

Social Affairs

What do I need to know before I start?

The European Social Policy finds its origins in the Treaty of Rome establishing the EEC (1957) which stipulated that Member States retain control over social policy, limiting the Community's competences in this policy area. The Treaty contained 'Social Provisions' (1957; Art. 117-123) as well as provisions for the establishment of a European Social Fund (1957; Art. 123-128) but early social policy developments were limited to the harmonization of health and safety standards for Community workers. Recognizing an imbalance between the Community's economic welfare and its citizens' quality of life, the latter adopted its first Social Action Programs (SAPs) in January 1974, leading to a series of directives aimed at the improvement of workers' living conditions. The Jacques Delors Commission presented to the Community in 1989 a Charter of Fundamental Social Rights, first opposed by the British administration but nonetheless appended to the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. The Treaty set new areas of social policy regulations for the Community, including health, safety, gender equality, collective bargaining, social security, social exclusion as well as the workers' right to participate in their companies' management. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, proclaimed in Nice in 2000, fully recognized workers' social rights in the Community, and the Lisbon Treaty (2009) now clearly recognized EU Social Policy as an area of shared competence between the Community and its Member States.

Languages: Please be aware that although most documents available in our Archives are in French, English or German, some may be in other EU languages. In order to check the languages used in a fonds, please refer to our holdings page. Additionally, some fonds may contain a few files in a language other than those listed in the description.

What can I find at the HAEU?

Specifically concerned with European social policy-building and policy-making, the fonds available at the HAEU are:

1) EU institutions

[ECSC High Authority](#)

For early social policy initiatives in the Community, you may look into the fonds of the ECSC High Authority, which includes a section '[Division Travail et Affaires sociales](#)' concerned with employment and other social issues such as health and safety.

[Council of Ministers](#)

In the HAEU inventory, matters relating to social policy discussed in the Council of Ministers are assembled in the section '*Activités de la CEE: Politique sociale*' or simply 'Question Sociale'. Since the fonds of the Council of Ministers is organized by year, you need to browse the fonds for each year to access the specific section on social policy (example for the year [1958](#) and [1972](#)).

[Commission](#)

In the Commission's fonds, you will find a specific section for the [DGV Affaires sociales](#). In addition, you might want to look into the sections concerned with the [Secretariat-General](#) and the [Cabinets](#).

[European Parliament](#)

You can find in the European Parliament's fonds relevant information on the development of a common social policy and the role played by the Parliament in this context. For the Parliament's early history in social policy, you may consult the fonds of the Common Assembly, which includes a section on the [parliamentary commission for social affairs](#). You may also consult in this context the sections concerned with the various parliamentary commissions for social affairs ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)). The fonds of the European Parliament includes the proceedings and reports of the parliamentary commission for social affairs and employment (for the [1st](#), [2nd](#), and [3rd](#) legislature), which are relevant in understanding the gradual development of the EU's social policy and the role of the Parliament in this framework.

[European Court of Auditors](#)

You might find it interesting to consult the ECA's [annual reports](#) (1977-1997), [special reports](#) (1978-1991) including those concerned with [European Schools](#) and [CEDEFOP](#), as well as [opinions](#) (1977-1997), [internal documents](#), including [information documents](#) (1977-1994) and [working documents](#) (1977-1994).

[European Court of Justice](#)

According to the nature of the ECJ, this fonds includes documents dealing with judicial affairs, namely procedure dossiers and sentences. You might find it interesting to consult some of its dossiers dealing with affairs concerning workers' social security and mobility, workers' residence in a member state, and occasional work activity in another member state (case [27/69](#) and [8/75](#)).

[European Investment Bank](#)

You might find it interesting to consult the sub-fonds that includes the EIB [annual reports](#) as well as the sub-fonds '[Publications](#)'.

[Economic and Social Committee](#)

As with the fonds of the Council of Ministers, the inventory is organized by year, each includes a special section on social affairs ([example](#) for 1962).

