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SOCIAL AGENDA

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EUROPEAN SEMESTER

A new evaluation tool

The new social dimension

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Welcome to n°50

Michel Servoz
Director General of the European Commission's Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion department

Twenty years ago, EU leaders gave a special impetus to addressing employment issues together, by accelerating the implementation of the new Employment title introduced into the EU treaties in 1997.

In November 2017, their successors met in a special Social Summit, in Gothenburg, to give extra impetus to the European Pillar of Social Rights, which the European Commission had adopted in the form of a Recommendation in April 2017: a programme of principles and action, in the words of European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, which now inspires all Commission proposals.

The new social dimension reconnects with the way the EU integrated macro-economic and employment issues in the 1990s but it also goes beyond that: beyond employment, it encompasses the conditions for getting a job in the first place (education, lifelong learning, work-life balance, social housing...). It even involves issues of exclusively national competence, such as wage setting.

In short, it calls for a mentality change: The new social dimension will only materialise if all the actors concerned – EU institutions, governments, social partners and civil society organisations - work in genuine partnership and take action, not just at EU level but also at national, regional and local level. The European Pillar of Social Rights provides them with a common a framework for adapting our labour market and societies to the challenges facing us in the years and decades to come.

"Time for genuine partnership"

The Social Summit in Gothenburg was an occasion to reaffirm at the highest possible level our joint responsibility to tackle the challenges our societies and labour markets face. It showed that all EU institutions, social partners and civil society organisations share a commitment to work towards better living and working conditions and equip the Union with a strong and tangible social dimension.

Now we need to act. The European Commission has already started using the European Pillar of Social Rights intensively with a whole set of proposals, and will carry on doing so throughout the year. And the 2018 European Semester cycle demonstrates the added value of the European Pillar of Social Rights in providing a comprehensive evaluation of EU countries' employment and social performance.

NEWS IN BRIEF

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Milestone for the future: The November 2017 social summit was an opportunity for EU leaders to debate with social partners and civil society on the future of Europe.

Europe's social dimension: The way forward

28 NOVEMBER 2017

European Commission President Juncker and Swedish Prime Minister Löfven took stock of the outcome of the 17 November Social Summit. They published a concluding report which serves to frame the follow-up of the Summit, from the December European Council onwards. The Summit was a first milestone in the debate on the future of Europe as laid out in President Juncker's Roadmap for a more United, Stronger and more Democratic Union, as well as the first stop on the road to the meeting of EU Leaders in Sibiu on 9 May 2019 (see page 12).

Free movement: Two public consultations

27 NOVEMBER 2017

The Commission launched a public consultation to gather views of the broader public on setting up a European Labour Authority and on introducing a European Social Security Number. The European Labour Authority should ensure that EU rules on labour mobility are enforced in a fair, simple and effective way. As for an EU Social Security Number, it would facilitate the identification of persons across borders for the purposes of social security coordination and allow the quick and accurate verification of their social security insurance status. It would facilitate administrative procedures for citizens by optimising the use of digital tools.

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Portuguese worker in the Netherlands: The European Labour Authority should ensure that the relevant rules are enforced in a fair, simple and effective way.

Social protection for all: Social partners consulted again

20 NOVEMBER 2017

The Commission launched a second round of discussions with trade unions and employers' organisations at the EU level on how to help people in employment and in self-employment have access to social protection and related employment services. In parallel, a wider public consultation was also opened to collect the views of all relevant stakeholders such as public authorities, companies, the self-employed, platform workers and civil society. Drawing on the conclusions of these consultations, the Commission intends to present a proposal in the first half of next year.

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Coming: In 2018, the European Commission should suggest ways of improving access to social protection for all, based on on-going consultations.

Second European Vocational Skills Week: Launched

20 NOVEMBER 2017

From 20 to 24 November 2017, the European Commission organised the second European Vocational Skills Week to help people discover, use and improve their talents and abilities through vocational education and training (VET) and encourage people to consider VET as first choice in their career path. On this occasion, the Commission showcased high-quality initiatives that aim at equipping people with the skills they need in a fast-changing labour market. More than 1000 events took place across Europe – in all 28 EU Member States, as well as in Norway, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Iceland and EU Candidate countries.

Quality training: More than 1000 vocational education and training events took place in November 2017 across and beyond the EU.

European Pillar of Social rights: Proclaimed

17 NOVEMBER 2017

At the first EU Social Summit in 20 years, the presidents of the EU institutions, EU heads of State or government, social partners and other key stakeholders gathered at the Social Summit in Gothenburg, Sweden, to have an open discussion amongst all participants on how to promote fair jobs and growth in the European Union. The European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission jointly proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights (see page 14).

Fair jobs and growth: The European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission jointly proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights in November 2017

Apprenticeships in Europe: Framed

5 OCTOBER 2017

The European Commission adopted a proposal for a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships. The Commission has identified 14 key criteria that EU countries and stakeholders should use to develop quality and effective apprenticeships. This initiative will help increase the employability and personal development of apprentices and contribute towards a highly skilled and qualified workforce responsive to labour market needs (see page 6).

Quality apprenticeships: The European Commission proposes 14 criteria that EU countries and stakeholders could use to determine quality.

Employment contracts: Further discussions with social partners

25 SEPTEMBER 2017

The European Commission has entered into further discussions with trade unions and employers' organisations at EU level on how to modernise the rules on employment contracts, in order to make these contracts fairer and more predictable for all types of workers.

Fairer work contracts: the European Commission wants to modernise the rules.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Apprenticeships – a common understanding

A European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships is on the EU Council of Ministers' table

On 5 October 2017, the European Commission proposed 14 criteria to ensure a common understanding, right across the European Union, of what makes for quality and effective apprenticeships: seven criteria concerning the learning and working conditions and another seven for the framework conditions (see boxes).

Well-designed apprenticeships that combine learning in school and training on the job, have proved effective in helping the transition of young people from education and training into work: 60-70% of apprentices (90% in some countries) move directly into a job.

Since 2013, the Commission has worked with Member States and stakeholders to promote the supply, quality, image and mobility of apprenticeships through the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

Also, the Youth Guarantee, adopted by the EU in 2013, seeks to ensure that every young person receives an offer for a good quality employment, training or apprenticeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. It is crucial to secure the quality of offers.

