
SOCIAL RIGHTS MONITOR 23

at a glance

The Social Rights Monitor (SRM) analyses the state of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights at national level, as well as the situation of the just transition and civic space. It builds on the assessments carried out by the National Strategy Groups (NSGs) composed of experts from civil society and led by SOLIDAR's members. In 2023, 9 countries have been analysed (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia, Spain). The general trends that emerged are summarised below. A series of policy recommendations addressed to EU decision-makers stemmed from the monitoring exercise are also listed in this summary.



01

Equal opportunities and access to the labour market

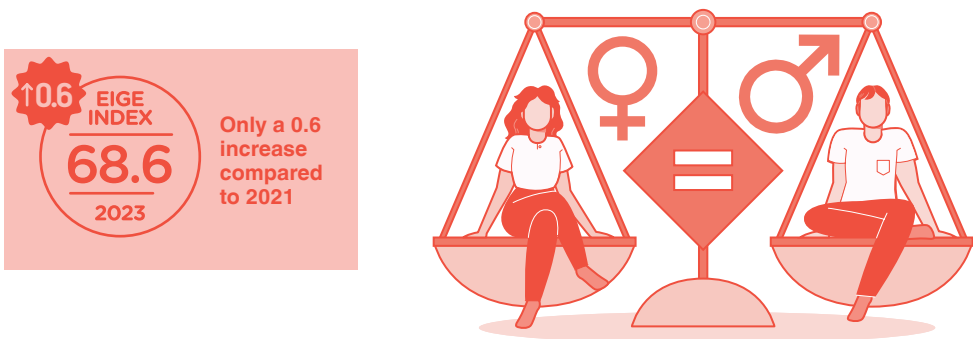
INCLUSION OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

Refugees from Ukraine are covered by temporary protection, giving them residency, access to employment, and essential services. Many NSGs were highly critical of the fact that the generous conditions given to Ukrainians were **not extended to asylum seekers from other countries**. Increasing issues with European asylum systems, such as **unlawful border practices** and **severe backlogs in processing cases** were found. Many NSGs reported the continued in their countries.



GENDER EQUALITY

Gender Equality Index (EIGE) found **little to no improvement in gender equality in the EU in 2022-2023**. Problems related to the Covid pandemic have continued to have negative effects on **female participation in education and work**. Increased unpaid care and housework, layoffs in sectors with greater female employment, and a greater female incidence in non-standard and precarious forms of employment have been recorded. Similarly, gender-based violence, that surged during the pandemic, is still not properly addressed. All these issues hit women from marginalised groups, such as migrant women, particularly hard.



02

Fair Working Conditions

REAL WAGES

Due to the rapid rise in inflation brought about by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, **real wages fell sharply across Europe** hurting particularly low-income households, as price rises have been sharp for **food, energy and other essentials**. NSGs also raised issues such as **underemployment** and **precarious employment**, especially among at-risk groups such as young people or people with lower levels of education.



WORKING TIME AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

NSGs reported significant problems with issues relating to **overwork**, including **difficulties linked with reconciling work and personal life**, the **non-payment of overtime**, and **non-compliance with working time legislation**. The question of the **gendered aspect of overwork** and the division of unpaid household and care tasks was present in almost every state analysed. Finally, several NSGs raised the idea of a four-day working week to tackle the problem of deteriorating work-life balance.