[Centre européen pour le développement de la formation professionnelle \(CEDEFOP\)](#)

The European centre for the development of vocational training was established in 1975 to support the Commission in promoting the development of education and vocational training at the European level as part of its social policy initiatives. In the CEDEFOP fonds, you can find numerous documents concerned with the development of a common social policy in the Community, in the field of education and employment in particular.

[European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions \(EuroFound\)](#)

The regulation creating the Foundation was adopted on 26 May 1975 (EEC 1365/75) and the Agency became operational in 1976 with the aim to ‘pursue ideas on the medium and long-term improvement of living and working conditions in the light of practical experience and to identify factors leading to change’. The [EuroFound](#) fonds includes numerous files on the Foundation’s meetings and activities, which all relate to the development of a common social policy in the Community.

2) *Corporate bodies*

[Organization for European Economic Cooperation \(OEEC\)](#)

The OEEC included a Manpower and Social Affairs Committee which was mostly concerned with employment, foreign workers, female workers and man power aspects of economic development in member countries. It can therefore be useful to consult the [section](#) dedicated to this Committee to learn more about social policy initiatives taken beyond the realm of EU institutions.

[GPSE](#), [GRAEL](#), [PPE](#) (Political Groups)

It might prove useful to consult the fonds of these three political groups of the European Parliament to better understand the development of a common social policy in the Community as well as the role of political groups and of the Parliament in this process.

NB: The fonds of several organizations concerned with education are also relevant to understand the development of a common social policy in the Community but are not mentioned here as they are concerned specifically with education. You may refer to the research guide on ‘[Education](#)’ to find out more about these organizations and the fonds available at the HAEU in this context.

3) *Individuals*

[Emile Noel](#)

In his private fonds, you can find a specific section related to [social affairs](#), but also his notes on the European Council and Commission meetings, as well as documents regarding [the work of the various DGs](#) of the Commission, during his time as Secretary-General.

[Peter Sutherland](#)

Appointed in the first Delors Commission, Sutherland was responsible for the Social Affairs Portfolio and was instrumental in the establishment of the ERASMUS programme. In this context, the [Peter Sutherland's Commission Papers](#) include a specific section '[Competition, Social Affairs, Education and Training](#)' on the role he played in the first Delors Commission, as well as [files](#) (briefings, information notes and reports) concerning the EuroFund, the European Social Fund and the Community's social dimension.

[Roland Tavitian](#)

Another useful fonds is that of Roland Tavitian, which includes [files](#) related to his work in the Commission's DG for social affairs, particularly pertaining to [employment](#) policies.

[Michel Richonnier](#)

The Richonnier fonds comprises files relating to his work in the [DG for social affairs](#), particularly in developing a common [employment policy](#) in the Community and in promoting cooperation in the field of [health](#).

[Raymond Rifflet](#)

Rifflet's private fonds includes various files pertaining to the Community's social affairs policy, during his time in the [DG for social affairs](#), as [director-general](#) and [adjunct director-general](#).

4) *Oral History*

In addition, have a look at the [oral history holdings](#), which comprise numerous interviews with European politicians and officials, including important figures active in the development of a common social policy at a European level. Below, you can find a list of persons interviewed who addressed the topic of social policy in the European field.

[Carlo Savoini](#)

[Carlos Ferrer Salat](#)

[Georges Debunne](#)

[Pierre Wathelet](#)

[Santiago Carrillo Solares](#)

[Odile Benoist-Lucy](#)

[Giulio Andreotti](#)

[Ezio Toffanin](#)

[Jean Flory](#)

[Raymond Lacombe](#)

[Henri-Marie Varenne](#)

[Riccardo Perissich](#)

[Jean Degimbe](#)

[Ivor Richard](#)

[Renato Ruggiero](#)

[Frans De Koster](#)

[Aneurin Hughes](#)

[Georges Rencki](#)

[Annette Bosscher](#)