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**Draft recommendation of the Committee of Ministers
to member states on the Council of Europe's
Charter on shared social responsibilities**

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(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on ...)

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe

Considering that:

a. Europe, via the historical pathways specific to each country, seeks to secure equal access to fundamental rights, the ideal of universal social protection and a dignified life for all, enabling all individuals to freely develop their personality, retain control over their life, participate in societal choices and exercise their responsibilities towards their families, the community, the environment and future generations;

b. the people of Europe have acquired democratic skills in their fight for equality, human dignity, the preservation of common goods and recognition of fundamental needs, and that their diverse knowledge and cultural heritages foster a critical and entrepreneurial spirit which is at the basis of institutional innovation, social experimentation and economic initiative;

c. institutions in Europe have built up a wealth of experience to be enhanced and passed on to future generations in the field of democratic citizenship, the development of a social state governed by the rule of law, local self-governance, social dialogue, partnerships and strategies for resolving conflict through political, non-violent means;

d. the democratic skills of the people of Europe and institutional achievements are faced with major social changes linked to widening inequalities, the loss of jobs resulting from company relocations and technological change in the absence of retraining and product innovation, the rise in employment insecurity for young people, overindebtedness and impoverishment of a growing proportion of households, and ageing of the population;

e. the constant movement of migrant workers and asylum-seekers towards Europe , and the presence of descendents of immigrants legitimately calling for full social and political recognition, require European societies to secure equal treatment for these groups, while at the same time incorporating cultural, religious and ethnic diversity into their practices;

f. today, several European countries are faced with public overindebtedness and states, exposed to the risks of repeated crises and financial speculation, are less able to fulfil their role of ensuring access to social protection, health care, education, housing and common goods in general, even though such access constitutes a key source of confidence and social cohesion; it is imperative to introduce an equitable taxation system in the future;

g. the rise in inequalities, financial insecurity and poverty is combined today with new circumstances that cast doubt on the link between economic growth and sustainability particularly in a context of rapid climate change, increased competition for non-renewable natural resources, and environmental limits for the absorption of waste produced by human activity;

h. the growing pressure of global markets on national institutions and local communities, in a context of radically shifting geopolitical balances, leads to fundamental decisions which

lack transparency and democratic supervision, as they are taken and produce effects beyond the level of states;

i. scientific and technological progress has considerably pushed back the frontiers of human abilities in a number of key areas (exploitation of natural resources, biotechnologies, nanotechnologies, information technologies, etc.), and at the same time has raised new questions in the field of ethics, societal responsibility and respect for common goods;

j. these changes, conveyed and amplified by the media, are directly reflected in European public opinion, which fluctuates between the search for a vision of the future and a feeling of uncertainty given the unpredictability of social changes and the limitations of the proposed alternatives to the status quo.

Convinced that:

a. faced with these challenges, the gap between politics and citizens, democratic deficits and forms of regulation, and the prevalence of short-term visions weaken the attachment felt for democratic institutions, increase the risks of violence and threaten social cohesion;

b. at global level, the decision-making mechanisms, despite awareness of inter-dependency and the need for concerted initiatives, fail to resolve tensions between globalised markets and the population's demand for security;

c. in a context in which no player is totally independent or immune from the negative consequences of other people's actions or failure to act, the most advantaged population groups cannot ignore their interdependencies and responsibilities vis-à-vis the rest of society, particularly when the least advantaged see their achievements in terms of access to rights, public services and common goods placed under threat;

d. the power disparities between the strongest and weakest players situated on the extremes of society are not sufficiently acknowledged and re-balanced whether in decision-taking or in social and institutional arrangements, producing an unacceptable waste of human capacities and knowledge which are essential for collective progress;

e. while states are tending to reduce their role, companies, social organisations, families and individuals have yet to acquire the skills and motivation necessary to exercise and share social responsibilities in a context of interdependence;

f. an inequitable distribution of power and influence out of phase with the allocation of social responsibilities among the different players makes it impossible to embark on new approaches to securing progress;

g. underestimating the contribution of active citizens and other players in the framing, implementation and assessment of public policies carries with it the danger of a loss of transparency and effectiveness;

h. the impact of the decisions of the public authorities on developing citizens' democratic skills and encouraging economic players to act in a socially responsible manner, should not be disregarded;

