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Economic crisis and social protection in the European Union: Moving beyond immediate responses

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Abstract

The economic crisis has served to remind us that social protection is both a social buffer and an economic stabilizer that cushions the impacts of recession. Social benefits are being used by the countries of the European Union (EU) as well as by the Union itself as part of its recovery plan, to support those negatively effected by the crisis and to boost household consumption, thus providing support for business activities and employment. But the crisis could also represent an opportunity for the EU to strengthen its social protection systems, through seeking inspiration from the basic principles of international social law, to emphasize the legitimacy of high levels of social protection, to encourage upward convergence among the social protection systems of its Member States and to increase budget allocations for social protection.

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