



PORTO SOCIAL FORUM 2023

CONCEPT NOTE



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1. An initiative of the Portuguese Government with the support of the European Commission

The Portuguese Government intends to hold, with the support of the European Commission, the Porto Social Forum on the 26th and 27th of May 2023 and every two years thereafter (26th will be dedicated to side events).

This meeting follows two recent key moments for Social Europe. First, the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth, where the Council of the European Union (EU), the European Parliament and the European Commission jointly proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) in November 2017.

Second, the Porto Social Summit in 2021 confirmed the role of the European Pillar of Social Rights and highlighted the importance of the EPSR Action Plan, including its EU targets to be achieved by 2030 and endorsed by the European Council. The Porto Social Summit also paved the way for a joint position (the Social Commitment) signed by the Presidents of the European Parliament and the European Commission, social partners (trade unions and employers) and the Social Platform. The Commitment reiterated the importance of the EPSR action plan and identified priorities to respond to the economic recovery in the post-Covid period. These achievements constitute the basis for the Biennial Porto Social Forum.

The Biennial Porto Social Forum does not intend to reproduce the profile and institutional framework of the 2021 Porto Social Summit but rather provide an occasion to debate and strengthen the central importance of the social dimension in the present phase of consolidation of the European project.



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The Social Commitment invites all those responsible to monitor and evaluate the goals there is set. Alongside the existing instruments of coordination of its economic and social policies, in particular the European Semester, the biennial gatherings allow for follow-up on the commitments made and introduce new concerns and priorities arising from a changing economic, social, and political context, always based on a strong dialogue between European Institutions, Member States, social partners and civil society.

2. Porto Social Forum 2023 – Main Themes

Today the European Union is undergoing major structural challenges: the green and digital transition, demographic change, a changing world of work and persisting inequalities and poverty. The socioeconomic consequences of high inflation and energy prices call for an even stronger effort to prevent unemployment and social exclusion. At the same time, there is a strong need to reaffirm Europe's role as a strong global leader, strengthen its industrial base, secure energy independence in the context of decarbonization and environmental policies, speed up the debate on EU enlargement, and strengthen Europe's defence and security capabilities.

This broad set of transformations cannot leave behind the ambition of enhanced cohesion, social justice, and progress in social welfare.



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The 2023 Forum will be structured around two main themes:

a. "The European Year of Skills as a key drive of the twin transitions

The Forum will be an occasion to underline the objectives of the European Year of Skills. It will be an opportunity to boost efforts towards making upskilling and reskilling a norm in Europe. The Year puts a spotlight on skills policies, focusing on increased and more effective investment, strengthened skills relevance, better matching of people's skills and labour market opportunities, and attracting third-country nationals with skills needed in the Member States. It also aims to activate more people, in particular women and young people not in employment, education or training, for the labour market (NEETs).

The Forum will provide a platform to assess the progress made and to reflect on how the Year of Skills can boost further efforts. It will also serve as an opportunity to reflect on the broader EU skills agenda in the context of ongoing economic and social transformations. Particular attention will be given to bringing down youth unemployment and decreasing the number of NEETs. The Green Deal Industrial Plan and the EU Long term Competitiveness Strategy give new urgency to the full implementation of the European Skills Agenda and provide new opportunities for all in our societies.

b. The European Social Model as a geopolitical lever

The criminal invasion of Ukraine by Russia underlines the importance of centering today's geopolitical debate on the EU's influence in the world and on the EU enlargement. In this context, the values of Social Europe should be used as a



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geopolitical lever and not made invisible or irrelevant. By contributing to cohesion, a strong labour market and inclusive social protection policies, the EU ensures an essential element of its strategic autonomy. For candidate countries, this means that joining the European Union is also joining a "club" where social rights are safeguarded, preserved, and constantly improved.