- i. it is essential to enhance the capacity of companies to take account of the interests of the different partners, especially those in the social and solidarity-based economy sector, and to incorporate the negative externalities in economic deliberations;
- j. a single progress indicator, such as Gross Domestic Product, shows its limitations given the need to take into account citizens' material and non-material needs, quality of life, freedoms and capacities, and to reduce social disparities and prevent the risks of a regression in acquired rights and the destructive consequences of irreversible decisions;
- k. in the absence of a comprehensive understanding of the impact of choices, including those relating to the private sphere, no sustainable development policy is capable of preventing and overcoming the threats of irreversible environmental destruction;
- l. the failure to clarify the relationship between representative and deliberative democracy hampers innovation in all fields in which the reciprocity of commitments and shared decision-making based on impartial reasoning are essential in order to guarantee the principles of social, environmental and intergenerational justice;
- m. without more widespread confidence in the possibility of change and societal progress, there is a danger that the exceptional legacy of the democratic values championed by the Council of Europe will be dissipated and that the most vulnerable groups, such as migrants, the poor and minorities in general, will be held to blame without justification.

Resolved to:

- a. combat poverty, insecurity, discrimination and widening inequalities in order to further develop and pass on to future generations a universal framework of inalienable and indivisible rights and common goods, as the basis of democratic citizenship which is inclusive of all forms of diversity;
- b. alert all players to the risks of a regression in rights and democracy when faced with recurring crises and to the waste of citizens' human, intellectual and moral skills;
- c. reduce the gap between the formal recognition of rights and democratic principles (such as human dignity, equality, participation, social, environmental and intergenerational justice and international peace) and decisions and behaviour which disregard or violate these rights and principles;
- d. gain an in-depth understanding of the nature of changes under way, so as to develop the collective skills to manage transitions and re-acquire a long-term vision in order to ensure that institutions and citizens are not paralysed by a feeling of impotence or that the balance of power is left to those who are already the most powerful;
- e. overcome ideological barriers and inertia which prevent linking responsibilities and individual interests to approaches for joint action to secure social, environmental and intergenerational justice, acknowledging the value of solidarity, co-operation and active participation in society;
- f. broaden the choices available to citizens in pursuit of social, environmental and intergenerational justice, by strengthening confidence in their capacity for initiative and creativity;

g. restore the ability of institutions to rectify democratic deficits and to settle social and distributive conflicts by setting up fair agreements with citizens and stakeholders based on the impartial search for the common good and mutual advantage, so that the most vulnerable are fully recognised and protected from the negative consequences of decisions in which they have had no part;

h. promote the ability of companies when drawing up their strategies to take account of the visions and interests of all their stakeholders and of the impact of their activity on society at large, to overcome a reductive view of economic efficiency that does not include collective well-being and to draw inspiration from the principles of the socially responsible and solidarity-based economy;

i. give greater acknowledgement to the contribution of the ethical and solidarity-based initiatives of citizens, social enterprises, co-operatives and other forms of social networks to the preservation and creation of common goods and innovation in policies and public services;

j. encourage experimentation of a new approach based on the principle of *shared social responsibilities*, which seeks to submit the decisions and action of the different players to agreement on the objectives of social, environmental and intergenerational justice, in a spirit of reciprocity, mutual accountability and minimisation of the negative consequences by reducing inequalities in power;

k. promote the principle of shared social responsibilities to develop the knowledge, skills and common strategies capable of limiting uncertainty and of taking account, in an impartial way, of all the various interests, while at the same time giving priority to satisfying the needs of the weakest members of society and to upholding fundamental rights;

l. facilitate the emergence of new forms of multi-stakeholder, multi-level and multi-sectoral cooperation as a vehicle for non-hierarchical and shared decision-taking, thereby ensuring that political actions are geared to the long term avoiding a transfer of the burden of risks to vulnerable groups or to future generations;

m. incorporate into collective knowledge and public policies the lessons of pioneering work encouraging the sharing of responsibilities to combat poverty, overindebtedness and discrimination, in order to ensure the preservation, management and creation of common goods, reduce the environmental footprint of human activities, improve health-care systems and other public policies through co-production with users and organisations active in the field of service access and quality, spread the benefits of the new technologies, sustainable choices regarding production, consumption, budgetary decisions, territorial mobility, housing, savings and consideration of the diversity of players' interests in decision-making processes.

n. encourage among all players reciprocity and mutual respect of commitments in the establishment of standards, priorities and co-decided strategies for action, in order to strengthen the assets in terms of democracy and social cohesion which make Europe unique and attractive in the global context.

