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## Is social protection in Europe ready for the future?

The European Social Charter: from Turin to Brussels

The best-known convention of the Council of Europe is the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The European Social Charter came into force 50 years ago and aims to guarantee the social rights in the field of employment, wages, social security, access to housing and the prohibition of child labor. Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe: *"In Europe, people are given a fair chance at a decent life thanks to the European Social Charter. Your rights in the areas of housing, health care and employment are being secured. Far from being restrictive, the Charter is liberating. It is not a collection of clumsy European rules and obligations. Rather, it is about universal social rights that everyone should be able to agree on."*

In October 2014 European policy makers gathered in Turin to emphasize the importance of social rights - especially in times of crisis - and to collaborate on strengthening these social rights. Brussels is a continuation of the Torino Process. After the conference, a "Brussels document" will be drawn up of all the proposals formulated during this two-day meeting.

Maggie De Block, Minister for Social Affairs: *"In times of crisis, social challenges are urgent as well. Social rights and the economic situation are mutually dependent. By strengthening social rights, we will be able to cope with the crisis more effectively. Belgium has been a good pupil in the European classroom as far as social rights are concerned. For instance, recently the Belgian government has decided to raise social benefits to a level above the poverty line. Access to health care is high on our agenda as well. There is always room for improvement, however, and exploring possible strategies for further reforming and bettering our system is an ongoing task. Hopefully this conference will help us along and offer new perspectives to tackle the problems we are concerned with as human beings and as Europeans alike."*

### High Level Conference

The two-day conference in Brussels brings together more than 300 people: academic experts, social partners, social organizations and representatives of national and international institutions. Together they examine a number of issues, such as: what does the future of social rights in Europe look like? Are the social rights "future proof"? How do the European Union and the Council of Europe relate to each other?

Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, opened the two-day Brussels conference together with Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility and Maggie De Block, Minister for Social Affairs and Health Care. On Friday 13 February, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Employment, the Economy and Consumers Kris Peeters will close the conference.

More information about the conference: <http://bit.ly/ZmjBxD>

Follow the conference live on twitter: #CoE2015Be and @FODSZ.

More information ?

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