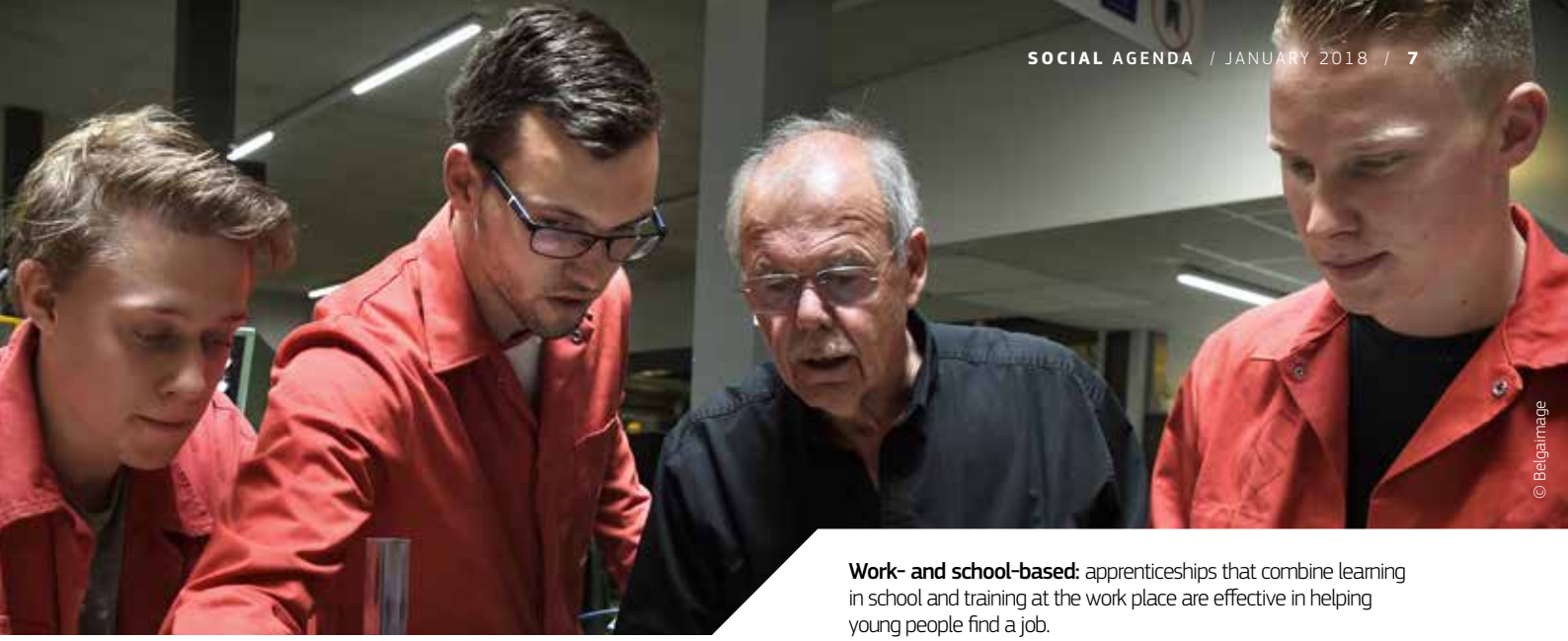
As far as traineeships are concerned, the issue of quality was addressed by an EU Recommendation of 2014 (see *Social Agenda* n°46). This new Framework will do the same for apprenticeships.

With the European job mobility portal EURES due to start advertising apprenticeship offers across Europe in 2018, it is all the more important to have a common EU-wide understanding of what is meant by "quality and effective apprenticeships", while respecting the diverse systems and traditions in this area from one EU country to another.

In this endeavour, the European Commission can count on the European social partners, knowing that apprenticeship is by definition part of their core business. In 2016, they agreed on a joint statement entitled "Towards a shared vision of apprenticeships".

It built on a report by the trade unions on quality, and on employers' work on effectiveness. This in turn paved the way for a tripartite (employers, trade unions and governments) opinion

Dual goal: The EU framework for apprenticeships aims to ensure both quality and effectiveness.



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Work- and school-based: apprenticeships that combine learning in school and training at the work place are effective in helping young people find a job.

of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT).

A newly established European Apprentice Network, representing the apprentices themselves, also supports the idea of quality apprenticeships.

Quality and Effectiveness

The EU Framework covers the dual goal of ensuring both quality and effectiveness for apprenticeships. For example, the Commission proposal recommends that apprenticeships be based on substantial learning on the job, with a focus on learning outcomes and on quality work and health and safety conditions.

There should be cost-sharing agreements bringing all the stakeholders together: the companies, which offer apprenticeships, the learner (who does not get a full salary) and the national, regional or local authorities, who can provide incentives, both financial (especially for small and medium-size enterprises) and non-financial (e.g. in the form of awareness-raising campaigns).

No matter how good the framework for apprenticeships, its implementation ultimately depends on employers' commitment to take apprentices. In countries like Germany and France, apprenticeship numbers have been decreasing and efforts are being made to turn the tide. In a number of other countries, such as Hungary, Slovakia and Spain, efforts are being made to introduce and build up apprenticeship provision.

Once the Framework is adopted by the EU Council of Ministers, the Commission will suggest indicators for each criterion which can be used by Member States when implementing the Framework. In addition, through the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, the Commission will strengthen its support to the Member States and stakeholders involved.

A new set of Apprenticeship Support Services will boost knowledge sharing and networking opportunities and provide "bench-learning": A combination of benchmarking and mutual learning which has been experimented with success by the European network of Public Employment Services.

More information: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.?langId=en&catId=1198&newsId=2873&furtherNews=yes

EU funding

Fourteen criteria that EU countries and stakeholders should use to develop quality and effective apprenticeships, are contained in the proposal for a European framework put forward by the European Commission on 5 October 2017.

Seven criteria for learning and working conditions, covering issues such as a written contract, earning outcomes, pedagogical support, the workplace component, pay and/or compensation, social protection and work, and health and safety conditions.

And seven framework condition criteria, dealing with a regulatory framework, the involvement of social partners, support for companies, flexible pathways and transnational mobility, career guidance, awareness raising, transparency of offers, quality assurance and graduate tracking.

The Commission supports the implementation of these criteria through EU funding: the European Social Fund alone contributes up to € 27 billion to education and training.

At least 390 000 apprenticeships have already been offered under the EU Youth Guarantee and a new ErasmusPro initiative aims at supporting 50 000 placements of vocational learners in companies abroad, up till 2020 (see *Social Agenda* n°49).

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Fairness and solidarity between **generations**

Recent analyses shows how urgent it is to make the labour market and social protection systems fairer for Europe's young and for future generations

Key role to play: Social partners have already addressed a number of intergenerational fairness-related issues.

Conveying a sense of urgency by collecting the hard facts and figures on the double burden expected to affect younger generations in the years and decades to come (see box): this was the aim of the European Commission's 2017 Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE) report, published in July 2017. Up till then, such data was scattered in various studies.

Together with the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Commission organised on 10 October a conference on "Intergenerational fairness and solidarity in Europe" to discuss the chapter headings of ESDE 2017: Intergenerational fairness and solidarity today and challenges ahead; working lives as the foundation of prosperity for all generations; securing good living standards in old age also in the future; and fostering intergenerational fairness through social dialogue.

Double burden

While working age adults experienced a stagnation of incomes during the crisis years, old age pensions were relatively well protected, even increasing in relative terms. Despite improving educational attainments, the younger generations have seen their employment rate stagnate, whilst older workers have experienced a rapid rise in theirs.

The income share of younger workers has declined, given their shrinking share in the overall population as well as their difficult labour market situation and their low wages, in a large number of EU countries.

The shift to non-standard work has affected the newer generation of younger workers more than the prime-age and older ones. Younger workers are twice as likely to be in temporary work as old age groups - involuntarily so, for more than one in three of today's younger part-time workers.

Poor employment prospects for younger people during the crisis have had a negative impact on their economic independence. Postponing household formation, home ownership and parenthood may in turn

Inter-generational solidarity: crucial in the face of the double burden falling upon the younger workers.

have inter-generationally adverse consequences on fertility rates and consequently also on the sustainability of pensions systems.

