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Subject: High Level Conference - The Future of Work: Today. Tomorrow. For All

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Documents: [Agenda](#) / [Conference website](#)

On April 9 the [Conference](#) hosted by President Jean-Claude **Juncker** , Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis** and Commissioner **Thyssen** , around 500 participants, among them Ministers, representatives from EU institutions and agencies, national governments, social partners, civil society and academia explored how to best harness changes in the world of work for the benefit of workers, businesses, society and the economy alike.

The transformations that are taking place at a fast pace have prompted the European Union to take action to ensure that Europe's employment and social policies remain fit for the world of today and tomorrow. With the Proclamation of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) , the EU established 20 principles and rights essential for fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems in the 21st century. Today, work is ongoing to ensure its implementation at EU and Member State level.

The following ten takeaways emerged from the discussions:

1. **The world is changing:** the European Union, like all other parts of the world, is being transformed, and often challenged, by mega-trends such as digitalisation, globalisation, migration, climate change, demographic change, notably ageing.
2. **The future of work is NOW:** changes on the labour market are happening now and they are irreversible - for example, automation and new business models, like the platform economy, which are enabled by digital technology.
3. **The EU provides a reference point and support to face these challenges:** the European Pillar of Social Rights is the compass to inspire - in line with existing competences - new legislation or policy initiatives at EU level, to steer reforms at national level through the European Semester, and to channel funding efficiently to address the most urgent social priorities.
4. **We need to define what we want the future world of work to look like, and on how to get there:** we want the European social model to be preserved and reinforced, but this requires being capable of responding to the new challenges of a globalised world and to reap the benefits of technological innovation. To make this a reality, we need to set out a roadmap with concrete actions.
5. **We need an inclusive digital economy:** People facing job loss or transitions need comprehensive support, based on up-skilling and re-skilling, access to employment services, income support, and social services throughout their professional career. The impact of digital transformation on EU labour markets has been explored by a [dedicated High-Level Group](#) , which presented proposals in the run-up to the conference around three main themes: a skilled workforce, new labour relations and a new social contract.

6. **We need adequate investment:** *it will be critical to make the best use of the EU's long-term budget 2021-2027, including the European Social Fund Plus to fund future skills policies and measures to support labour market transitions.*
7. **We need better active labour market policies:** *provided by high-quality public administrations that deliver effectively the services our citizens and societies need. This requires better involvement of and working together between employment services, skills providers, social services and business.*
8. **Nobody must be left behind:** *economic benefits should reach all Europeans, also those living in a disadvantaged district of a big metropolis or a remote rural area. The success of any policy should be judged in light of its impact on the most vulnerable and cohesion of our social fabric.*
9. **Strengthening a global level playing field is crucial :** *the EU is well placed to intensify cooperation with other organisations and partners, including the International Labour Organisation, to promote decent work and to ensure progress in the implementation of international commitments.*
10. **The future is our joint responsibility:** *all levels of governance (global, EU, national, regional/local) have to work together with social partners and civil society to deliver what EU citizens and workers expect.*

Please find below the summary of panels A to F, Juncker's speech and the opening/closing remarks.

Opening session: The future of work - our joint responsibility

Joost Korte, Director-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission, welcomed all participants to the conference. He highlighted the variety of speakers from different backgrounds. The conference will investigate the main changes in the world of work, with the aim to best harness the changes in the labour market for the benefits of workers, business, society and the economy alike. At the same time, it is the 100th anniversary of the International Labour Organisation. But this conference is not restricted to Europe because the future of work has a strong global impact.

Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the United Nations General Assembly (video message), said in 2015 the General Assembly (GA) promoted full and productive employment and decent work for all. The inclusion of Sustainable Development Goal no. 8 in the 2030 Agenda was a breakthrough. 4 years later global growth and productivity are up and running, but behind these statistics are also people who did not benefit, this should not be forgotten.

Digitalisation and automatisisation bring challenges and opportunities. New jobs appear like app developers, robot journalists and AI investment bankers. She called on all decision makers to harness the new opportunities and new business models for their working population.

On April 11, ILO-Brussels hosted another [live panel discussion on The Future of Work in Europe](#) . Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European Commission, representatives from ETUC, BusinessEurope and the European Youth Forum will discuss how

to ensure a Future of Work in Europe that is socially inclusive, provides decent jobs for all, allows our economies to grow and our businesses to thrive.

Unfortunately, many people have lost faith in institutions and governments. The European Pillar of Social Rights is a positive example of regional action to bring back that lost faith. The ILO's 2030 Agenda provides a framework to address the global dimension of the challenges ahead, she concluded.

Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, European Commission , said that the future of work is one of the defining challenges of our time. The EU needs to shape future policies already today. Digital change is a global challenge, the future of our economy, society and democracy are affected and need to be prepared. Other important factors are greening the economy, maintaining global value chains, address demographic change, especially ageing etc.

The EU must empower its citizens with human-centred artificial intelligence, she demanded. Make tech giants pay their fair share of tax, she emphasised.

The EU is in the process of preparing a values-guide for the changing world of work. The future of the European social market economy depends on the right decision to be taken today.

There is a need to reboot the social dialogue, to reduce and protect from carcinogens, she gave examples. Europeans do share social rights, 30 of which are enshrined in the Social Pillar, for example fair labour conditions, social protection and inclusion etc. The Social Pillar acts as compass with 2 goals: 1) to steer Europe to upward social convergence, and 2) to help navigate economic and social change in the new world of work.

The social pillar has been integrated in the European Semester country recommendations. It has used to update the European labour law and social security standards to meet the needs of the 21st century.

Flexibility brings jobs and growth but can also mean uncertainty for individuals. The EU needs to embrace the platform economy as a new type of flexible employment but insist on economic and social sustainability.

Predictable work and access to social protection is also on the Commission's agenda. The aim is to create minimum standards of predictability and stability for all workers.

Access to social protection systems, which are all different across the EU, and coverage that can be transferred between jobs but also between member states, is part of the coordination of social security systems file.

People need the right skills to find jobs and compete with others; therefore, training and life-long learning are the base of the EU's skills agenda. Routine and repetitive jobs will disappear because of digitalisation and automatisisation, she was convinced.

For the future generation it is not only about digital skills but also about human skills like creativity, confidence, teamwork; furthermore, green skills like climate policy, less meat, less, coal, less airplane travel, she continued.

The EU supports regional employment and social policies, investments in the new economy, for example via the new European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). Not to forget that EU trade agreements include social provisions and not only products and services.

The impact of digital transformation of the European labour market will be significant, she predicted. Hence the EU needs to train its workforce to be greener and more sustainable.

Society and technology might change but not our common European values. The social dimension will not disappear, she concluded.

Please click [here](#) to access the full speech.

Muriel Penicaud, Minister of Labour, France, Presidency of the G7, said this conference was about the impact of modern technologies on the world of work. The ILO centennial celebration is remarkable, she pointed out.

There are positive and negative impacts because of globalisation, and inequalities have grown a lot. The top 10% in France have grown their assets significantly, on the other hand, many people feel abandoned and anguished, she clarified.

All jobs in all sectors are affected by digitalisation. France holds the current G7 presidency and put the matter on the agenda, she said. France does have profound reflections on the new trends: it anticipated about 10-15% of basic jobs will disappear, 2/3 of jobs will be changed by technology etc.

Digitalisation will revolutionise the world of work and bears enormous opportunities. But wage earners should remain in control of the change, that is why France introduced individualised protection for self-employed workers of platforms. She advised that the young generations do not want a traditional job with strict hierarchy but a flat and open work environment.

The competitiveness of France's economy down to the smallest company is a challenge of upskilling and reskilling the workforce. This measure is important for social cohesion, France cannot abandon parts of its society.

France picked up the work of the previous Canadian G7 Presidency on decent work, online platforms, promoting universal social protection, professional equality of men and women etc.

The ILO cooperated with the Commission on life-long learning, guaranteed social protection etc. which will lead to a strong declaration of the ILO after its Social Summit in June 2019.

In France last year, a law was adopted on the freedom to choose one's own profession, which means entitlement to an individual training account: 26 million workers will have a budget of €500 for training each year; she explained.

The social pillar started as a common basis, so that all member states can work together, it can be an inspiration for the rest of the world, she noted. The social G7 will create a shared road map between its governments for its implementation.

She was paying tribute to the role of the European social partners. The new Commission shall continue the good work of the current college. The EU must use the momentum of the European elections to progress European social rights, she concluded.

Guy Ryder, Director-General, ILO (video message) , said that the strong commitment of the EU to the new world of work is justified. He explained that the ILO is much older than the EU; the ILO was created by the Versailles Treaty after the first World War in 1919. Rapid changes in the world are putting pressure on the labour markets, like climate change. This leads to greater uncertainty and questions like: which skills are relevant, are robots much better, etc.

He wondered if European governments are determined enough to shape the future in a social way, focusing on economic security, equal opportunity and social justice.

The ILO has a human-centred agenda that puts humans and their work in the focus, he assured. Relevant topics are: social justice and fairness at work, investment in skills and life-long learning, well-functioning welfare systems, etc.