Recalling that:

a. the Council of Europe's *Revised Strategy for Social Cohesion*, which defines the latter as the capacity of society to ensure the well-being of all its members, calls for the

construction of a Europe of shared social responsibilities in order to achieve this goal, as one of its fundamental pillars;

b. the *Social Cohesion Plan*, launched by the Council of Europe in 2010, seeks to foster the involvement of citizens and players in defining priorities and responsibilities by means of deliberative democracy and the accession by territories taking part to a *European Network of Territories of Co-Responsibility*;

c. the European Union's 2020 Strategy calls for "intelligent", sustainable and inclusive growth and sets among its chief objectives the reduction of poverty and a decrease in the use of fossil fuels and that the *European Platform against Poverty* gives practical form to the aspirations of several groups of citizens and civil society organisations committed to constructing a more just Europe;

d. the enjoyment of the rights secured by the *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, the *European Social Charter* and the European Union's *Charter of Fundamental Rights* entails responsibilities and duties both between individuals and towards the human community at large, and to future generations, and consequently a European Charter on Shared Social Responsibilities is an indispensable complement to those instruments;

e. many recommendations approved by the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities support a change in the economic and social model inspired by the principles of democratic participation, social justice and sustainable development;

f. the Council of Europe already supports the establishment of a context conducive to the sharing of social responsibilities through the *Convention on access to official documents*, the *Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority*, the *New Urban Charter* and the *Convention on the participation of foreigners in public life at local level*;

g. the *Aarhus Convention*, which was adopted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on 25 June 1998 and entered into force on 30 October 2001, recognises and protects citizens' rights to information, participation and access to justice in environmental matters;

h. numerous international documents, such as the *UNESCO Declaration on the responsibilities of the present generations towards future generations*, the *Earth Charter*, the *Manifesto on the future of the climate*, the *Manifesto on the future of food*, the *Aalborg Charter of European cities and towns towards sustainability*, the *Charter of Human Responsibilities* and the *Agreement* adopted by the World Conference of People on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth recognise the need to preserve common goods and pass them on to future generations in a context of shared responsibility in the field of social and environmental justice;

i. numerous international projects underway, such as *Beyond GDP*, supported by the OECD and the European Union, and the Council of Europe's activities on defining the aim of societal progress in co-operation with citizens and communities, are working on innovative ideas and strategies for promoting the prosperity and well-being of all, combining access to material goods with access to non-material, relational and environmental goods, regulating production and consumption, and recognising each person's contribution to social cohesion;

Recommends that the governments of member states :

- a. acknowledge the urgent need to limit uncertainty over the future and create renewed awareness of public and private responsibilities, by promoting the principle of *shared social responsibility* in order to channel the knowledge and resources of individual and collective players, strong and weak alike, vis-à-vis jointly agreed objectives in the field of social, environmental and intergenerational justice in a long-term vision;
- b. facilitate *processes of innovation and collective learning* to promote behaviour consistent with the European frames of reference in the field of fundamental rights, democracy and the management of common goods;
- c. promote a new *sharing of social responsibilities* reflecting the societal capabilities of all stakeholders;
- d. encourage and legitimise *new forms of deliberation*, in order to reduce inequalities of power and formulate preferences through reasoning and exchanges of views;
- e. promote and legitimise *new structures of governance* involving stakeholders, the various levels of responsibility and the different sectors of society which will make it possible to engage in democratic deliberation regarding the direction to take and the policies that are lacking, including vis-à-vis future generations;
- f. encourage renewed *criteria for assessing* initiatives in order to provide players with the means of verifying consistency between decisions and their implementation, and the quality of the results;
- g. ensure that learning processes, forms of participation, structures of governance and assessment criteria capitalise on the knowledge and contributions of all stakeholders in accordance with their abilities, roles and resources, paying particular attention to those who have less power, whose voices are less often heard, who have less legal protection and who suffer from the negative consequences of other people's choices;
- h. recognise and actively support the vital role played by local stakeholders, neighbourhoods, cities, towns, villages, cantons, districts and regions in constructing a Europe of shared social responsibilities, especially with regard to the application of the principles of this Charter in more disadvantaged areas ;
- i. ensure that the Charter is widely disseminated among institutions, authorities, companies (including those operating in the social and solidarity-based economy), civil society organisations (including those producing goods and providing services), trade unions, foundations, professional organisations, the media, social networks and citizens in general;
- j. facilitate ownership and implementation of the contents of the Charter by setting up a Committee for the Promotion of Shared Social Responsibility, tasked with promoting its implementation, learning from experience and putting forward policy recommendations in the different areas concerned.