The EU's working-age population (20-64) peaked in 2009 and is projected to decline significantly over the next decades. This will put pressure on future workers to generate higher productivity growth than today's working generation. At the same time, the number of people older than 64 will strongly increase. A growing number of older people will thus be dependent on a shrinking number of potential contributors, increasing demographic dependency.

As a result, today's younger workers are likely to be confronted with rising contribution rates that will be necessary to fund future spending on the increasing number of pensioners. In addition, compared to today's pensioners they are also likely to face lower pensions, relative to wages. Many of the reforms that have been introduced to improve pensions systems' long-term sustainability are spread over a long period and will therefore affect future contributors and pensioners, rather than today's pensioners.

Policy response

This is where inter-generational solidarity comes in. The EU's greatest asset in the face of this situation is its people. Investing in the employability of all generations, in a life-cycle perspective, is absolutely crucial.

A higher percentage of potential workers should be helped into employment (women, disabled people…) and the length of working lives should be extended. Net immigration and higher fertility could also help, while the productivity of all workers needs to be enhanced.

Social partners have an important role to play in this context. They have already addressed a number of intergenerational fairness-related issues. They also play a key role in designing and implementing employment protection legislation and active labour policies (e.g. training).

The framework for the policy response is already in place, such as the New Skills Agenda for Europe (see *Social Agenda* n°45), the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Semester (see page 14 onwards). Concrete initiatives are in the pipeline, on access to social protection for all and work-life balance.

The next report, ESDE 2018, will be an opportunity to further deepen the issue of intergenerational fairness and solidarity, focusing as it will on the changing world of work.

More information: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&langId=en&newsId=2841

Worse off than their parents?

The European Commission's 2017 Employment and Social Developments in Europe report focuses on a single topic: intergenerational fairness and solidarity.

Employment in the EU has never been as high as it is today and unemployment is at its lowest since December 2008. Ten million jobs have been created since 2013.

However, there are concerns that for the first time since World War II, today's young people and their children may end up worse off than their parents.

In addition to the crisis legacy and the challenges of globalisation and digitalisation, the working age population is expected to decline steadily while the number of future pensioners will strongly increase. As a result, a smaller work force will need to ensure the EU maintains its current growth rate while more pensioners will depend on them.

A double burden therefore rests on young people's shoulders, stemming from demographic change and the need to ensure pension system's sustainability - hence the need for swift action, involving all generations.

INNOVATION

Breaking new **social** ground

Social innovation is strategic to ensure inclusive growth

A great variety of projects

The calls for proposals launched via the European Employment and Social Innovation Programme (EaSI) give an idea of the great variety of areas covered by social innovation.

The 2014 call aimed at promoting an integrated approach in the delivery of social services. Seven projects were selected, concerning childcare, long-term care or school dropping-out prevention.

The 2015 one focused on social services for labour market integration. Eight projects are now addressing employment and training, housing and health, as well as the provision of minimum income. They target those furthest away from the labour market, in particular disadvantaged young people, low-skilled migrants, Roma people and mentally disabled people.

The projects to be selected following the 2016 call will deal with the integration of asylum seekers, refugees and their families into the labour market, with a strong emphasis on women.

Developing a service model to improve migrants' transitions to education, work and other services as soon as they arrive; creating a single citizen-oriented social record to coordinate and integrate social care in a particular region; organising thousands of meetings with unemployed people and social security employees to find out why so many registered jobseekers do not take up social benefits to which they are entitled…

The red thread between all these projects is social innovation: Innovation that is social both in ends and means – in the "how" (the process) and in the "why" (the social and societal goals it wants to reach).

New era

Projects such as these were presented at a major conference co-organised on 27-28 November 2017, in Lisbon, by the European Commission, the Portuguese government and the Gulbenkian Foundation. Its theme: "Opening up to an era of social innovation". The conference was attended by European Commissioners Marianne Thyssen (Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility) and Carlos Moedas (Research, Science and Innovation), as well as by Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, Prime Minister António Costa, several ministers, mayors and personalities.

Its aim: to highlight the potential future opportunities that social

Second chance: Social innovation is about investing in people and empowering them, as second chance schools do.

Focus of attention: The 2015 EU call for projects focused on social services for those furthest away from the labour market, such as Roma people.

innovation can bring to the EU and its Member States, in terms of societal well-being, jobs and business development.

The conference brought together over 1 000 participants: scientists, innovators, social entrepreneurs, civil society representatives, national and regional policy makers, local actors, business angels, politicians etc.

They were able to network, debate about new trends in social innovation (e.g. digital innovation, mainstreaming social innovation…) and discuss the possible role of social innovation in future EU policies and funding instruments, beyond 2020.

New context

The Lisbon conference took place straight after the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights by the Presidents of the EU Council of Ministers, the European Commission and the European Parliament in Gothenburg (see page 14).

In the new context created by the Pillar and its proclamation at the highest possible level, social policy encapsulates what used to be considered as separate and distinct policy areas: Education, health, housing, information and communication technologies, research…

As the projects showcased at the conference showed, nowadays social policy aims at improving the living and working conditions, as well as the skills, of the EU's greatest asset in the face of today's challenges: its people.

Social investment

The underlying vision is one of social investment: ensuring that the EU model of a highly competitive social economy remains sustainable in the face of today's challenges and becomes more resilient in the face of future shocks.

In practice, social innovation means turning citizens into innovators, by empowering them to meet the challenges they face. At a time of budgetary restrictions, it taps into social creativity and, as a result, often works better - and is cheaper than solutions proposed from the outside. It also offers a transition towards a different kind of growth that puts people and environment at its centre: inclusive growth.

"Social innovation is about cohesion, social change that helps to build a more social Europe", Marianne Thyssen stated when addressing the Lisbon conference. "They say that necessity is the mother of invention. And the necessity is there. The European economy is growing again. Employment is increasing again. We also now need to make Europe inclusive again".

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1022&langId=en

Co-funded by the EU

Social innovation is one of the missions of the European Social Fund (ESF) and, since 2007, programmes directly managed by the European Commission (first PROGRESS, now EaSI) focus on helping small-scale experimental programmes get off the ground: If successful, they can be scaled up at a second stage, with the help of EU funds co-managed by the Member States, such as the ESF.

The ESF provides the most funds, with € 1.1 billion invested in innovation between 2014 and 2017. There is also the Horizon 2020 programme, which supports research and innovation in general. And almost all European Commission services have an innovation policy department.

SOCIAL POLICY

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Calling for equality: "Europe must be a Union of equals where there can be no second class citizens or workers" (Jean-Claude Juncker, 2017 State of the Union speech).

Ensuring **fairness** across the EU

This year, crucial EU employment and social policy initiatives are due to materialise as part of a roadmap towards a more united, stronger and more democratic EU

Every year, in September, the President of the European Commission delivers a "State of the (European) Union" address to the European Parliament. In addition, in 2017, Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker presented a letter to the Heads of State and government and the presidents of the European Council and of the European parliament.

This letter took the form of a roadmap "for a more united, stronger and more democratic Union", ranging from the day he delivered his State of union address to 30 March 2019, the day after the United Kingdom leaves the European Union, and stretching out to the European elections of June 2019.

To understand the context in which a particularly ambitious employment and social affairs work programme is being implemented by the European Commission in 2018 (see box), it is worth analysing the way issues related to this policy area came up, both in the State of Union speech and in the Roadmap.

