



# Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2018

*Brussels, 11 December 2018*

## Conclusions and recommendations

**Sebastiano Sabato**  
**European Social Observatory**

 **#SPEU18**

[www.ose.be](http://www.ose.be)

 **Ose**  
European  
Social  
Observatory

# Structure of the presentation

- 1. The European Pillar of Social Rights as a game changer?**
- 2. Policy Recommendations**
- 3. Why do we need a strong social Europe (asap)?**

# The European Pillar of Social Rights as a game changer? (1)

Why this time it could be different? The EPSR, the SIP and the ‘politicisation’ of EU social policies.

The **political nature** of the Pillar:

- **Context:** the debate on the Future of Europe;
- **Origins:** the role of the President of the Commission;
- **Development:** building a supporting coalition through the consultation;
- **High-level endorsement:** role of the Parliament and Inter-Institutional Proclamation
- **Symbolic aspect:** rights-based language

# The European Pillar of Social Rights as a game changer? (2)

How we can understand the EPSR?

A EU **social policy framework**: a policy infrastructure combining the various elements of public policy, from agenda setting to implementation.

Three functions:

- 1) Revitalising the EU social policy arena and revamping the EU social policy agenda;
- 2) Influencing Member States' (social) policies through the European Semester;
- 3) Influencing the EU's macro-economic and fiscal policies

# The European Pillar of Social Rights as a game changer? (3)

Revitalising the EU social policy arena and revamping the EU social policy agenda

**Pillar Package**

**Social Fairness Package**

# The European Pillar of Social Rights as a game changer? (4)

Influencing Member States' (social) policies through the European Semester;

**The European Semester 2018:**

**AGS 2018**

Follows structure of EPSR, but not all the principles taken into consideration

**Draft Joint Employment Report 2018**

Revised Employment Guidelines inspired by EPSR Principles  
Headline indicators of the Social Scoreboard used