Instructs the Secretary General to transmit this recommendation :

- a. to the political bodies of the Council of Europe;

- b. to the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions;
- c. to the national parliaments of the member states;
- d. to the international organisations.

Appendix to Recommendation Rec. (2011)...

Council of Europe Charter on Shared Social Responsibilities

Adopted under Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec. (2011)

Chapter I – General considerations

Reasoning

1. The political and social achievements of Europe are under threat. Public over indebtedness, particularly in a context of crisis, exposes states to pressures to cut back investment in the field of social protection, access to health-care, education and housing. This reduces their ability to take action against inequalities and discrimination. The disappearance of jobs as a result of company relocations and technological change in the absence of retraining and product innovation, employment insecurity and impoverishment of parts of the population, notably young people and the elderly, and rising levels of household debt challenge the principle that everyone has a right to an equitable future.
2. There is a growing gap between the formal recognition and the application of the principles of justice, which undermines confidence in the possibility of improving living conditions, especially for the least advantaged, and fuels feelings of insecurity in the face of these changes. Fears that democratic and social achievements may be damaged or lost are taking precedence over aspirations for social progress. This gives rise to the danger of victimising groups who can most easily be blamed without any real justification, such as the poor, migrants and minorities.
3. The rise in inequality and poverty coincides with concerns over persisting economic conditions that can no longer ensure full employment. A succession of economic and financial crises, as well as climate change, depletion of natural resources and environmental limits to the absorption of waste show clearly that the current model of production and consumption have a range of negative consequences. The resulting risks affect people in an unequal way. Their effects are felt with greater severity by those who are the most vulnerable and the least protected, even they bear little or no responsibility for the current imbalances.
4. European societies are finding that they lack appropriate means for tackling these problems, including methods of regulation, conflict management and planning for long-term sustainability. Incentive mechanisms that are based exclusively on private interests have shown themselves to be ineffective in securing fundamental rights and protecting common goods. The traditional forums for negotiation and social dialogue are being inhibited or are no longer suited to the complexity of the challenges. Important decisions often suffer from a democratic deficit. Consultations at all levels are rarely felt to be effective. These tendencies reinforce feelings of distance between citizens and institutions.
5. While there is a tendency for states to reduce their role in key policies and services for collective well-being. Meanwhile, other actors fail to fully understand the common issues at stake in a context of interdependence.

6. Faced with questions of such magnitude, Europe must react. It is essential, to generate confidence in the future, for social responsibilities to be shared equitably among public authorities, companies, civil society organisations, families and individuals. .

7. The sharing of social responsibilities is an alternative to the status quo. It offers hope because it takes account of the nature of the changes taking place and the shortcomings of current institutional arrangements, which have prevented stakeholders from finding common and sustainable solutions. It creates a framework for developing action strategies that can provide everyone with an acceptable degree of control over their lives in a context of co-decided priorities. This innovation in citizen and institutional practices can only come about by involving all actors, weak and strong alike, in the setting of common and shared objectives, recognising their interdependence.

Definitions

8. For the purposes of this Charter:

a. *responsibility* is defined as the state or ability of individuals and institutions to be accountable for the consequences of their actions or failure to act in all fields of public and private life, with due regard for the relevant moral, social or legal rules or obligations;

b. *social* responsibility is defined as the state or ability of individuals and institutions to be accountable for the consequences of their actions or failure to act in the fields of protecting human dignity, the environment and common goods, the fight against poverty and discrimination, and the pursuit of justice and social cohesion, with due regard for diversity and for the relevant moral, social or legal rules or obligations;

c. *shared* social responsibility is defined as the state or ability of individuals and institutions to take action and be accountable for the consequences of such action or failure to act, in the context of mutual commitments entered into by consensus, agreeing on reciprocal rights and obligations in the fields of protecting human dignity, the environment and common goods, the fight against poverty and discrimination, the pursuit of justice and social cohesion, with due regard for diversity.