8 million new jobs

In the speech, social policy appears right at the beginning, under the heading "Wind in our sails", when Jean-Claude Juncker highlights that "unemployment is at a nine year low. Almost 8 million jobs have been created during this mandate so far. With 235 million people at work, more people are in employment in the EU than ever before. The European Commission cannot take the credit for this alone. Though I am sure that, had 8 million jobs been lost, we would have taken the blame".

Under "Staying course", as part of a long section dedicated to the issue of migration, the Commission President states that he is "particularly proud of the young Europeans volunteering to give language courses to Syrian refugees or the thousands more young people who are serving in our new European Solidarity Corps. They are bringing European solidarity to life.

Towards the end of this section, he explains that "irregular migration will only stop if there is a real alternative to perilous journeys (...) At the same time, legal migration is a necessity for Europe as an ageing continent. This why the Commission made proposals to make it easier for skilled migrants to reach Europe with a Blue Card".

At the heart of his speech, Jean-Claude Juncker addresses the issue of values and this is where he makes his most important announcements in the field of employment and social affairs: "Our values are our compass. For me, Europe is more than just a single market (...) Europe is first of all a Union of freedom, freedom to voice your opinion, as a citizen and as a journalist (...) Second, Europe must be a Union of equality. Equality between its Members, big and small, East and West, North and South (...) In a Union of equals, there can be no second class citizens (...), there can be no second class workers. This is why the Commission proposed new rules on posting of workers. We should make sure that all EU rules on labour mobility are enforced in a fair, simple and effective way by a new European inspection and enforcement body. It seems absurd to have a Banking Authority to police banking standards, but no common Labour Authority for ensuring fairness in our single market. We will create one".

Social standards Union

The European Pillar of Social Rights comes up soon after, under the heading "A more united Union" and after a call to integrate into the Schengen free circulation area and into the Euro zone those Member States that have not yet joined them: "If we want to avoid social fragmentation and social dumping in Europe, then Member States should agree on the European Pillar of Social Rights as soon as possible (...). National social systems will still remain diverse and separate for a long time. But at the very least, we should work for a European Social Standards Union in which we have a common understanding of what is socially fair. Europe cannot work if it shuns its workers".

In his Roadmap till the end of his mandate, the Commission President calls for a Special Summit in Romania on 30 March 2019, the day after Brexit: "My hope is that Europeans will wake up to a Union where we all stand by our values (...) Where our single market will be fairer towards workers from the East and from the West. Where we managed to agree on a strong pillar of social standards", which was the case on 17 November 2017 (see page 14 onwards).

More information on the State of Union speech:
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/state-union-2017_en

An ambitious 2018 agenda

The State of the Union speech and the Roadmap to a post-Brexit EU of 27 Member States and the next European elections: The two together make for a very ambitious European Commission 2018 work programme in the field of employment and social affairs:

- Totally new initiatives: Such as a proposal to establish a European Labour Authority and an initiative on a Europe social security number and, by May 2018, a comprehensive proposal for the future Multi-Annual Financial Framework (the EU budget for the years 2021-27, including the structural and investment funds).

- And pushing through the EU decision-making process the initiatives put forward by the Commission in 2017: Such as the one on access to social protection for atypical self-employed workers, the revision of the Written Statement Directive (see *Social Agenda* n°49), the coordination of social security systems and work-life balance for parents and carers (*Social Agenda* n°48), the revision of the posting of workers directive, the European Accessibility Act and a legal basis of the European Solidarity Corps.

A common understanding: "At the very least, we should work for a European Social Standards Union in which we have a common understanding of what is socially fair" (J.-C. Juncker).

SPECIAL **FEATURE**

The **new** social dimension

The proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights at the Social Summit on 17 November 2017 gives extra ownership of the Pillar to actors from the EU to the local level, as well as extra momentum to a series of employment and social affairs initiatives launched by the European Commission on the basis of the Pillar, which should materialise in the next eighteen months.

For the first time in exactly twenty years, the EU Heads of State and governments met on 17 November last in a summit exclusively devoted to employment and social affairs.

In 1997, in Luxembourg, it was to accelerate the implementation of the new Employment title that had been introduced into the EU treaty.

In 2017, in Gothenburg, it was to do two things: proclaim, on behalf of the European Commission, the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, the European Pillar of Social Rights which exists since April 2017 in the form of a Recommendation (see *Social Agenda* n°48); and take part in live web streamed debates with representatives of 30 social partner and civil society organisations on how to concretely implement the Pillar (see box).

In that sense, the Summit was a key milestone in the broader debate on the future of Europe, kick-started by the European Commission in March 2017 with the publication of a White Paper on this issue, followed by a series of annexes including one on the social dimension of Europe by 2025 (see *Social Agenda* n°49).

Protection

"The new world of work gives rise to opportunities", European Commissioner Marianne Thyssen commented. "People should be able to seize them and feel protected, no matter what type of

Beyond the Heads of State and Government

The Social Summit was not just with Heads of State and Government, Presidents of EU institutions and bodies and representatives of other international organisations. Thirty organisations of a different kind were invited too: The European cross-industry social partners and Swedish social partners, as well as civil society actors such as the Social Platform, the European Youth Forum...

Nor was it only about making formal and parallel declarations. Rather, the Social Summit was designed as an interactive event, combining plenary sessions with discussions in smaller groups to debate about access to the labour market, fair employment and working conditions and "in between jobs: supporting transitions".

Large parts of the Summit were webcast, allowing citizens at large to follow those discussions live.

An interactive summit: EU leaders were web-streamed live debating with social partners and civil society organisations during the social summit.

job they are in. This is the rationale behind the European Pillar of Social Rights. (...) I want to make sure that everybody who works is covered by social protection schemes, on the basis of their contributions. This is important to make sure our social protection systems are adequate, sustainable and in respect of intergenerational fairness".

Double aim

There was a double aim in connecting the Heads of the EU Member States with social partner and other civil society representatives in a single, interactive event.

The first one was to turn this summit into a great opportunity to discuss the challenges which every EU country and citizen is facing in the field of employment and social affairs in the wide sense (including living conditions, education, housing, work-life balance, digitalisation, demographic change...).

The second one was to increase the sense of ownership of the principles and values enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights on the part of all actors from the EU to the local level and in societies at large - knowing that the Pillar may give rise to concrete policy proposals not just from the European Commission but also from national governments. For only then will citizens be able to use the rights contained in the Pillar, from a legal point of view.

Action programme

"The Pillar is not a poem", Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker emphasized in his address to the summit participants. "It is first of all a programme of principles, and secondly a programme of action".

At EU level, this is amply reflected in the European Commission's action programme for 2018 (see page 12) and in the 2018 cycle of the European Semester process of economic, social and fiscal governance which was launched five days after the Gothenburg summit, using the new social scoreboard annexed to the European Pillar of Social Rights to evaluate in a much more comprehensive way than before EU countries' performance in the employment and social affairs areas (see page 21).

Member States must play their part too, in particular when it comes to taking initiatives in areas such as wage setting, where the EU as such has little leverage. This is particularly important at a time when the reports adopted at the start of the 2018 European Semester cycle deplore the fact that economic expansion and the labour market recovery we are witnessing is not reflected in wage growth (see page 21).

