



NATIONS UNIES
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HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

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The International Trade Union Confederation, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the European Trade Union Institute and the mandate of the United Nations Independent Expert on Foreign Debt and Human Rights cordially invite you to a lunch-time event:

Social rights – lost in austerity?

Making economic policies within the European Union compatible with international human rights obligations

Featuring

Mr. Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, United Nations Independent Expert on foreign debt and human rights

Mr. Olivier De Schutter, Member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Ms. Monserrat Mir Roca, Confederal Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation

Ms. Patricia Scherer, Management Committee Member, European Social Platform

Ms. Ruth Paserman, Deputy Head of Cabinet for Marianne Thyssen, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility

Mr. Bela Galgoczi, Senior Researcher, European Trade Union Institute

As well as representatives from the International Labour Organisation, International Trade Union Confederation and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

Friday 19 May 2017, 12:30 – 14:30

**International Trade Union House, Blvd du Roi Albert II 5, Brussels
Room AB, 7th floor**

A light lunch will be offered directly before the event between 12h00-12h30

Structural reform policies and austerity measures implemented under the justification of restoring debt sustainability and macroeconomic stability have raised concerns about adverse human rights impacts, including in the area of labour rights. Such economic reform policies have frequently included, among others: budget cuts affecting public health care, education and other social services; measures to increase labour market flexibility; measures to restrict social dialogue and deviate from collective bargaining agreements; measures to cut social protection benefits or restrict access to them; and the privatization of public services or state-owned assets and enterprises. While fiscal consolidation measures might be sometimes justifiable, in practice such reforms have often been done without consideration of human rights obligations existing under international human rights treaties and international labour standards.

Juan-Pablo Bohoslavsky has recently undertaken a review of fiscal consolidation measures undertaken in recent years and their impact on the enjoyment of human rights. He has presented to the UN Human Rights Council a report on the policy response by the European Union to the sovereign debt crisis ([A/HRC/34/57/Add.1](#)) and a report on the impact of structural adjustment and fiscal consolidation policies on labour rights ([A/HRC/34/57](#)). His reports highlight concerns by UN human rights mechanisms about growing income and gender imbalances, increased poverty, homelessness and unemployment and the reduction of labour rights protection for workers as a consequence of financial crises. The reports also show that such measures have sometimes have not achieved their intended effects of supporting job creation and improving macro-economic performance, but have instead contributed to worsening economic and fiscal outcomes.

In July 2016 the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights issued a Statement on public debt and austerity ([E/C.12/2016/1](#)) setting out obligations of Borrowing States and International Organizations as lenders in relation to rights contained in the Covenant, when they are considering the adoption of fiscal consolidation programmes, including structural adjustment and austerity programmes.

On 26 April 2017 the European Commission presented the European Pillar on Social Rights to strengthen the social dimension of the Union setting out [20 key principles and rights](#) to support fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems. The Pillar builds on the body of law which exists at EU and international level including the European Social Charter, relevant ILO conventions, international human rights treaties and the EU social acquis, which includes the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

In this meeting, Mr. Bohoslavsky will present the main findings of his recent reports and participants will discuss the implications of his findings. The discussion will centre around the following questions:

- **Have economic and social rights enshrined in international human rights law been adequately integrated in economic, financial and labour policies of the European Union?**
- **What is the potential of the European Pillar on Social Rights for strengthening social rights in the new social-economic governance of the European Union?**
- **How can country specific recommendations and financial assistance programmes for Member States made fully compliant with obligations set out in the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, in international labour standards and the European Social Charter?**
- **Can the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations provide additional impetus for improving policy coherence between economic and social policies in the European Union?**



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Agenda

Welcome address: Paul d'Auchamp, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Presentation of Reports: Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, United Nations Independent Expert on foreign debt and human rights

Response: **Ruth Paserman**, Deputy Head of Cabinet for Marianne Thyssen, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility

Panel discussion:

- **Olivier De Schutter**, UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- **Montserrat Mir Roca**, European Trade Union Confederation
- **Patricia Scherer**, European Social Platform
- **Irene Wintermayr**, ILO-Brussels Office
- **Bela Galgoczi**, European Trade Union Institute

Closing remarks: Sidonie Wetzig, Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung-Brussels Office

Moderation: Evelyn Astor, International Trade Union Confederation