

AmCham EU's response to the European Commission's Consultation on the European Pillar of Social Rights

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AmCham EU speaks for American companies committed to Europe on trade, investment and competitiveness issues. It aims to ensure a growth-orientated business and investment climate in Europe. AmCham EU facilitates the resolution of transatlantic issues that impact business and plays a role in creating better understanding of EU and US positions on business matters. Aggregate US investment in Europe totalled more than €2 trillion in 2015, directly supports more than 4.3 million jobs in Europe, and generates billions of euros annually in income, trade and research and development.

Consultation on the European Pillar of Social Rights

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Welcome to the European Commission's online public consultation on the "European Pillar of Social Rights".

Are our social rights fit for the 21st century? The Pillar will identify a number of essential principles to address the challenges in the field of employment and social policies.

We want to involve everyone in shaping the European Pillar of Social Rights. We welcome contributions from citizens, social partners, organisations and public authorities, so have your say!

Please submit your contribution below until the end of 2016.

I. Questions for the identification of the respondent

*

Are you replying as an individual or as an organisation?

- Individual
- Organisation

What is the type of your organisation?

- Business
- EU level organisation
- National level organisation

Your business is a

- Micro or small enterprise
- Medium enterprise
- Large enterprise

Your EU level organisation is a(n)

- NGO
- Trade Union
- Employers organisation
- Think tank/academia
- X Other

Please specify:

500 character(s) maximum

AmCham EU speaks for American companies committed to Europe on trade, investment and competitiveness issues.

Your national level organisation is a(n)

- NGO
- Trade Union
- Employers organisation
- Think tank/academia
- National administration
- Regional/local administration
- Other

Please specify:

500 character(s) maximum



Name of your organisation or institution:

500 character(s) maximum

American Chamber of Commerce to the European Union (AmCham EU)

***Respondent's first name:**

Brendan

***Respondent's surname:**

Moran

***Respondent's email address:**

bmo@amchameu.eu

Postal address of your organisation or institution:

500 character(s) maximum

Avenue des Arts 53, Brussels, Belgium

***First name:**

***Surname:**

***Email address:**

If you do not have an email address, please write "Not available".

***Postal address:**

What is your current status?

Employment:

- Employed
- Not employed
- Self employed
- Retired



- Age.** <25 years old
 25-65 years old
 +65



Gender:

- Male
 Female

Parent/caring responsibilities:

- Yes
No

Country

For individuals: country of residence.

For organisations: country where the organisation is based or country where the organisation's headquarters are.

- Austria
-
- Belgium X
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czech
- Republic
- Denmark
-
- Netherlands
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
-
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
-
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Poland
- Portugal
-
- Romania
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
-
- Sweden
- UK
- EU
- level
- Other

Register ID number (if you/your organisation is registered in the Transparency register):

If you would like to register, please refer to the following webpage to see how to proceed : <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/info/homePage.do>

[5265780509-97](#)



Your reply:

- Can be published with your personal information** (I consent to publication of all information in my contribution and I declare that none of it is under copyright restrictions that prevent publication)
- Can be published in an anonymous way** (I consent to publication of all information in my contribution except my name/the name of my organisation and I declare that none of it is under copyright restrictions that prevent publication)
- Cannot be published - keep it confidential** (The contribution will not be published, but will be used internally within the Commission)

II. Questions for the consultation

The Commission invites all interested parties to reply to the questions set out in the questionnaire below, together with any additional comments, by 31 December 2016. (See also [Commission communication "Launching a consultation on a European Pillar of Social Rights", COM\(2016\) 127 final](#))

On the social situation and EU social "acquis"

1. What do you see as most pressing employment and social priorities?

2000 character(s) maximum

Changing demographics and disruptive shifts impacting the workforce landscape (e.g. smart machines, globally connected world, new media, the app economy) are creating a number of pressing employment and social priorities that require urgent action. They include: a rapidly ageing workforce and lack of trained professionals with the right skill set, the need to increase the number of women in the workforce, and the need for new forms of work (eg increasing freelancing and self-employment).

2. How can we account for different employment and social situations across Europe?

2000 character(s) maximum

3. Is the EU "acquis" up to date and do you see scope for further EU action?

2000 character(s) maximum

There is already a strong social dimension in Europe. The objective is to create the framework conditions for companies to provide the best possible opportunities for employment for all. This can be achieved by undertaking national reforms and improving coordination of member states' employment and social policies. We believe there is room for improvement in the management of the transition to a more flexible network workforce, in order to adapt to demographic challenges and the ensuing pensions shortfalls. The future of jobs, leading to more flexible employment, will also require changes in Europe's labour market regulations, safety nets and training systems that are currently not designed to cope with those.