Equal opportunities

As for EU citizens at large, a special Eurobarometer survey on the future of Europe published in October 2016 reveals that most Europeans think that the life of young people will be more

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Not a poem: The European Pillar of Social Rights is a programme of principles and of action (J.-C. Juncker, here co-hosting the summit with Swedish Prime Minister Löfven).

difficult than that of their own generation. And more than half of the respondents disagree with the statement that, in their country, everyone has a chance to succeed in life.

On the other hand, a large majority of respondents agree that a free-market economy should go with a high level of social protection. There is also a growing consensus across the EU that fostering equal opportunities is necessary to ensure that everyone can start well in life, overcomes difficulties and realise their own potential.

Equal opportunities, equal pay, shared caring responsibilities between men and women and opportunities to develop and keep up with technological developments through lifelong learning and up-skilling: all this would help empowering individuals and build more resilient social structures that are able to adapt successfully over time.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9003&furtherNews=yes

Beyond the crisis legacy

The 2008 economic crisis has left deep societal marks, from long-term unemployment to high levels of public and private debt in many parts of Europe.

Although the EU economy is now back on a more stable footing, significant social inequalities remain and many persisting difficulties need to be addressed: differences in social protection coverage between workers on standard and non-standard contracts; the gender pay gap; unequal access to goods and services for disabled people and other vulnerable groups…

Today, people change jobs up to 10 times in their work life and more and more people are working under non-standard contracts.

The working age population will shrink if the current demographic trend carries on in the EU: There will be 38 million fewer Europeans of working age by 2060. Whereas today, four working people support one pensioner, the ratio will go down to two to one by 2060.

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Gender equality: More equality between women and men would contribute to empowering individuals and build more resilient social structures.

SPECIAL **FEATURE**

© European Union

Michel Servoz: It is crucial to have a mix of EU and national endorsement of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Michel Servoz

Partnership is the key to implementing the new social dimension

Proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in Gothenburg by the presidents of the EU Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the European Commission; a particularly ambitious State of the Union speech by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, announcing among other things the creation of a European Labour Authority; the Commission rolling out a series of ambitious and complex proposals to implement the Pillar; and a proposal for a new EU Multi-annual Financial Framework for the years 2020-2027 due to be adopted in May 2018: 2017 ended in a flourish in the field of employment and social affairs.

We asked Michel Servoz, Director-General of the European Commission's Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion department, for his views on this acceleration of events, from an operational standpoint.

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Mobile counselling for migrant workers: The European Labour Authority will ensure better implementation of the free circulation legislation for EU workers and provide mediation and counselling (as here in Germany).

Is the EU taking on a new social dimension?

There is definitely a new emphasis on social issues, especially with the signature of the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights by the Heads of State on 17 November 2017: We have 28 countries which, in spite of having a lot of differences in terms of social values and social performances, agree on the need to restore some degree of convergence and setting common goals in this area!

What difference does it make to proclaim the European Pillar of Social Rights or to adopt it in the form of a Recommendation like the Commission did in April 2017?

It's a big change. Now we have the 28 Member States endorsing the Pillar, as well as the three main EU institutions: Council, Commission and Parliament. It is crucial to have this mix of EU and national endorsement, as the 20 principles enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights have to be implemented through both EU and national legislation: Some of the principles are within the realm of EU competence; others are not. The principle on wage, for example, can only be implemented through national legislation. It may even be implemented by an agreement between the social partners, in some countries. And there is also the fact that, whether translated through EU or national legislation, the implementation of the Pillar principles may also benefit from EU funding.

The future of work is also about the future of our societies

The European Pillar of Social Rights goes beyond what we traditionally define as "social" policy...

Yes. It's about social values and but also concrete issues such as health, housing... It's a very broad agenda which recognises that you cannot separate employment issues from social ones. All in all, it is really a forward-looking agenda: One of the big issues we discussed whilst preparing the Pillar was the future of work, which also happens to be the future of our societies. If you look at the situation of young people, it is very difficult for them not only to find a job but also to get housing. There are also issues such as the cost of education, so we want to look at all these issues in a holistic way.

The European Pillar of Social Rights comes with a new Social Scoreboard to monitor how well the EU Member States are doing in converging on the basis of the Pillar principles. How will it work in practice?

We have already started using it in the framework of the 2018 European Semester exercise, which we launched on 22 November with the adoption of the Annual Growth Survey and of a proposal for a Joint Employment Report which is now been discussed with the Member States (see page 22). In practice, this new scoreboard contains 14 indicators which show where some countries have to do more. This in turn will translate, where appropriate, into country-specific recommendations to be adopted by the European Council in July 2018. So we are using the instruments of the European Semester process of economic and social governance to convince Member States to be more forthcoming in implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Is the EU leading the way in having this holistic approach and breaking policy silos?

I would rather say that the EU is coming back to an approach which integrates macro-economic and employment issues. The economic crisis has shown that it is crucial to do so. Some EU countries are really bent on having such a very integrated approach but for the EU as a whole, it is a question of coming back to something that was very important in the past. This is thanks to Jean-Claude Juncker, who is really focused on both economic and social performance. From the beginning of his mandate, he has been calling for a social triple A rating for the EU.

In September 2017, Jean-Claude Juncker also called for the creation of a European labour authority.

This has very much to do with the problems that have arisen with the cross-border mobility of workers and European citizens within the EU: the posting of workers, the coordination of national social security systems… These issues stem from sub-optimal cooperation between EU Member States. When moving from one EU country to another, people face problems when carrying over their rights. There are also issues of abuse and of inaccurate implementation of EU legislation by some Member States. The European Labour Authority will help create better implementation standards. It will improve inspections on how EU legislation is being put into practice in the Member States and also provide some mediation when difficulties and disputes arise.

This issue of free movement of citizens and workers across the EU has become particularly sensitive of late…

Yes. Even if only a small proportion of EU citizens live and work in another EU country, this has created some political tensions, not always for good reasons… but we have to acknowledge them. It is quite clear that the mobility of EU citizens is something that needs to be promoted and developed: It is healthy for the functioning of the single market and it reduces the skills mismatches which exist in some EU countries. It is one of the four freedoms, alongside the freedom of movement of goods, services and capital. But in order to make it work, we need also to reduce the political tensions which have arisen and facilitate the circulation of workers in a practical way: We need to provide some solutions. This is what we have been doing with our proposals on the posting of workers and on social security. On 23 October, we obtained an agreement in the EU Council

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Mentality change: "Employment and social policies are all about the employers, the trade unions and the governments working together".

of Ministers on a general approach to the revision of the posting of workers directive, an important step in the decision-making process.

Will the European Pillar of Social Rights help define the future financial framework?

Absolutely. It has to be the driving element, the political framework for designing the future financial instruments which will, in part, implement each of the 20 principles of the Pillar.

There is talk of a Human Capital Fund?

That's one of the options that are being considered. Indeed we believe it is important now to give more prominence, politically speaking, to actions which are centred on human capital. If you look, at the state of the economy, our competitiveness depends so much on the human factor: Skills, innovation, education… I am not saying that we should stop investing in infrastructure but maybe we should focus a bit more on human capital.