03

Social inclusion and protection

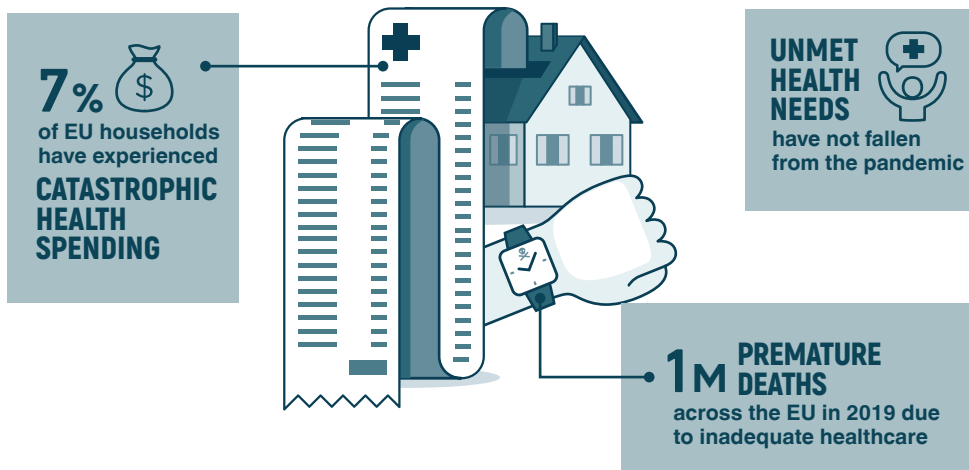
POVERTY AND THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

2022 and 2023 saw an **explosion of poverty across Europe**, largely due to inflation and the energy crisis, overwhelmingly affecting people at the lower end of the income distribution. The **inadequacy** of social protection measures is among the main causes, with minimum guaranteed income schemes across Europe often **not even covering minimum food costs** for beneficiaries. Furthermore, the rate of in-work poverty, highlights the crisis of low pay and underemployment. Poverty rates are particularly high for people living in rural areas, young people, people with children, women, migrants, and especially the Roma community.



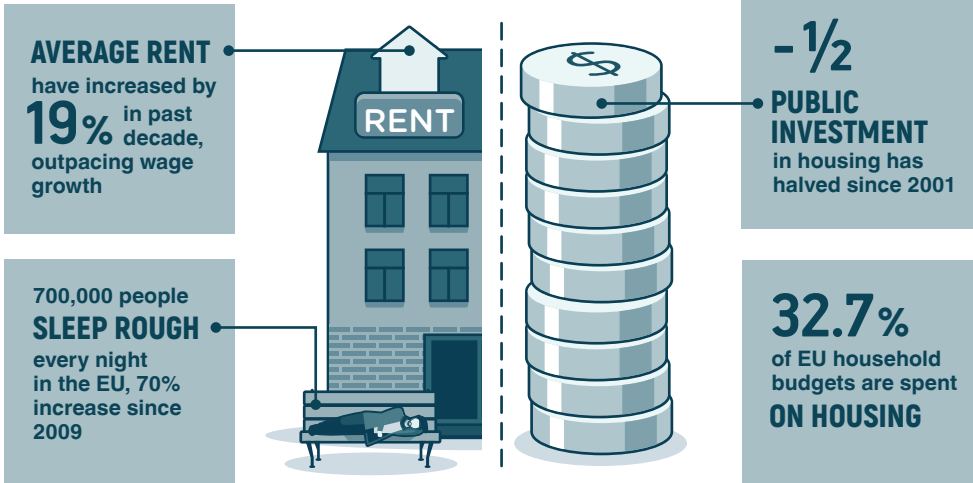
ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

European healthcare systems have faced the twin threats of **austerity and Covid-19**, affecting both the quality of care received by Europeans. **Unmet health needs across the EU remained as high** due to high costs and waiting times. Healthcare staff are also **overstretched, overworked and underpaid** across Europe.



I HOUSING

Housing costs have risen rapidly across Europe, **outpacing growth in wages**, leading to severe financial difficulties for many households. **Investment in public and social housing has halved since 2001**, with social housing policies increasingly focussed on providing housing allowances rather than building social housing.



04 Just Transition

Almost every NSG reported a **significant rise in energy poverty and excessive energy costs** in their respective countries. Governments introduced measures aimed at alleviating these issues, which had mixed results. Research by the International Energy Agency (IEA) suggests that **the EU will not reach its REPowerEU goals**, especially as Germany, Europe's largest energy consumer, has increased its reliance on coal. The EU's policies and actions towards reducing its emissions have been deemed **insufficient to avoid an increase of more than 1.5°C** in global temperatures by the Climate Action Tracker.