9. Shared social responsibility is not a denial of specific responsibilities. On the contrary, it gives them new meaning by obliging social actors and individuals to act with full transparency and to account for their actions to each other. Nor does shared social responsibility mean indiscriminately placing of responsibility on the weaker actors on the pretext of a poorly understood freedom of choice.

10. To ensure the application of shared social responsibility:

a. each individual or group of individuals must have the ability to take a decision or take part in an action having significant effects in the public arena;

b. for their actions to be legitimately subject to the approval or disapproval of others regarding the effects of their choices, each individual or group of individuals must be able to have access to information on the impact of their actions, in order to foresee and verify their compliance with the norms of life in society;

c. the principles, norms and priorities in the field of social justice must be agreed by democratic consensus having a significant influence on their substance and application;

d. these principles, norms and priorities must reflect a collective identity, creating a feeling of solidarity and reciprocity between stakeholders motivating them to action and to honouring their mutual commitments.

Vision

11. The future of Europe and the preservation of its democratic and social achievements are closely linked to the ability of institutions and citizens to understand the changes taking place and address the uncertainty generated by unprecedented interdependence between individuals, communities and organisations. Such a systemic context fundamentally alters the scope and substance of specific responsibilities, be they individual or collective, voluntary or statutory.

12. Interdependence brings to the fore differences in values, conceptions of well-being and interests present in society. These differences can give rise to mutually destructive conflicts, to the waste of social, environmental and economic resources and to other negative externalities. In order to avoid friction, reduce imbalances of power among members of society and exploit the potential of mutual gains, it is essential to put in place co-operative solutions which can ensure for all stakeholders an equitable share of social and economic benefits.

13. Such solutions will be possible on condition that an impartial consideration of the different social demands, concepts of well-being and interests at stake are impartially considered, leading to the identification of common interests, while at the same time acknowledging the value of diversity. This consensual approach will enable European societies to pull together, generating solidarity, imbued with the principles of social, environmental and intergenerational justice.

14. Social justice seeks to acknowledge the primacy of access to rights while satisfying fundamental human needs and to capitalising on each individual's personal assets and skills. Environmental justice seeks to ensure the equitable management of natural resources. Intergenerational justice places future generations and their possibilities for development at the heart of present-day decisions, so that they do not have to suffer from irreversible damage caused by the generations preceding them.

15. Putting these principles into practice and implementing the associated objectives, policies and initiatives require shared social responsibility. The introduction of shared social responsibility can foster a climate of confidence in the future and develop the social and moral resources for the citizens of Europe to work together for the well-being of all, for social cohesion and for sustainable development.

16. A Europe which seeks to eradicate poverty, social exclusion and all forms of unfair discrimination must take steps to safeguard existing democratic and social achievements and implement a social model that is appropriate for the present while intentionally directed towards a desirable and sustainable future.

17. Common goods (natural resources, cultural and historical heritage, human rights, social protection, social cohesion, democratic institutions and knowledge, etc) are ideal elements for establishing a vision of the future for Europe. They symbolise the common destiny of present-day and future humankind and create a strong rationale for practices of sharing and solidarity, that can become a catalyst for economic renewal and job creation in the regions of Europe.

18. By encouraging the different stakeholders to adopt the content of the Charter of Shared Social Responsibilities, the Council of Europe is calling for renewed confidence in equitable social progress, on the basis of collective learning processes, deliberative democracy practices and new forms of partnership and multi-stakeholder and multi-level governance. All these approaches will help to strengthen representative democracy.

Chapter II – Action strategies

General considerations

19. Current social challenges are real dilemmas which require the attention of all actors in the socio-economic system and political institutions. Everyone needs to be involved. The achievement of human dignity, peace between societies, social cohesion and justice, and the preservation of the natural environment will only be possible if all stakeholders, at all levels, local, national and international are consulted and –where possible- co-operate in taking and implementing decisions. Failing this, there is every chance that social and societal difficulties will persist and even result in conflict and violence.

The major dilemmas include:

- a. the budgetary policy of the public authorities, choices regarding the ways of reducing public debt, “fiscal justice” options, and levels of investment in the field of social rights, public services and common goods;
- b. economic policy: what type of growth can reduce poverty and narrow inequalities in wealth while preserving the quality of the natural environment?
- c. intergenerational policy: how can one preserve the quality of life and interests of future generations? How can one uphold the social rights of the elderly without creating conflicts between their social protection and efforts to avoid the financial and employment insecurity of the younger generations?
- d. policies for harmonious co-existence in plurality: how can one develop societal and institutional capacities to promote both equity and diversity?