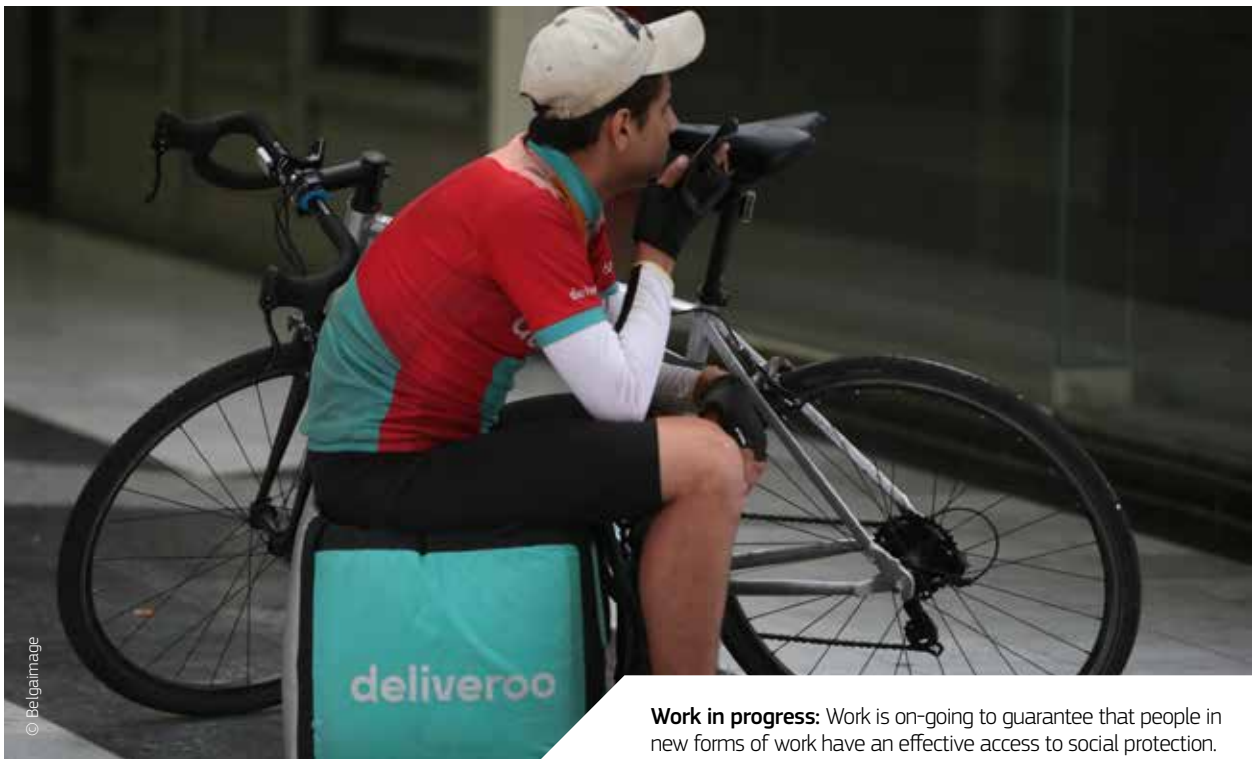
The dialogue between the European Commission and social partners, as well as civil society, has been relaunched over the last few years. Is cooperation with them due to further deepen, as the focus is placed more and more on the concrete implementation of social rights and principles?

Implementing the rights enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights requires a big change in mentalities. With the level of ambition shown by the Pillar, we really need genuine partnership on the part of the social partners. The key issue is how they will participate in the development of EU but also national social policy. Indeed, we have taken initiatives to really kick-start the work of the social partners and this is producing good results, like recently on the issue of skills. However, much more can be done. We would like to see more and bolder initiatives coming from the social partners themselves. Of course I understand their constraints but the national governments or the EU cannot be ambitious in isolation, alone: this would not work in this particular field of employment and social policies, which is all about the employers, the trade unions and the governments working together.

Ambitious and complex files for 2018

The European Commission's agenda for 2018 is particularly ambitious in the field of employment and social affairs…

It is indeed! We still have to deliver the Written Statement directive revision, on which we have just received the social partners' replies as part of the second stage consultation. Work is on-going on guaranteeing an effective access to social protection for people carrying out new forms of work (see *Social Agenda* n°49). And we have to come forward with a proposal on the European Labour Authority and on a European social security number. These are extremely ambitious and complex files but we will deliver. And there is also the preparation of our proposal for the future Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, which has to be ready by May 2018 at the latest. Indeed, it is not only the legislative files that are important for citizens: Our financial instruments too, as they are the expression of EU solidarity on the ground!



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Work in progress: Work is on-going to guarantee that people in new forms of work have an effective access to social protection.

SPECIAL **FEATURE**

© Belga Image

Acquiring skills: the 2018 Annual Growth Survey gives priority to helping workers acquire skills and enjoy equal opportunities, as well as to fair working conditions.

A more and more social European Semester

For the first time, the EU's yearly economic, social and fiscal policy coordination process, the "European Semester", assesses Member States' performance in the light of the European Pillar of Social Rights' indicators

The 2018 cycle of the European Semester was launched only five days after the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its broad social investment approach (see page 14). Significantly, this new cycle is particularly geared to investing in people.

For sure, the backdrop to the 2018 Semester is one of robust economic recovery in the EU, with record high employment levels and unemployment ones declining towards pre-crisis levels.

However, this labour market recovery is not reflected in wage growth and many people still do not feel the impact of the good tidings.

The priority now is therefore to make sure that this momentum benefits all members of EU countries' societies - and lasts!

Social rights

The European Semester autumn package, which the European

© Belga Image

Critical case: This year's draft Joint Employment Report identifies 50 critical cases, in 18 countries, thanks to a new social scoreboard using 14 indicators.

Commission presented on 22 November 2017, fully integrates the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the three categories in which they fall: equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; and social protection and inclusion.

The 2018 Annual Growth Survey (AGS), which kicks-start the Semester (see box), frames the new priorities in the shape of a virtuous triangle: reform, to improve the functioning of product, service and labour markets; investment (including in people); and fiscal restraint. The aim is to simultaneously favour productivity, long-term growth, coherence between Member States and social inclusion within each country.

On the reform side, it gives priority to helping workers acquire skills and promoting equal opportunities as well as fair working conditions.

Critical situations

The AGS 2018 takes a lifecycle social investment approach which includes not just working but also living conditions, at all ages.

The draft Joint Employment Report, which feeds into the AGS and is part of the autumn package, uses the new social scoreboard which is attached to the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Made up of 14 indicators, the new scoreboard provides a comprehensive and vivid picture of the employment and social performance of each Member State. It makes it possible to flag situations as "good", "weak but improving" and "critical" when it comes to implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights.

As a result, the 2018 draft Joint Employment Report identifies 50 "critical" cases, occurring in 18 EU countries, which clearly require action

New guidelines

The autumn package also included a proposal for changing the "Employment Guidelines", which form the legal basis for the ultimate output of the European Semester process: the reform Recommendations sent to each EU country by the European Council at the end of the cycle (see box).

The European Commission proposes to amend the Employment guidelines so as to strengthen them on issues such as precarious working conditions, the abuse of atypical contracts, social dialogue, access to adequate social housing assistance or work-life balance, in line with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

A new red thread

Back in October 2014, in his address to the European Parliament as President-elect of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker declared that what he wanted was "for Europe to have a social triple A rating: that is just as important as an economic and financial triple A rating".