In 2022, over 41 million Europeans were unable to keep their homes **ADEQUATELY WARM** according to the European Parliament



05

Civic Space



NSGs reported differing situations regarding civic space in their respective states. The involvement of **civil society in policymaking** and **respect for fundamental rights** varied greatly from state to state. NSGs reported issues with **attacks and intimidation on journalists**, both from official and private actors. Overall, the state of civic space and the quality of civil dialogue are a matter of concern for civil society in Europe and must be **monitored, protected, and enhanced**.

Civil disobedience acts from environmental activists have resulted

IN DETENTION

in several European countries in 2022



06

Policy Recommendations

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET

- **Combat youth unemployment** within the EU and candidate countries. Combine this action with ensuring equitable access to quality education and lifelong learning including VET to all to promote social inclusion of marginalised youth and people in general, beyond the labour market participation.
- Accelerate **labour market integration into decent jobs for migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers** who are ready to work. Access should be ensured to work permits and language courses, prior to a final decision on asylum status.

FAIR WORKING CONDITIONS

- Monitor and ensure the proper implementation of the **adequate minimum wages** Directive at national level to ensure the efficacy of the **adequacy standards** established by Member States and that they are **regularly revised** to protect workers, including those in non-standard employment, from in-work poverty.
- Ensure that the assessment of the level of **national collective bargaining coverage** required by the Directive takes into account all types of workers, including **atypical workers**.

- **Recognise the value of (unpaid) care work** and its gendered dimension. Increase public investment in Early Childhood Education and Care services and the sector of care more broadly to underpin the **promotion of the work-life balance for all, reducing the overwork afflicting women** primarily and improving working conditions in a feminised sector such as care, as foreseen by the EU Care Strategy.
 - Explore innovative solutions like the **4-day working week** to tackle the deteriorating work-life balance and unemployment.
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SOCIAL INCLUSION AND PROTECTION

- Introduce an **EU framework Directive on adequate minimum income** to make sure that no one lives below the poverty line.
 - **Address the underlying causes of homelessness** also through the European Semester and EU funding while guaranteeing universal access to the fundamental right to adequate housing.
 - Make **affordable housing a reality for all** and protect tenants from the rise of housing costs pushed by house owners on them.
 - Ensure that all **people on the move have immediate access to social rights** including health, housing and essential services, regardless of their residence status upon arrival. The successes from the response to people fleeing Ukraine should be incorporated in European asylum systems.
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JUST TRANSITION

- Advance **climate action, environmental protection and restoration, and social justice** as a coherent and **mutually reinforcing agendas**, rather than treating the social dimension of the transition as an afterthought of green transition policies.
 - Fully implement the Council recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality and establish a **cross-sectoral EU 'Green and Social Deal'** that maximises the economic and societal benefits of the green transition, while ensuring that the required contributions are shared equitably across society.
 - Adopt a **broad understanding of a "fair, equitable and just green transition"** that ensures decent work for all and contributes to social justice and the elimination of inequalities.
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CIVIC SPACE & CIVIL DIALOGUE

- Elaborate a **European Civil Society Strategy aimed at strengthening civil society across the EU**, supporting the harmonisation and enhancement of the open, accessible and enabling environment in which civil society operates in Europe. Pursue the same objectives also in candidate countries.
- **Strengthen and recognise accessible, structured and meaningful civil dialogue** throughout the entire policymaking process as an essential element of healthy democracies including through an **interinstitutional agreement**. Ensure that civil dialogue is strengthened also in candidate countries and closely monitor the involvement of civil society in policymaking.
- **Protect and strengthen social dialogue** in the EU, also through the implementation of the adequate minimum wages Directive and the Council proposal of strengthening social dialogue in the EU, as well as in candidate countries.

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the full SRM



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