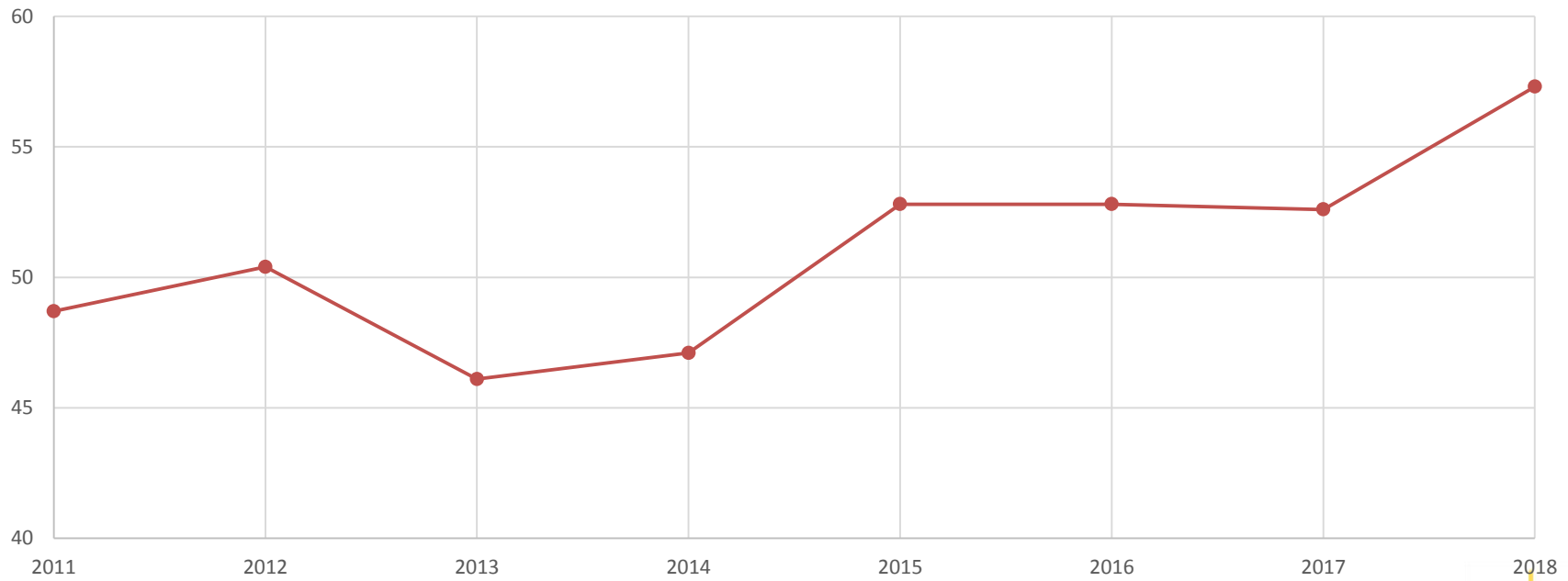
**Country reports**

The EPSR informs the analysis

# The European Pillar of Social Rights as a game changer? (5)

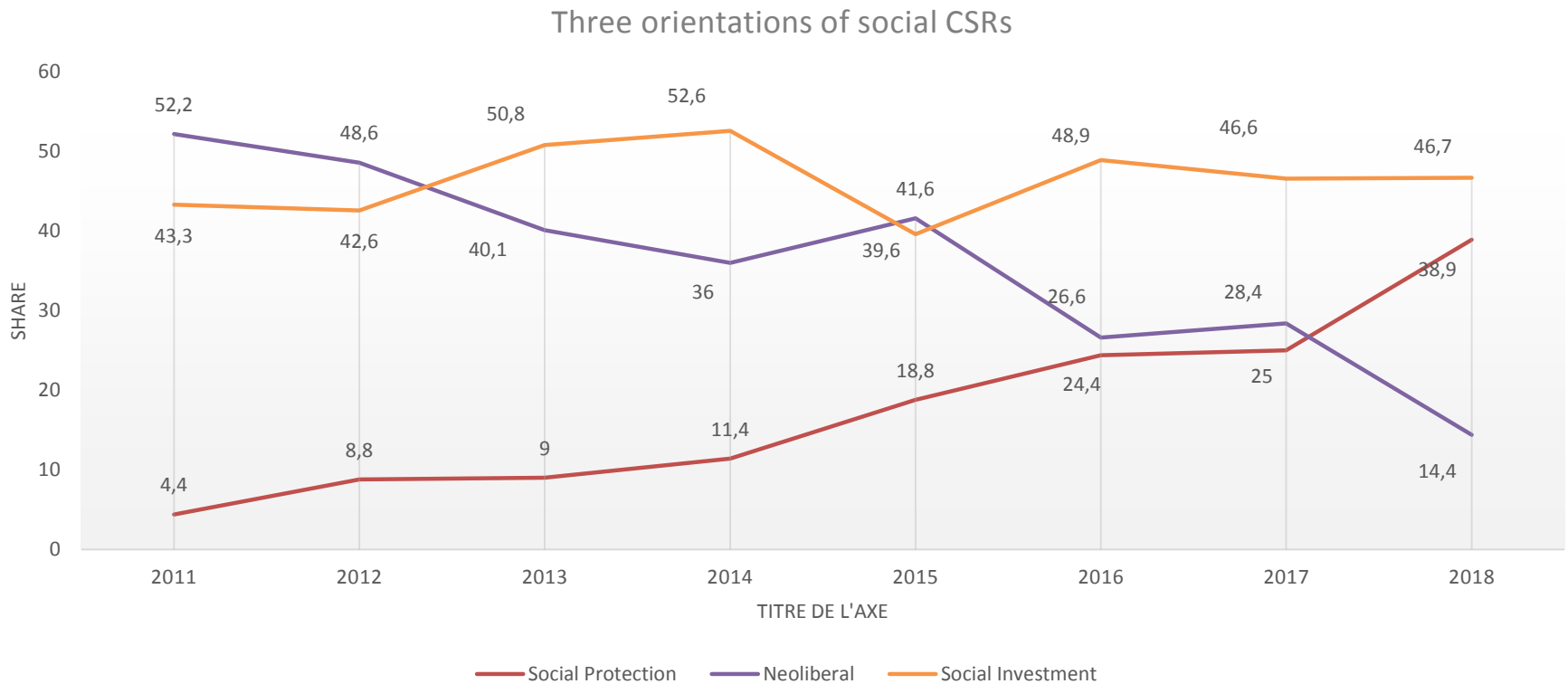
**The CSRs 2018** (from Vesan, Corti and Sabato, 2018)

## Share of 'social CSRs' over total CSRs



# The European Pillar of Social Rights as a game changer? (6)

## Social CSRs by 'policy orientation'





# The European Pillar of Social Rights as a game changer? (7)

## Two conclusions

- Since 2014 the European Semester is **more social**
- Evolution 2017 – 2018: **Pillar effect**

But

‘the Pillar should be implemented **according to available resources** and within the limits of **sound budgetary management** and Treaty obligations governing public finances’ (European Commission, 2017)

- ‘**constrained socialisation**’ of the Semester?