Since then, the social dimension of the European Semester has been gradually strengthened, especially in the narrative contained in the policy papers which make up the building blocks of each European Semester cycle.

More and more, the impact of planned or on-going reforms on social equality is running like a red thread across all the country reports, which are adopted in February each year (see box).

Particularly significant is the way the social partners have become more and more involved in the Semester process.

Social dialogue

In 2015, social dialogue was integrated into the Employment Guidelines. And on the very day the European Semester autumn 2018 package was adopted, the first multilateral surveillance on social dialogue took place in the Employment Committee, the main advisory committee for Employment and Social Affairs Ministers in the EU Council. Member States jointly drew up country-specific conclusions on the quality of this dialogue, underlining its importance for balanced growth.

The central role that the European Pillar of Social Rights now plays in the European Semester also entails a new partnership with civil society to discuss Semester priorities and translate them into action. Indeed, the Pillar would not have seen the light of day without the strong commitment of civil society.

Both the social partner and civil society organisations can enrich the Semester with their knowledge of on-the-ground realities. With a greater sense of ownership at all levels of governance, the country-specific Recommendations produced by the European Semester will become easier to implement.

More information: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9011&furtherNews=yes

An annual and seasonal process

The first stage of the EU's European Semester yearly process of economic, fiscal and social policy coordination process takes place in November. Called the "autumn package", it is made up of:

- The Annual Growth Survey, the basis for building a common understanding of the EU priorities;
- the draft Joint Employment Report, an annual review of the main employment and social developments in the EU, as well as of Member States' reform actions, which is adopted by the EU Council of Ministers in March;
- the Employment Guidelines, framing the scope and direction for Member States' policy coordination
- an Alert Mechanism Report which kicks off the annual cycle of budgetary imbalances surveillance;
- an assessment of Euro area Member States' draft budgetary plans;
- and a Recommendation on the economic policy of the Euro area.

In February, the European Commission publishes reports assessing the economic and social performance of each EU country.

In March or April, the Member States submit national reform and stability/convergence programmes. In May-July, the Heads of State and government send country-specific policy recommendations.

And between August and October, the national governments incorporate those recommendations into their reform plans and national budgets for the following year.

Social equality: the impact on social equality of planned or on-going reforms is a red thread running across the country reports, adopted in February.

EU FUNDING BENEFICIARIES

From **jam** production to electronic prescriptions

The stories of Erika (Hungary), Marisa (Malta), Kristina and Monika (Bulgaria) and Marios and Alexandra (Greece)

After working in an emotionally draining profession, Erika was looking to do something with her life that would bring her positive energy and happiness. The answer was a European Social Fund (ESF) funded programme for young entrepreneurs. It helped her turn her homemade jam-making hobby into a business in Újfehértó, a city in the Northern Great Plains of Hungary which specialises in producing homemade jam.

She took part in a course on entrepreneurial skills and received a grant that enabled her to develop her webpage, increase her marketing activities and expand her business.

"We supply our customers with a wide variety of jams that are manufactured using traditional technologies", Erika explains. "It was essential to create a unique image and brand by bringing new, previously unknown products to the domestic market".

The machinery procured with the help of the grant made it possible to manufacture products apart from jams – but Erika also saw that the number of similar companies was growing in the market. She realized that product development and expansion would be the key to long-term success.

Taking inspiration from a family recipe, Erika launched "ground lecso", a dish prepared using sliced onions, tomatoes, green peppers and spices. It proved a popular addition to her product line.

In the future, Erika is planning to expand her business further and she would like to apply for other European grants.

Disadvantaged groups

Launched in 2013, the LEAP project aimed at fighting against social exclusion and poverty in Malta by providing disadvantaged groups with training and occupational opportunities, i.e. helping people empower themselves. LEAP centres were established in several areas across Malta in order to bring the project's services straight to local communities.

Marisa is one of the people who found support through the LEAP project and its centres. "I had been out of employment for

Up-scaling: In Hungary, Erika turned jam-making from a hobby into a business.

© European Union

Reaching out: In Malta, Marisa helped the 'Grandparents Malta' NGO extend its reach by setting up, administering and coordinating events.

a number of years due to family commitments," she explains. "Through my participation in the LEAP traineeship scheme, I helped the NGO 'Grandparents Malta' widen its reach through the setup, administration and logistical coordination of events. On several occasions, I represented the organisation during meetings and in relation to the media," she adds. "This facilitated my reintegration into the community and improved my personal skills."

While the ESF-funded LEAP project officially ended in 2015, the Family and Social Solidarity ministry decided to capitalise on its success. It launched the LEAP programme, which is now part of Malta's National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion.

Dropping out of school

Reducing school drop-out rates and encouraging students to get the most out of their time at school is a priority across Europe. In Bulgaria, the ESF-funded SUCCESS project helped make school more attractive – particularly for those at risk of leaving education early – by supporting a range of extracurricular activities and clubs.

"When the SUCCESS project was launched, I was planning to get involved in journalism," Kristina, a participant in the project, explains. "Then I took part in an IT competition and this made me reconsider my future."

Now studying computer and software engineering at university, Kristina evaluates the impact the project had on her life. "The SUCCESS project provided me with an opportunity to choose my career. It taught me how to work in a team and gave me the incentive to take part in competitions and training."

Monika had a similar experience during her catering studies. "Through the project, I learned about new products and materials used in confectionary. It helped me to improve professionally."

Monika and Kristina are just two of the thousands of students who benefited from the SUCCESS project. Not only did the project achieve its aim of reducing school drop-out rates, it also produced guidelines for implementing extracurricular activities that could serve as a basis for a state-wide educational standard.

E-prescriptions

Prescribing medicines and medical procedures is one of the most crucial aspects in the healthcare and social security fields, seriously affecting both public health and finances. The "e-prescription", i.e. the production, distribution and control of prescriptions and other medical acts with the use of IT, is one of the main tools to address chronic problems in this area.

As part of the ESF-funded 'Establishment of Electronic Prescription procedures' project, a pilot implementation of e-prescription was developed in Greece. Its successful business operation was ensured and its introduction and use in everyday practice was facilitated.

"The project contributed decisively to the smooth introduction and wide dissemination of e-prescription, to the reduction of pharmaceutical expenditure in Greece and to the comprehensive information for stakeholders and the public," Project Manager Marios explains.

The reliability, security and transparency of the information flow has been ensured, setting the basis for solving problems faced by stakeholders such as errors or ambiguities related to handwritten prescriptions, long queues for the prescription renewals or payment delays.

"It has saved me from the incredible number of hours I had to wait for my insurance fund and for the working hours I lost," beneficiary Alexandra confirms. "It has been a great improvement for the health sector in Greece."

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=564&langId=en

OTHER **VOICES**

The Social Scoreboard will help **civil society** engage with the European Semester

Luk Zelderloo: "European policies must facilitate the full inclusion of persons with disabilities through high quality person-centred support systems".

Representing a network of over 15 000 care and support services for persons with disabilities, my first priority is to make sure European policies facilitate the full inclusion of persons with disabilities through high quality person-centred support systems, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

This means that we work on a broad range of policies: From European Structural and Investment Funds to the EU Investment Plan; from public procurement to Social Dialogue, including activities to unlock the job creation potential of the sector, long term unemployment and the skills agenda. These are all policies which are directly linked to the sector's development.