On the future of work and welfare systems

4. What trends would you see as most transformative? [Please select at most three from the list below]

between 1 and 3 choices

- Demographic trends (e.g. ageing, migration)
- Changes in family structures
- New skills requirements
- Technological change
- Increasing global competition
- Participation of women in the labour market
- New ways of work
-
- Inequalities
- Other

Please specify:

New skills requirements and new ways of work are directly linked to technological change. Some of the most disruptive shifts that will reshape the work landscape include: extreme longevity, the workforce cliff, the rise of smart machines and systems, global connectivity, new media. These all require a new employability framework based on a core set of skills that enable high-value added, an entrepreneurial mindset, the ability to 'live with looseness', and an even heavier emphasis on lifelong learning.

5. What would be the main risks and opportunities linked to such trends?

2000 character(s) maximum

Risks:

- New tech increases the premium for efficient labor markets. Overly restrictive rules reduce incentives for businesses and workers to adapt. Slowing resource reallocation increase skills mismatches.
- Global pensions: financial security in retirement is critical for individuals and societies grappling with social, economic and financial effects of ageing. A cause of demographic shift is declining birth rates and

increasing longevity. These place pressure on pension systems, leaving many elderly, specifically women, in poverty.

- A growing mismatch between skills demand and supply: many job types are projected to become redundant, with an estimated 47% of all occupations at risk. In many industries and countries the most in-demand occupations for the future don't exist yet and it is hard to predict how they will look like. If jobs change, skills change. This leads to new management and regulatory challenges, including better aligning the skills taught and delivered by the education system to those needed for jobs.

Opportunities:

- Competitive advantages go to early adopters. The scale of change governments will see over the next decade will increase as tech changes spread out to multiple sectors: job shifts will be significant and the labour marketplace and models will be changed.
- Gig economy will make markets more efficient and allow people to manage their time better and create a balance between work, family, and well-being.
- Women lag in workforce participation. With the size of the female workforce and the role in society as providers, caregivers, decision makers, and consumers, their participation has implications for the economic and social development. Traditional approaches do not work. Without change to how organizations approach gender diversity this opportunity will likely be missed.
- Combating age discrimination. More can be done to reinforce the impact of legislation and urge company to apply good practices.
- Tap the growing pool of refugees

6. Are there policies, institutions or firm practices – existing or emerging – which you would recommend as references?

Policies:

- Large competitive advantages go to early adopters, including governments that assist workers to transition into in-demand jobs, that maintain employability of workers in such a period of turbulence, and that provide employers with the freedom to pivot with new processes and technologies.
- Policies aimed at improving the regulatory framework for private pension savings. We welcome the European Commission's recent initiatives to better facilitate cross-border pensions, but much more is needed to encourage citizens to invest in personal pensions.
- Explore alternative models for providing safety nets for the self-employed and facilitate the move from classical fulltime employment, while avoiding a misplaced extension to these groups of a set of policy solutions designed for a different era.

Firm practices:

- As a company, your level of adaptability also depends on with what kind of change capacity you are building inside. Installing a culture of learning is an important step in this process. Workers should be expected as well as encouraged to adapt and develop by receiving guidance and opportunities for career and expertise growth. Setting targets for yearly trainings may help build a structured approach to learning. Better use of online open courses may support both effective and cost-efficient delivery of course content.
- Development and implementation of new/different working time modules to meet the need of the older workforce.
- Companies implementing gender diversity strategies based on evidence of what helps and what hurts the progress of women in the organisation, and, when appropriate, to demonstrate how advancements in gender diversity impact business results. Good examples of company initiatives that truly make a difference are: Processes that actively support women and value their competences; active management of careers and pay to ensure equity; programs that support women's unique health and wealth needs over their entire life cycle.

On the European Pillar of Social Rights

7. Do you agree with the approach outlined here for the establishment of a European Pillar of Social Rights?

- I strongly agree
- X I agree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree

Please specify:

2000 character(s) maximum

Overall, we support the broad principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. We urge the Commission to carefully assess the consequences of the measures considered. A concrete example is pensions. While the Pillar foresees measures to address the gender pension gap, pension reforms often lead to an increase rather than decrease of this imbalance. A holistic approach will be required.

8. Do you agree with the scope of the Pillar, domains and principles proposed here? (if you wish

to provide detailed comments on any of the 20 domains, please see the section "Detailed comments by domain" below)

	I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
1. Skills, education and life-long learning	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Flexible and secure labour contracts			X	<input type="radio"/>
3. Secure professional transitions		X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Active support for employment			X	<input type="radio"/>
5. Gender equality and work-life balance	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Equal opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Conditions of employment	<input type="radio"/>		X	<input type="radio"/>
8. Wages	<input type="radio"/>		X	<input type="radio"/>
9. Health and safety at work	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Social dialogue and involvement of workers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>
11. Integrated social benefits and services	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Health care and sickness benefits		X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Pensions	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Unemployment benefits	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Minimum income	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Disability benefits	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. Long-term care		X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. Childcare		X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. Housing	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. Access to essential services	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Are there aspects which are not adequately expressed or covered so far?