20. The above dilemmas call for action strategies based on the principle of shared social responsibility. Such strategies should:

- a. safeguard the social and political achievements of Europe and ensure their sustainability faced with the dangers of regression of those achievements;
- b. support innovation in the field of social, environmental and intergenerational justice, based on new institutional and organisational arrangements;
- c. take account of the negative externalities of decisions and actions so as to minimise injustice, unfair discrimination and protect the rights of future generations;
- d. provide the weaker actors with the opportunities to influence decisions and priorities;
- e. manage conflicts through the impartial mediation of interests and an understanding of the complexity of the challenges, while bearing in mind the principles of social, environmental and intergenerational justice;

- f. build up confidence and everyone's ability to take action by giving them an opportunity to express their views on the objectives sought, the means of implementing the strategies adopted and the criteria for assessing those strategies;
- g. produce performance indicators able to measure societal progress in terms of well-being for all, the reduction of disparities in living conditions and harm caused to the environment.

21. An effective strategy in the field of shared social responsibilities presupposes:

- a. innovation and learning processes making it possible to develop the competences and knowledge of actors, enabling them to evaluate the consistency between decisions taken and the European frames of reference regarding fundamental rights and the democratic management of common goods;
- b. recognition of the full range of stakeholders, their demands and possible contributions in terms of action or suggestions, their rights and obligations, and their role in a social system based on close interdependencies;
- c. deliberative processes that make it possible to fine-tune the preferences of the stakeholders and draw up priorities through an exchange of differing points of view and through the impartial mediation of different interests; forms of partnership, multi-stakeholder and multi-level governance that make it possible for a plurality of actors to be engaged on a sustainable basis; the emergence of institutional mechanisms that engender confidence that each partner will act in accordance with the decisions taken and refrain from detrimental or self-interested behaviour.

Innovation and learning processes

22. Europe has social, cultural and political achievements which it is essential to preserve and which serve as a reference for innovation among institutions, practices and decision-making processes. These achievements relate to the recognition of the universal and indivisible fundamental rights and human dignity, democratic action and the ability of towns, cities and regions to implement relevant policies in very different contexts. They are the result of co-operation, a pooling of know-how and knowledge and experience applied to the public management of common goods and the natural, cultural and technological heritages; they are based on the spirit of initiative and partnership that is found when civil society has demonstrated its capacity for harmonious co-existence in diversity for surmounting unfair discrimination.

23. Preserving the vitality of this heritage and transmitting it to future generations requires a keen awareness of and a willingness to learn from the social and societal changes taking place. To this end, all actors must use their knowledge, experience and moral and material resources to engage in innovative co-operative approaches inspired by the principles of shared social responsibility.

24. The main initiatives which today promote institutional and social innovation, particularly at local level, relate to:

- a. the fight against impoverishment and discrimination, with the active participation of the persons concerned;
- b. the strengthening of social ties and networks by establishing partnerships and collective decision-making processes that are rooted in an understanding of the

differences between stakeholders and the need to reconcile their interests while reducing imbalances of power;

c. the management of common goods, both material and non-material, as a source of learning competences, mediating and identifying shared interests;

d. improving health and welfare systems and other public policies and services through shared decision-making with service users, provider organisations and public authorities co-production the design and delivery of services, ensuring equitable access, service quality and outcomes that meet the needs of those who are intended to benefit;

e. devising and propagating sustainable lifestyles in terms of production, consumption, mobility, housing, savings and investment;

f. promoting institutions and professions whose aim is the resolution of conflicts, through the impartial consideration of the interests at stake and by broadening perspectives;

g. setting up enterprises and co-operatives incorporating into their accounts all social and environmental costs, and the interests of the other stakeholders in their forms of governance.

25. The results of these initiatives should be further developed in general policies. These initiatives modify the vision and behaviour of the different stakeholders, highlighting in the interaction between “experts” and “non-experts” and between strong and weak actors, a key source of institutional and social innovation.

Recognition of the stakeholders

26. Sharing social responsibilities in an equitable way requires an reassessment of the allocation of roles and powers among all stakeholders, their rights and obligations, and their specific responsibilities.