We also work on broader cross-cutting instruments such as the European Pillar of Social Rights (see page 14) and the European Semester (page 21).

By influencing the development of national policies in the field of labour market inclusion, education and care provision, the European Semester is an important instrument for the social sector. It is therefore essential in our perspective that the two main stakeholders in the process – Member States and the European Commission – are aware of what are the major barriers to the development of quality support services at national or regional level.

In this regard, the European Commission - in particular DG Employment and Social Affairs - has made great progress over the last few years, by financing and engaging with civil society in a frank and constructive approach.

Last year, EASPD (European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities) highlighted the extremely high unemployment rate of persons with disabilities as a major social and economic challenge for Europe, with strong data and concrete recommendations on how to help persons with disabilities gain access to the labour market. Such input was taken up by the European Commission and prioritised as a major issue to be tackled by the European Semester.

Challenges remain, of course. The European Semester has often been accused of focusing too much on implementing the EU's fiscal rules, which has placed pressure on Member States to "consolidate" their public expenditure, often resulting in cuts to social care and support. Another danger is the difficulties social NGOs have in keeping their local partners engaged with the Semester process on a multi-annual basis.

There is hope that the new "social scoreboard", accompanying the European Pillar of Social Rights, will help to keep local stakeholders engaged with the Semester process and facilitate the EU's fine balancing act between meeting its fiscal rules and ensuring social cohesion and inclusive growth in Europe. The scoreboard has the potential to trigger 'upwards ' tendencies. It will provide a practical tool to show progress and help identify weaknesses.

In Gothenburg the leaders of the EU and the Member States committed to (re)launch a social agenda. Let us work together, aiming at having a positive impact on the lives of people and communities. The European Pillar of Social Rights provides the European Union, its Member States and their local and regional authorities, with an important framework upon which to build their policies for a more inclusive society.

The European Semester is the perfect tool to help coordinate the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and we look forward to providing input and data into the social scoreboard to achieve such an objective.

Luk Zelderloo
Secretary General, European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities.

INTERVIEW

Clinching funding and **priorities**

Jeroen Jutte is head of the European Semester coordination unit in the European Commission's Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion Directorate General (DG EMPL)

Economic underpinning: "There is more economic growth in societies where everybody has access to good education and healthcare and a decent standard of living".

You are going through your fifth European Semester cycle, after having been involved for several years in the EU Multiannual Financial Framework. How do you see the link between EU funding and the Semester?

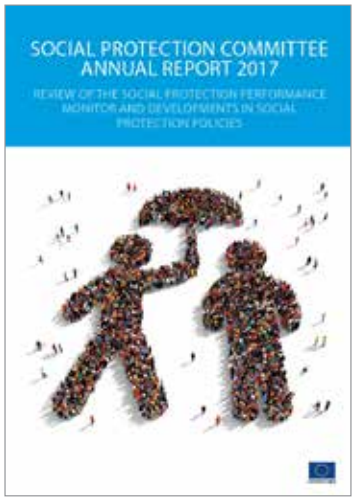
I have always considered that we should use European budgets for European priorities. In the 2014-2020 set of structural funds rules, this link was significantly strengthened. Now, after years of crisis, with an increasingly effective European Semester and with the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (see page 14), we need to further strengthen the connection between funding, on one hand, and economic and social governance recommendations, on the other. In this respect, a central question will be how to bring together the 7-year strategic outlook of the funds and the annual country-specific recommendations (CSRs) of the European Semester (ES). Will it be possible to find a balance in which funding is more flexible over the duration of a programming period, and economic governance clearer on medium term priorities?

You are an economist by training. How does Commission President Juncker's call for "a social triple A", a rating usually applied to economic and budgetary performance, ring in your ears?

Take the European Pillar of Social Rights that was proclaimed in 2017 by the Member States, the European Parliament and the Commission: It confirms that the EU's political objectives to create a better life for Europeans in general and a more equal society, has an economic underpinning. We believe that there is more economic growth in societies where everybody has access to good education and healthcare and a decent standard of living. It is the combination of the two that forms the true strength of the Pillar.

What has changed the most in the ES process, since you started in your present position?

Today the different Commission departments work much more and better together in preparing the CSRs. DG EMPL works, in practical terms, as one with the DGs in charge of Education, Justice, Home Affairs and Health. And the national and European stakeholders have more time to get involved in the different stages of the process, which is crucial if we want actors at all levels of governance to actively debate, design actions and then implement the CSRs. We consult the social partners formally but also informally throughout the process, asking them to confront our analyses with concrete facts and figures and their experience of reality on the ground. And we are presently engaged in strengthening our engagement with civil society organisations too - they have a lot to offer and are key partners for making progress on the Social Pillar a reality.



Overall social situation: Not there yet

Despite the recent improvement of most social indicators in many EU countries, the Social Protection Committee 2017 report shows that, overall, the social situation in the EU has not recovered from the 2008 economic crisis. The EU continues to be far off-track in reaching its poverty and social exclusion target for 2020, with signs of continued deterioration in the depth and persistence of poverty in a number of Member States, as well as widening gaps in the adequacy of social benefits. Overall inequality increases due to the crisis have not yet begun to reverse.

On the positive side, there are increases in household disposable income along with reductions in the risk of poverty or social exclusion, in long term unemployment and in youth exclusion. There are also improvements in the labour market participation of older workers.

Catalogue n°: KE-BG-17-001-EN-N

EU funding: Making a difference in people's lives

This report showcases 22 projects promoting reforms of social protection systems, improvement of working conditions, social innovation and cross-border mobility. It also features 9 EU-level organisations which actively contributed to the creation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (see page 14).

Special attention is paid to the projects' sustainability, transnational dimension and European added value, showing where and how EU funding mostly contributes and can make a difference in people's lives.

All selected projects were supported by the EU's Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) as well as its predecessors, EURES and PROGRESS.

Catalogue n°: KE-BP-17-002-EN-N

Youth opportunities: How to drop into EURES

Drop'pin@EURES is an online platform where you can publish and promote your youth opportunities, browse the CVs of potential young employees and help young people to develop the skills of the future. But how does it work on a practical level?

This manual guides you through each step of the process, from registering on the Drop'pin@EURES platform and publishing your opportunities to finding the perfect candidates and raising your company's profile. Get started with Drop'pin@EURES today and discover the benefits it can offer to your organisation.

Catalogue n°: KE-04-17-705-EN-N

Temporary and self-employment: Recent developments

Job creation in the EU continued to progress in 2016 and the first half of 2017. The 2017 Labour Market and Wage Developments in Europe review explains why. It also focuses on the structural and institutional determinants of labour market segmentation in the EU, focussing in particular on temporary employment and self-employment without employees. This annual report analyses the labour market from a macroeconomic perspective. It provides an analysis of recent employment and wage developments, looking at the euro area and the EU as a whole in comparison with its global trading partners.

Catalogue N°: KE-BN-17-001-EN-N

To download or to order these publications, please go to **http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en**

To subscribe to the 'Social Agenda' magazine or to other publications of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, please fill in the registration form available at: **http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=740&langId=en**

Publications Office

Useful websites

The website of Commissioner Thyssen: **http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/thyssen_en**

The home page of the Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion: **http://ec.europa.eu/social**

The website of the European Social Fund: **http://ec.europa.eu/esf**