The ILO has 3 priorities of actions: 1) increasing investment in people's capabilities, 2) increasing investment in the institutions of work, making it clear that labour is not a commodity, and 3) increasing investment in decent and sustainable work.

The ILO wishes to continue the decade-long deep co-operation with the EU, he concluded.

Panel A. FAIR TRANSFORMATION: Bringing opportunities of digitalisation to all

Moderator: Gertrud Ingestad, Director-General for Informatics, European Commission , welcomed everyone and admitted that she has a strong case for digitalisation. Digitalisation and globalisation both play a huge role in transforming the future of work. Both developments create opportunities, for example IT jobs are on the rise, but also risks.

The EU experiences a record high in employment and hence a record low in unemployment, there are new business models, and digital tools can be boosting social inclusion, she explained.

Supporting the digital transformation in a social manner is a priority for the Commission. The ongoing work on artificial intelligence is also high on the agenda.

The questions this panel addresses are:

- How can we manage the digital transformation in a social manner, so that no one is left behind?
- How should artificial intelligence be governed so it is trusted and follows ethical rules?
- How to protect workers' privacy?

Kris Peeters, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Employment, Economy and Consumer Affairs, Belgium, said that the Commission and the ILO are not stuck in the past, considering that 15% of jobs are about to be automated and 30% will change dramatically.

There will be new jobs that do not exist today. Classic jobs and job patterns will disappear, he argued. Despite the start of the digital transformation, productivity growth in the EU over the last decade has been slower and less inclusive than before. Though the 4th industrial revolution is accelerating.

In his opinion, 14 movements are crucial for our European labour market: 1) dynamic work life, with a lot of learning in the beginning and continued education throughout; 2) different forms of work; 3) a flexible administrative shell, globalisation and digitalisation increase the need for flexibility, but also knowledge and competence; 4) sustainable and continuous approach to education, the world is changing at a rapid pace, there is a growing need to invest in necessary vocational training; 5) solidarity with the vulnerable low skilled workers and non-EU immigrants; 6) more meaning in our jobs, because routine jobs will be replaced; 7) reducing social inequality, technological advances will bring benefits; 8) a working moral compass for artificial intelligence, because most new technology is not regulated; 9) the blockchain technology is a gamechanger, it could replace every transaction with guarantees; 10) building an inclusive labour market; 11) holistic approach, with a dynamic long-term strategy; 12) increased cooperation between social partners; 13) flexible legislation, with long term thinking, because institutions, companies and governments of the future must remain responsive. EU regulations must be flexible enough to adapt, he concluded.

Luca Jahier, President of the European Economic and Social Committee , hoped that there will be an agreement on the to-do list. Still a long way ahead, the future becomes reality much faster than most think. He asked himself how the world of work for his children will look like. He said about 60% of current jobs will disappear and his 20-year-old daughter will have 7 to 8 jobs in her whole work life.

He explained that the EU is outlining nowadays the European social mode of the future. Technological change includes automatisisation, robotisation and AI, all of which will profoundly transform our societies.

Technological innovation entails 2 processes: 1) job destruction, and 2) job creation, the question is how long will the transition take?

People need to improve professional skills, AI can work for dangerous and difficult work.

He identified 4 trends in the world of work: 1) work as mass; 2) less working time and work places; 3) profound transformation of the content of professional skills and 4) change of the work-life balance.

To be inclusive, all workers need social protection, especially old people and women, so the challenge is financing and delivering a sustainable social protection the future.

On the question of AI ethics, he demanded clear red lines.

The world of work will depend on what we will make of it: Man is the artist of his fortune, he concluded.

Heinz Koller, Assistant Director-General, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, ILO, said that this Commission conference is on the run-up to the social ILO GA conference in the summer in Geneva, Switzerland.

A human must always stay in command of artificial intelligence, he stressed. The dilemma between human and machines is not new, for example the English weavers destroying the spinning machines in the 19th century.

Technology development and non-standard work has become heterogenous. The ILO is the only organisation in the UN system that is based on a normative agenda, he explained.

Digitalisation and AI, robotisation, 'uberisation', are all trends that we must accept and make the best out of it. Half of the global population does not have access to internet, that should not be forgotten, he pointed out.

Disadvantages are: job insecurity, uncertainty, no right to disconnect from work, minimum wages not adhered to etc.

The ILO's global commission provides several recommendations: investing in people, the institutions and decent work, right of life-long learning, public employment services, fostering occupational safety and health at work, time sovereignty should lead to better work-life balance, etc.

His daughter does not want to sit in the office for 12h every day like her father, she told him, he concluded.