27. Traditionally, social responsibilities have been assigned to states, while the markets have been asked to guarantee the efficient allocation of resources through mechanisms encouraging the pursuit of private interest. At a time when the public sector is tending to reduce its role in relation to social policies and common goods, under the pressure of liberalisation and deregulation processes, the other actors do not always have the skills and motivation necessary to share social responsibilities in a context of interdependence, or to appreciate the urgent need to protect the weakest and common goods.

28. This distribution of roles is unequal to challenges of preventing current socio-economic imbalances and preventing damage to the natural environmental. It needs to be reviewed, bearing in mind the innovative capacities of the various actors. This is not a matter of replacing wholesale current arrangements, but of encouraging the development of appropriate means for co-operation, regulation and transparent evaluation of results.

29. An assignment of roles, specifying the arrangements for the participation of the various stakeholders in collective well-being must take account of the following elements:

a. the relative urgency of the different demands put forward by the stakeholders, acknowledging the priority of those which satisfy fundamental needs and corresponding rights;

b. the production of negative externalities or the risk of having to suffer such externalities;

c. the material or non-material contributions of all stakeholders and their corresponding merits.

30. Everyone must be able to contribute, individually and collectively, to the well-being of all, future generations included. If some people are incapable of accepting social responsibilities because of circumstances beyond their control, it falls to the other parties to rectify the situation.

31. The sharing of social responsibilities is legitimate insofar as all stakeholders are present, visible and duly represented in accordance with their needs, their contributions and the externalities that have to be contended with. The views of the weaker actors must be able to be heard, heeded and able to influence decisions and results. This means avoiding situations where actors in possession of more information and organisational power relinquish their specific responsibilities, impose priorities based on their interests alone and fail to acknowledge and compensate for the negative externalities to which they may give rise.

Deliberative processes

32. The equitable sharing of responsibilities calls for methods making it possible for everyone to put forward their own visions and reformulate their preferences through reasoning and exchanges of views. Deliberative processes must comply with these requirements by making it possible to:

a. bring to the fore and examine in a public, transparent setting the different interests put forward by the stakeholders;

b. evaluate in an impartial way social preferences and demands, so as to identify common interests and reach agreements acceptable to each stakeholder;

c. construct shared visions and knowledge capable of reconciling the aspirations of present and future generations;

d. motivate each stakeholder to comply with the agreements reached that are acknowledged as equitable and as an expression of a collective identity.

33. Deliberative processes must be structured in accordance with well-defined methodological principles. Each stakeholder must be able to:

a. benefit from a universal base of rights, in particular the right to information, to participate, communicate, experiment, criticise, and organise;

b. be part of the decision-making process whenever there are alternatives to be chosen;

c. interact on an equal footing with other stakeholders, all present and duly represented;

d. accept the viewpoint of others in the context of impartial discussions, seeking a consensus that is as equitable as possible;

- e. adjust his or her own interests in the light of the disparities between the different positions and the relations of interdependence between everyone's individual choices;
- f. take into account the long-term effects of decisions on objectives and means of action, including their impact on the weaker actors and on future generations;
- g. receive guarantees about the implementation of decisions and the respective contributions of the other stakeholders;
- h. take part in the construction of criteria to assess decisions and initiatives regarding the well-being of all and in the design and implementation of evaluation procedures.

34. By upholding these principles, deliberative processes contribute, amongst other things to:

- a. clarifying the actual needs of the actors and highlighting their interrelations;
- b. reconciling individual preferences with common priorities in the field of social, environmental and intergenerational justice;
- c. reducing imbalances of power between the stakeholders and neutralising its impact on the construction of knowledge and on decision-making;
- d. renewing the sense of specific responsibilities and broadening the scope of individual and collective choices;
- e. reactivating the actors' moral resources, forms of collective intelligence and democratic competences;
- f. highlighting the key role of citizenship in countering the fragmentation of responsibilities of individuals as workers, consumers, savers, investors, etc.;

35. Proximity is a crucial factor in introducing deliberative processes. Within regions, towns, neighbourhoods, local institutions, public services, enterprises and the workspace it is possible to bring together all the actors required to share social responsibilities. Proximity also encourages the setting up of partnerships and networks, strengthening reciprocity and the actors' confidence in joint action.

36. Deliberative processes are not a substitute for representative democracy. Because they reactivate the capacity to mediate between different interests, there's need of strengthening the links between representative and deliberative democracy, so as to guarantee collective learning, social and institutional innovation.

