclusive and just economy. The appropriate implementation of the EPSR is hence pivotal.

Conclusions

This study illuminated the ambitious EPSR proposition applied after the negative social impact of the 2008 crisis and the enforcement of austerity policies in the EU. However, the EPSR's ideal of avoiding social fragmentation clashes with the lack of practical instruments for its implementation. The EPSR is limited from inception due to its legal character, because the elaboration of its principles is left in the hands of national governments. The only operational instrument, at least potentially, is the

inclusion of the European Semester, as an instrument of coordination and supervision of the real action of member states. However, the European Semester has presented vagueness and lack of coercion in the impulse of social aims.

The burst of the pandemic has de-contextualised the implementation of the EPSR. The new scenario is obviously less favourable to develop its principles because of the effects of the COVID-19 outbreaks on the prevailing inequities and unemployment. Nevertheless, the current global crisis has stimulated a significant and unexpected change in EU policies in terms of economic governance, which can benefit the eventual implementation of the EPSR. In particular, the relaxing of strict fiscal discipline and the significant increase of EU funding can facilitate the advancement of EPSR goals. The Next Generation EU and the other mechanisms should be aligned with the EPSR principles and become effective drivers for its implementation. This key aspect could be examined in the near future; for now, the first allocations of post-pandemic funds evidence a marked orientation toward employment, which is a core feature of the EPSR, health, and other social services. The flexibility of all these systems should continue in the EU to address future crises or specific difficulties confronted by individual member states in the implementation of the EPSR.

The EPSR Action Plan represents a valuable effort to pinpoint facets and propose precise measures to national and regional authorities. Certainly, this agenda does not extend to all the EPSR principles. Likewise, some imbalances are evidenced because all the proposed procedures do not present equal degrees of precision and viability. A practical vision of the feasibility of the advancement and application of the EPSR in the near future is recommended. Such a structure should assume that the achievement of all the social demands and domains established by the EPSR with equal intensity is a difficult ask. Notably, the EPSR is embedded in the macroscopic EU strategies such as the Social Resilience Strategy and the Just Transition aim of the Green Deal. However, it is also connected to the particular mechanisms of national coordination and supervision, for instance, the European Semester and the Social Scoreboard. The foreseen reforms of these latter tools are then crucial for the evaluation of the efficacy of the execution of the EPSR. Similarly, the inclusion of the EPSR in the core themes of the *Conference on the Future of Europe* offers a robust opportunity to initiate a bottom-up impulse to ensure Europe's social recovery from the pandemic.

References

- Armstrong, K. A. (2013) „The New Governance of EU Fiscal Discipline”, *European Law Review* 38 (5) 601-617.
- Bekker, S. y Klose, S. (2013) „EU governance of economic and social policies: chances and challenges”, *European Journal of Social Law*, No 2. June 2013. https://pure.uvt.nl/ws/files/1555850/Bekker_Klose_EJSL20132C.pdf.
- Bekker, S. (2015) *EU economic governance in action: Coordinating employment and social policies in the third European Semester*, Observatoire Social Européen Research Paper, 19, 2015. http://www.ose.be/files/publication/OSEPaperSeries/Bekker_2015_OseResearchPaper19.pdf.
- Bonciu, F. (2018) „The European Pillar of Social Rights: Too Little, Too Late?” *Romanian Journal of European Affairs* Vol. 18, No. 1, June 2018.
- Caritas. (2015) *Caritas cares 2015 National Reports*. <http://www.caritas-europa.org/code/en/publications.aspx>.
- Carr, L. (2021) *EU credibility as a people's union rests on the social pillar*, <https://www.socialeurope.eu/eu-credibility-as-a-peoples-union-rests-on-the-social-pillar>.
- Copeland, P. and Daly, M. (2018) “The European Semester and EU social