Maarten Goos, Professor, Utrecht University, and Chair of the High-Level Expert Group on the Impact of the Digital Transformation on EU Labour Markets said that the high-level group researched on recent EU initiatives like the European pillar of social rights.

Often the public debate considers skill gaps and skill shortages as a problem, still investment in skills of workers and employer is lacking. A solution could be third parties, also called intermediaries, that finance specialised vocational training.

Investing in women and displaced workers is another important field. Then there is the duality of contracts in the labour market: permanent vs. fixed-term. This is creating a dual labour market in terms of contracts, with all the implications.

There are economic values to both types of contracts in a healthy labour market. But questions remain like: How to make public social security neutral to the type of contract that workers have?

AI can increase job satisfaction because jobs become less repetitive, but also become more complex, and may lead to increased stress and overloading.

In the report, the focus was to define incentives for workers and employers to prevent mental health risks at work, for example through information campaigns. The report presents specific policy recommendations, for example: Post-market taxing of digital activities and redistributing these taxes through transfers.

Machine-working and AI are becoming more important by the day. That includes collecting big data, the high-level group calls it 'data used as labour', in order to redistribute pre-market rather than post market, he concluded.

Julie Foulon, Co-Founder, MolenGeek, explained that MolenGeek is tech-incubator and coding school in the Brussels district of Molenbeek. The idea was to help especially women to acquire digital skills and prepare for IT jobs. She said about 300.000 people in Belgium are at the risk of losing their job because of lack of digital skills in the coming years.

MolenGeek was founded 3 years ago, she recalled. In Molenbeek 40% of young people (15-18y) are unemployed. At the same time local companies cannot find IT experts, so they hire from abroad instead. MolenGeek tries to bridge this discrepancy; they take in the early school drop outs and dive them into technology learning.

After 2 years of coding school, over 93% have a positive exit, that means they got a job or founded their own start-up. Central is the empowerment of women in IT, 30% are women in the coding classes, she stated. MolenGeek is a community, that means everybody has to give back to the community 4h per week, she explained.

Of the school drop outs 30% have no degree and 70% have the lowest school diploma. Most of the students do not know how to learn, but after 6 months of training they are fully autonomous in learning. Many are doing internships abroad, for example at the American tech giants headquarters for Europe in Dublin.

Often, when the youngsters search for a job they are faced with an old-fashioned HR department, that does not recognise their achievements. She demanded better promotion of their work and school. Another problem is that the youngsters often have debts and housing problems, for example up to €20,000 of debt. That is why many of them work beside their studies to pay back money, which impacts their studies of course. MolenGeek connects them with social services to deal with the debt so they can better concentrate on their studies.

She was convinced that MolenGeek is a working concept, which is needed elsewhere too. Therefore, she announced the opening of new offices in other Brussels' districts Laeken and Schaerbeek, but also in Antwerp.

Jan Noterdaeme, Senior Adviser and Co-Founder, CSR Europe, told that his company is 25 years old and was initiated by former Commission president Jacques Delors. CSR Europe includes a network of 10,000 enterprises across 30 countries. He explained that there are 3 key elements for his client companies: 1) disruptive pedagogy; 2) turn your factory into a learning space, for life-long learning, and 3) being an enterprise with a responsible behaviour on tax and transparency.

He raised the issue of future of work and adult learning at the last World Economic Forum in Davos.

He reported that large industry associations are getting nervous about the digital transformation, fearing of losing workers and being not attractive enough in the labour market. There is a general sense of being unprepared in the whole sector, he said.

Hence, he recommends the following most urgent actions: 1) explain the goals of your planned digital transformation; 2) reduce the digital overload, info obesity, hyperconnectivity of your employees; 3) create ethical principles for your IT and build a policy on the role of data usage in decisions making; 4) train your employees for future tasks, beyond the needs for current positions, be proactive and anticipate future challenges and 5) define the essence of human added value in occupational tasks, what kind of technology and AI will be used.

He cited the example of the French cooperative bank Credit Mutuel. They started handling about 350,00 customer emails with a tailor-made AI programme. This technology saved employees thousands of work hours which were instead used for vocational training and led to an overall improved motivation, he concluded.

Panel B - UPWARD CONVERGENCE: Employment, social and territorial cohesion

Marc Lemaître, Director-General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission, began the debate by pointing out that, looking at the statistics, it seems that things have never been so good: the unemployment rate has diminished, so has done youth unemployment.