Forms of governance

37. The sharing of social responsibilities requires regulation mechanisms and institutional and organisational structures which, based on deliberative processes, make it easier for the stakeholders to reach equitable agreements and honour the decisions taken. Forms of partnership and multi-stakeholder and multi-level governance satisfy these requirements, when they:

- a. facilitate decision-making in complex contexts, where the traditional forms of responsibility and the framing of public policies are proving to be ineffective;
- b. provide the stakeholders with the information and encouragement required for the sharing of social responsibilities and resolving conflict;

c. create a mutually accepted framework for evaluating situations, taking diverse judgements into consideration.

38. These forms of governance supplement existing institutional structures. In order to be effective, they must:

a. comply with the principles of equitable shared responsibility, assigning priority to satisfying fundamental needs and including amongst stakeholders those who suffer the negative externalities;

b. adopt the principles of deliberative democracy, particularly regarding everyone's equal right to participate, the free circulation of information as well as impartiality and balance between strong and weak actors;

c. guarantee participation on an equal footing in the mechanisms for monitoring processes and results.

39. Public authorities are required to guarantee the legitimacy and continuity of these forms of governance and partnership. To this end, they are required to:

a. motivate stakeholders to comply with the principles relating to the sharing of social responsibilities and the implementation of decisions;

b. where there is evidence, promote and make widely available the positive results of innovation;

c. set up institutions specialising in conflict resolution, facilitating the exercise of shared social responsibility;

d. reassess the role of public servants as mediators between different actors who may have different interests, bearing in mind the constitutional principles and democratic procedures in force;

e. make interaction with stakeholders the opportunity for learning, so that representative and deliberative democracy become mutually reinforcing.

40. Cities, towns, neighbourhoods and villages are encouraged to adopt these forms of governance so as to:

a. acknowledge everyone's contribution to the development of social cohesion and respect for others and their territory, and to building social solidarity;

b. strengthen consistency between the objectives of social, environmental and intergenerational justice, decided by common accord, and individual and institutional choices;

c. reinforce citizens' sense of belonging by focusing on the importance of common goods, the landscape, the cultural heritage and all other resources which help form their social identity, while embracing diversities generated by immigration;

41. Companies are encouraged to adapt their forms of governance to incorporate the general principles of shared social responsibility, so as to:

a. integrate further in decision-making the viewpoints of workers, consumers, those who experience the negative consequences of production, institutions and the relevant civil society organisations;

b. rethink their aims and operational principles in a context of social, environmental and intergenerational justice;

c. manage relationships and conflicts, both in-house and with those in communities and areas where they are located, in a spirit of dialogue, confidence and mutual respect.

42. Companies that wish to share social responsibilities are required, amongst other things, to:

a. take account of the interests of all stakeholders;

b. make the life cycle of products transparent, from the origin of the raw materials to the management of waste;

c. publish periodical reports on the social and environmental impact of their activities, including those of a financial nature;

d. seek lasting competitive advantages focusing on sustainability through innovation in products and production processes, rather than exclusively on reducing labour force costs.

Chapter III – Final provisions

Dissemination and encouragement

43. Member states are invited to disseminate the Charter and encourage and facilitate implementation of its principles.

Voluntary accessions

44. All other interested parties, with the exception of natural persons, may also accede by application to the Secretariat of the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS). The voluntary accession procedure provides for the following, in order:

a. a statement of interest in the general provisions and strategies of the Charter;

b. submission of an account of activities already carried out or in progress relating to the general provisions and strategies of the Charter;

c. presentation of objectives in relation to one or more policy areas mentioned in the Charter, together with an indication of the methods to be employed and the results expected;

d. formal accession to the Charter.

Co-operation

45. Member states are also invited to co-operate in implementing the objectives and principles of this Charter, by:

a. pursuing activities of common interest;

b. encouraging multi-lateral and cross-border activities, including the networking of territories committed to implementing the Council of Europe's Action Plan for Social Cohesion;

c. exchanging, developing and codifying positive results, in the context of the Council of Europe and with other international organisations.

46. All parties to the Charter are invited to make themselves known to each other, exchange their experiences and identify areas of complementary between their initiatives.

Evaluation and revision

47. Member states and all other parties should at regular intervals evaluate the strategies, action and policies pursued in accordance with this Charter and adapt them in line with changing needs and contexts. The evaluation and revision of action may be the subject of co-operation at various levels.