# The European Pillar of Social Rights as a game changer? (8)

Influencing EU macro-economic and fiscal policies

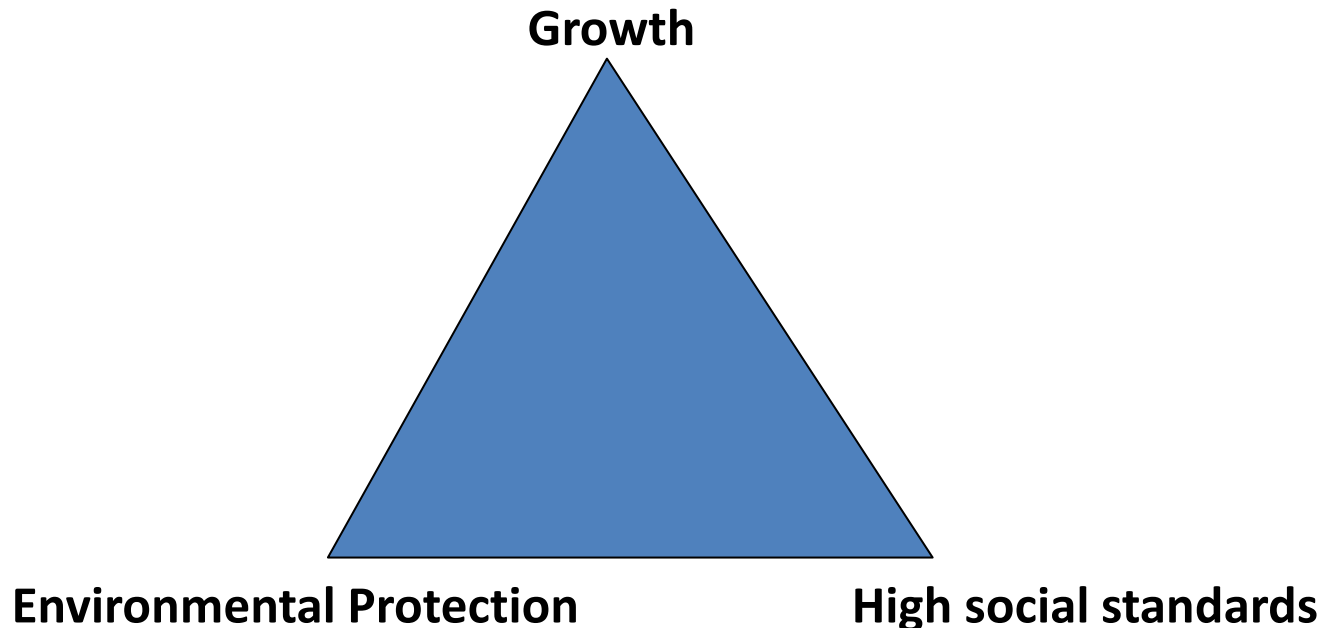
## The limitations of the Social Scoreboard

- Not all the principles of the Pillar are covered
- Need to boost headline and secondary indicators
- ‘Weight’ compared to dominant scoreboards
  - Macro-economic Imbalances Procedure
  - Excessive Deficit Procedure

# The European Pillar of Social Rights as a game changer? (9)

Would the 'reconciliation' of EU social and economic policies/objectives be sufficient?

## The eco-social-growth trilemma



# Policy Recommendations (1)

1. **Taking the Sustainable Development Agenda seriously.**
2. **Striking a new balance between EU economic and social policies by strengthening the social dimension of E(M)U.**
3. **Boosting stakeholder involvement.**
4. **A roadmap for the implementation of the EPSR.**

## Policy Recommendations (2)

### Examples:

- A **(social) budget** for the eurozone
- A common **European unemployment scheme**
- A **Social Progress Protocol** (ETUC)
- A **Social Imbalances Procedure**

# Why do we need a strong social Europe (asap)? (1)

Are these proposals realistic/feasible?

Euroskeptic/ sovranist parties, some of them with limited democratic credentials: defending people's (social) rights against a Europe who only protects the interests of the capital and of banks:

**Poland:** PiS

**Hungary:** Fidesz ; Jobbik

**Italy:** Northern League

**Germany:** AfD

**France:** FN

Et al.

## Why do we need a strong social Europe (asap)? (2)

A strong social Europe supporting Member States' welfare systems is not only a matter of social fairness

**It's a matter of protecting our democracies!**

**Thank you for your attention!**