

Policy

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Article 4 of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) states that social policy is a shared competence of the European Union (EU) and its Member States. Thus, the EU does not regulate the social policy of each Member State but sets the main guidelines and minimum standards. Over time, EU Member States have begun to jointly address more and more social issues but direct social support in the form of various benefits or pensions is up to each Member State.

The EU social policy covers the following areas:

- free movement of workers;
- coordination of social security schemes;
- employment relationship;
- safety and health at work;
- social dialogue;
- equal treatment;
- social protection;
- employment;
- financial support (for employment promotion, human resources development, etc.)

During Lisbon European Council meeting in 2000, social and employment issues were recognized as a common goal of the EU. The Lisbon meeting also formulated the Open Method of Coordination, which was designed to help the Member States successfully develop their policies, giving the European Commission a coordinating role. This method includes:

- setting guidelines;
- creation of quantitative and qualitative indicators, based on best practice as well as respecting the needs of each country and sector;
- implementation of guidelines at national and regional level, taking into account national and regional differences;
- periodic monitoring, evaluation and review.

Building on the previous experience, the European Semester has become a cycle of policy coordination within the EU that, along with economic and fiscal policies, now pays attention also to labour and social policies. Following the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in 2017, the European Semester provides a framework for coordinating and monitoring the Member States' policies implementing the principles and rights set out by the Pillar.

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