- policy”. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 56(5), 1001-1018.
- Costamagna, F. (2013) *The European Semester in Action: Strengthening Economic Policy Coordination While Weakening the Social Dimension?*, Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network. SSRN Scholarly Paper. <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2367768> (December 3, 2019).
 - Darvas, Z. (2020) *The EU's recovery fund proposals: crisis relief with massive redistribution*, Bruegel Blog post, 17 June 2020. <https://www.bruegel.org/2020/06/the-eus-recovery-fund-proposals-crisis-relief-with-massive-redistribution/>.
 - Dawson, M. (2018). “New governance and the displacement of Social Europe: the case of the European Semester”, *European Constitutional Law Review*, 14(1), 191-209.
 - Degryse, C., Jepsen, M. and Pochet, P. (2013) *The Euro Crisis and Its Impact on National and European Social Policies*, Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network. SSRN Scholarly Paper. <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2342095> (December 3, 2019).
 - EAPN (2020) *The impact of Covid-19 on people experiencing poverty and vulnerability, Rebuilding Europe with a social heart*, Brussels, European Anti-Poverty Network. https://www.eapn.eu/wpcontent/uploads/2020/07/EAPN-EAPN_REPORT_IMPACT_COVID19-4554.pdf.
 - ETUC (2020a). *MFF and recovery plan: the ETUC demands reinforcement of social partners involvement*, Press release, 5 August 2020, European Trade Union Confederation. <https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/mff-and-recovery-plan-etuc-demands-reinforcement-social-partnersinvolvement>.
 - ETUC. (2020b) *Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights: ETUC Proposals*, <https://est1.etuc.org/>.
 - European Commission (2012) *Communication from the Commission Action for Stability, Growth and Jobs*, COM(2012)299 final. Brussels: European Commission.
 - European Commission (2013) *Communication Strengthening the social dimension of Economic and Monetary Union*, COM (2013) 690 final. Brussels: European Commission.
 - European Commission (2015) *The Five Presidents' Report: Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union*, Brussels: European Commission.
 - European Commission & Social Protection Committee (2015) *Social Protection Systems in the EU: Financing Arrangements and the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Resource Allocation*, Luxembourg, Luxembourg: European Commission.
 - European Commission (2016) *A New Beginning for Social Dialogue*, Luxembourg: European Commission.
 - European Commission (2017a) *White Paper on the Future of Europe: Ways for EU Unity of 27 Member States*, COM (2017) 2025 of 1 March 2017. Brussels: European Commission.
 - European Commission. (2017b) *Reflection Paper on the European Social Dimension* Brussels: European Commission.
 - European Commission (2017c) *Communication Establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights*, COM/2017/0250 final. Brussels: European Commission.
 - European Commission (2017d) *Social Scoreboard accompanying the Communication Establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights*, COM/2017/0250 final, European Commission, Brussels, 2017, <https://composite-indicators.jrc.ec.europa.eu/social-scoreboard/#>.
 - European Commission (2020a) *Europe's moment: repair and prepare for the*

- next generation, communication from the Commission*, COM(2020) 456 final, Brussels: European Commission.
- European Commission (2020b) *Proposal for a Council Regulation on the establishment of a European instrument for temporary support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE) following the COVID-19 outbreak* COM/2020/139 final. Brussels: European Commission.
 - European Commission (2020c) *Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021*. COM/2020/575 final. Brussels: European Commission.
 - European Commission (2021a) *Communication The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan*, COM (2021) 102 final. Brussels: European Commission.
 - European Commission (2021b) *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council shaping the Conference on the future of Europe*, COM/2020/27 final. Brussels: European Commission.
 - European Council (2012) *European Council 28-29 June 2012 Conclusions*, Brussels, Belgium: European Council.
 - Eurostat (2017) *Statistics on People at risk of poverty or social exclusion*. http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion.
 - EU Semester Alliance (2015) *CSRs 2015: Delivery gap remains on a democratic, social and sustainable Europe*, COM(2015) 700 final. <https://semesteralliance.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/2015-semester-alliance-csr-report-17-12-151.pdf>.
 - Hochscheidt, L. (2021) *Social pillar Action Plan - longer on aspiration*, <https://www.socialeurope.eu/social-pillar-action-plan-longer-on-aspiration>.
 - Sabato, S., Ghailani, D., Peña Casas, R., Spasova, S., Corti, F. and Vanhercke, B. (2018) *Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights: what is needed to guarantee a positive social impact*, Brussels: European Economic and Social Committee.
 - Stiglitz, J.E. (2020) *Recovering from the pandemic: an appraisal of lessons learned*, FEPS COVID Response Papers October 2020, 10.
 - Thill, P. Kirov, V. (2020) *Covid-19 and a new social Europe*, <https://www.socialeurope.eu/covid-19-and-a-new-social-europe>.
 - United Nations (2012) *General Assembly Resolution „Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”*, A/RES/70/1 (October 21, 2012), http://unctad.org/meetings/es/SessionalDocuments/ares70d1_es.pdf.
 - Vanhercke, B., Spasova, S., Fronteddu, B. (2020) *Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2020 Facing the pandemic*, Twenty-first annual report, ETUI, <https://www.etui.org/publications/social-policy-european-union-state-play-2020>.
 - Vesan, P. (2019) *New Tensions over Social Europe? The European Pillar of Social Rights and the Debate within the European Parliament*, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 57, 5, 977-994.
 - Zeitlin, J. and Vanhercke, B. (2018) “Socializing the European Semester: EU Social and Economic Policy Co-Ordination in Crisis and Beyond”, *Journal of European Public Policy* 25(2): 149–74. DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2017.1363269.
 - Watt, A. (2020) *EU Economic policy response to the coronavirus pandemic*, IMK policy Brief 93e, https://www.imk-boeckler.de/de/faust-detail.htm?sync_id=8951.
 - Watzka, S. & Watt, A. (2020) *The macroeconomic effects of the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility*, IMK Policy Brief 98,2020. https://www.imk-boeckler.de/de/faust-detail.htm?sync_id=9110.