European Social Charter will only gain relevance if it supports reforms for job creation and sustainable social security systems

Speaking at the High-Level Conference on the European Social Charter in Turin on 17 October, the IOE Vice-President for Europe, Ms Renate Hornung-Draus warned that the way in which the supervisory bodies of the Council of Europe interpreted the principles of the European Social Charter was undermining its relevance for Member States.

"The context in which the European Social Charter has to be implemented today has changed fundamentally compared to the period in which the Social Charter was first adopted," said the IOE Vice-President.

Since 1990, many new member States have joined the Council of Europe. They have different economic and social challenges than the founding members. The interpretation of the European Social Charter by its Supervisory bodies has to be more responsive to their specific situation.

Globalisation, technological changes require open, dynamic and flexible labour markets and a commitment to life-long learning. In some European countries, where labour market regulation has not adapted to this changing context, very high unemployment, and especially youth unemployment (which emerged with the 2008 financial crisis), can only be properly addressed with profound structural reforms in labour markets. Also, social spending in some countries has reached levels that go beyond the economic resources of these countries leading to high public debt. This crowds out investment, because these countries have failed to make their social security systems sustainable in the context of changing demographics. Fiscal consolidation in these countries is urgently required, not only to restore the credibility of financial markets and attract investment, but also as an act of social justice towards the young generation.
Ms Hornung-Draus said: "The [European] Social Charter will achieve its goal of promoting economic and social development only if its principles are implemented in a way that respect the variety of situations of Member States, and if they are conducive to the structural reforms and fiscal consolidation required by the changing economic and social context."

For further information on Ms Hornung-Draus’s participation in the Conference, please contact IOE Adviser, Ms Alessandra Assenza