2000 character(s) maximum

9. What domains and principles would be most important as part of a renewed convergence for the euro area? (Please select maximum 5)

between 1 and 5 choices

- X 1. Skills, education and life-long learning
- 2. Flexible and secure labour contracts
- 3. Secure professional transitions
- 4. Active support for employment
- X 5. Gender equality and work-life balance
- 6. Equal opportunities
- 7. Conditions of employment
- 8. Wages
- 9. Health and safety at work
- 10. Social dialogue and involvement of workers
- 11. Integrated social benefits and services
- 12. Health care and sickness benefits
- X 13. Pensions
- 14. Unemployment benefits
- 15. Minimum income
- 16. Disability benefits
- 17. Long-term care
- 18. Childcare
- 19. Housing
- 20. Access to essential services

Comments:

2000 character(s) maximum

10. How should these be expressed and made operational? In particular, do you see the scope and added value of minimum standards or reference benchmarks in certain areas and if so, which ones?

2000 character(s) maximum

Detailed comments by domain

If you wish to provide detailed comments on any of the domains, please select one or more from the list below and fill the table(s) and comment box(es) underneath. (A detailed description of the domains and principles is available in the [Annex "A European Pillar of Social Rights - Preliminary Outline"](#) to the [Commission communication "Launching a consultation on a European Pillar of Social Rights", COM\(2016\) 127 final](#)).

- X 1. Skills, education and life-long learning
- X 2. Flexible and secure labour contracts
- X 3. Secure professional transitions
- X 4. Active support for employment
- X 5. Gender equality and work-life balance
- X 6. Equal opportunities
- X 7. Conditions of employment
- X 8. Wages
- 9. Health and safety at work
- 10. Social dialogue and involvement of workers
- 11. Integrated social benefits and services
- 12. Health care and sickness benefits
- X 13. Pensions
- 14. Unemployment benefits
- 15. Minimum income
- 16. Disability benefits
- 17. Long-term care
- X 18. Childcare
- 19. Housing
- 20. Access to essential services

Skills, education and life-long learning

	I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
Do you agree with the challenges described?	X		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way?	X		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Should the EU act to put in reality this principle?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum

The EU can play a role in increasing awareness and coordinating by bringing together governments, businesses and education systems to share information and exchange best practices.

Flexible and secure labour contracts

	I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
Do you agree with the challenges described?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>
Should the EU act to put in reality this principle?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum

While we fully acknowledge the importance of social and labour law protection for workers, sufficient flexibility should be foreseen for the employer to be able to deal with a rapidly changing jobs landscape. Flex workers are projected to comprise 50% of the workforce by 2020.

Secure professional transitions

	I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
Do you agree with the challenges described?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Should the EU act to put in reality this principle?	<input type="radio"/>	X		<input type="radio"/>

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum

The EU can play an important role here, with a specific focus on much needed cross-border mobility.

Active support for employment

	I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
Do you agree with the challenges described?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>
Should the EU act to put in reality this principle?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum

Gender equality and work-life balance

	I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
Do you agree with the challenges described?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Should the EU act to put in reality this principle?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum

We support the European Commission's work on work-life balance and refer to our response to that specific consultation made earlier this year.

Equal opportunities

	I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
Do you agree with the challenges described?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Should the EU act to put in reality this principle?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum

We especially refer to the situation of refugees.

Conditions of employment

	I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
Do you agree with the challenges described?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>
Should the EU act to put in reality this principle?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum

We don't recommend any type of attempting to harmonize probation or dismissal rules.

Wages

	I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
Do you agree with the challenges described?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>
Should the EU act to put in reality this principle?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum

Pensions

	I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
Do you agree with the challenges described?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Should the EU act to put in reality this principle?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum

We believe that cooperation between the EU and Member States is crucial to achieving much needed structural reforms, including greater adaptability for the retired to boost their savings through flexible working. Disruptive technologies are enabling those who wish to transfer from employment to retirement gradually, boosting their income at the same time thus allowing them to maintain their quality of life. This should also be taken as an opportunity to provide a solution to the workforce cliff and the productivity challenge posed by the ageing population. .

Childcare

	I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
Do you agree with the challenges described?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is the principle addressing those challenges in the right way?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Should the EU act to put in reality this principle?	<input type="radio"/>	X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you have other comments or additional suggestions? For instance: how to address these challenges in the right way? How should the EU act to put in reality this principle?

2000 character(s) maximum