

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.

Please bear in mind that archival sources are subject to the 30-year accessibility rules. Some files may therefore currently be listed as closed but will progressively become available as they reach the required period of accessibility (check the "Closed until" field in description).

You might find related information in the Research Guides on Employment. Similarly, if you are interested in our audiovisual material, you can consult our Research Guides divided by type (posters, artifacts, pictures etc). All Audiovisual materials are available through our multimedia portal

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, bodies and agencies*

[ECSC High Authority](#) and the [Special Council of Ministers of the ECSC](#)

Researchers interested in the early development of European social policies initiatives researchers may consult the fonds of High Authority of the European Coal and Steel

Community (ECSC) and the Special Council of Ministers of the ECSC.

For early social policy initiatives in the Community, researchers may look into the fonds of the ECSC High Authority containing relevant documentation in the [serie of document](#) concerned with employment and other social issues such as health and safety and in the Special Council of Ministers of the ECSC the following serie [Social et travail \(CM1.F.L\)](#).

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](#)).

European 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 registry of the working documents in the [Secretariat-General](#) and the Cabinets such as the [Thorn Cabinet](#) and [Delors Cabinet I](#) and [II](#)

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).

Court of Justice of the European Union

The fonds of the European Court of Justice contain documentation relating to the Court's judicial activities, including procedural files and judgments. For research on the development of European social affairs, these records provide valuable evidence of the interpretation and application of Community law in areas such as workers' social security entitlements and mobility, residence rights, occasional work activity in another member state, equal treatment, gender equality, and access to social and welfare benefits.

Among the case-law preserved in the fonds, researchers may wish to consult case-law *Lawrie-Blum v Land Baden-Württemberg* ([C-66/85](#), also [vol. 2](#)) which established a clear legal definition of the concept of “worker” in Community law and subsequently became an important reference point for the application of social and mobility rights. The case-law *Hoeckx v Centre Public d’Aide Sociale* ([C-249/83](#)) is also relevant, particularly for the development of social security and welfare rights for migrant workers. Other potentially relevant cases include, [27/69](#) and [8/75](#) which illustrate the Court’s evolving interpretation of workers’ mobility and associated social rights.

[European Investment Bank](#)

The fonds of the European Investment Bank (EIB) can provide useful complementary material for research on the social dimension of European integration. Although the EIB’s primary function is the financing of investment, many of the projects supported by the Bank had direct or indirect implications for areas closely connected to social affairs, including infrastructure, regional development, housing, public services, and employment. Records concerning EIB operations in Ireland for [example](#), from the 1970s and 1980s, can also be consulted in connection with the development of less-developed regions and the relationship between EIB lending and the Community’s broader regional and cohesion policies. Researchers should also consult the sub-fonds containing the [EIB annual reports](#), which provide an overview of the Bank’s activities and lending priorities, as well as the [“Publications”](#) sub-fonds, which contains published material relating to the EIB and its activities. These sources can help identify projects and place individual investments within the broader evolution of the Bank’s role in European economic and social development.

[Economic and Social Committee](#)

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is an advisory body of the EU that represents organized civil society. Through opinions, reports, and consultations, the EESC has served as a bridge between civil society organizations and EU institutions, ensuring that social concerns are integrated into European policymaking. The archival material shows the evolution of debates on welfare systems, labor market reforms, and social cohesion, illustrating the Committee’s role in shaping a more socially balanced Europe. 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).

See also the private fonds of [Fabrizio Baduel Glorioso](#) as committed trade unionist and former president of the Economic and social Committee, (1978-1979) she focused on workers’ rights, social protection, and the role of civil society in shaping a “Social Europe.”

[European Committee of the Regions](#)

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR), an EU advisory body representing local and regional authorities, was established by the Treaty of Maastricht. It ensures that regional and local perspectives are reflected in European legislation, particularly in areas that directly affect citizens’ daily lives.

Within the holdings of the HAEU, the Committee’s work on social affairs highlights its focus on policies such as social inclusion, public health, education, employment, and territorial cohesion. Its opinions and reports emphasize the importance of adapting EU social policies

to regional realities, addressing disparities between regions, and promoting equal access to services. In fact, the CoR plays a key role in promoting social cohesion within the European Union, see some Opinions on [Energy and economic and social cohesion](#) or on the [European Social policy](#).

Centre européen pour le développement de la formation professionnelle

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

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 of the EP)

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 (See: [1](#), [2](#))

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.

Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs

The Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs (BEUC) fonds contains a wide range of documents on social affairs, since many of its activities intersect with consumer protection, labour conditions, and social policy. The fonds includes a large number of social-policy-related material, especially on consumer protection as a social right, fairness and equality in the internal market and the social impact of EU regulation on citizens' daily lives (See for

example [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)).

[Ligue européenne de coopération économique](#)

The Ligue européenne de coopération économique (LECE), organisation created in 1946 brought together political, economic, and intellectual figures with the aim of promoting European economic integration and closer cooperation between European countries. The fonds includes valuable material on social issues, even though the organization primarily focused on economic integration. The most relevant sources are the records of working groups and [commissions](#) (ex: [1](#), [2](#)) dealing with labour, employment, and worker mobility, as well as reports, [conference proceedings](#), and correspondence.

3) Individuals

[Emile Noël](#)

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 EuroFound, 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](#).

[Pascal Lamy](#)

The archives of Pascal Lamy are mainly focused on trade and economic policy, reflecting his roles at the Commission européenne and the Organisation mondiale du commerce.

However, they also address social issues indirectly, particularly the impact of trade on employment, debates on social standards, and the social dimension of globalization. The most relevant materials for these themes are [policy notes](#), [reflections](#) and [speeches](#), trade negotiation files, and strategic correspondence, which highlight how economic policies intersect with social concerns.

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](#)

[Pascal Lamy](#)

[Philippe Loir](#)

[Fay Devonick](#)