What we are witnessing is technical acceleration, which, driven by digitalisation, opens a new world on AI, platform economy, automation, etc. Europe is becoming more and more aware of this, as well as conscious of the challenges posed by the need for a more sustainable climate and environment. The latter will require a change in the energy systems and in the way economies work, with less exploitation of natural resources and a significant shift towards the circular economy. Other challenges are ageing and the concentration of economic activities in some territories, which leads to depopulation and brain drain.

All of this is translating into significant fears among the population – fears which are more and more being expressed through political movements. Europe does care about these things, Mr Lemaître reassured. Economic, social, and territorial cohesion are all enshrined in the Treaties.

Europe has been and still is a successful convergence machine, as the World Bank has asserted. This can be seen when comparing the performance of Member States, with Central Europe catching up quickly.

However, it must be acknowledged, there are raising inequalities inside the different Member States. The question is thus how broad upward can be achieved. The EU has been focusing a lot on this issue, as demonstrated by the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the revision of the cohesion policy.

Magdalena Valerio Cordero, Minister for Labour, Migration and Social Security, Spain, argued that Europe is currently facing one of the most profound alterations since the industrial revolution, which is rooted in the processes of the digital transformation, globalization, as well as demographic changes. The future of labour will depend therefore on the policies that respond to these ongoing challenges, which should foresee and address the inequalities between countries, regions and people.

There need to be adequate policies for employment that guarantee distributive efforts and reduce the short-term impacts so that no worker is excluded from the digital revolution. It is for this reason that the subject of upward convergence will play a central role over the discussions of the future of Europe.

The convergence between countries, regions and people has been an essential European element since its origins. More specifically, the European success is partly due to the fact that European integration is coupled with the efforts to ensure that no one is left behind either from their rights or participation in the labour market. For this reason, they need to go beyond any simple policy. The paradigm of austerity that devalues salaries and social questions for the purpose of investments and economic activity has not given results. Moreover, these policies compromise the efforts for economic convergence. The decrease in salaries consequently led to a brain drain. These types of policies also have the tendency to quell most of the economic power into privileged regions, which has only increased the inequalities within the regions.

If the right policies are not put in place, this transformation on the labour market will further deepen the existing disparities, leading to polarisation and poverty. All of this will challenge the principle of solidarity. It is essential to work on a strategy towards upward convergence, which should be inclusive and based on the following points: firstly, there should be properly-designed employment policies that recognise workers' rights to training throughout their career. There should also be adequate social policies, alongside distributive efforts and an extension of social protection while minimising the impact of technological transformation.

This is what Spain has been working on. There is resistance to ecological transformation and this is due to the weaknesses of the support mechanisms.

As far as Spain is concerned, the Labour, Migration, and Social Security Ministry has drawn up a plan targeted at the most vulnerable. To be more precise, it has adopted two "shock plans", one for the long-term unemployed and one for youth unemployment. In addition, Spain firmly believes that, as stressed also by the ILO expert group, the quality of jobs is important too. That is why Spain has decided to increase minimum wage level. Furthermore, Spain is convinced that, in line with the Work-Life Balance Directive, the future of work is feminist: a binding gender equality strategy should be promoted in the EU.

That said, Ms Valerio Cordero argued that the new forms of employment are often used, rather than for specialisation, for undermining the working conditions. This is what led Spain to develop the Masterplan for Dignified Work, thanks to which a number of temporary contracts have been modified in permanent contracts.

Moreover, social protection of self-employed in Spain has reached the highest level in the EU in 2019. All those falling under that category are provided with full mandatory coverage, Ms Valerio Cordero pointed out.

What Spain has also been working on is including in the European debate issues like regional and rural development, mobilisation of new technologies, and renewable energies. It is important to reduce the rural and regional divide and foster new economic ties between regions. Green jobs should have the priority.

At EU level, the SDGs should be achieved through a European green pact, centred around sustainable industries with high added value thanks to innovation. The role of the EU should be reinforced too: there should be an ambitious EU budget with bold guidelines on gender and labour standards, as well as labour mobility and social investments. Additionally, Spain fully supports the European unemployment scheme and the European Labour Authority, and calls for tax flexibility, which allows financing of social protection.

Ms Valerio Cordero concluded by asserting that labour mobility does provide a buffer for asymmetric shocks that arise in the event of a crisis, but this should not result in an encroachment of workers' rights. She also stressed the relevance of tripartism.

Karl-Heinz Lambertz, President of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR), took the floor by underlining that it is the CoR's belief that employment and unemployment are burning issues at the moment. Employment is undergoing a huge transformation because of digitalisation, automation, globalisation, AI, etc. The following questions thus arise: how are these factors going to affect us at different levels? Will there be a widening of the gaps separating people?

In some regions, digitalisation will drive jobs, but in other regions there will be a drop in jobs. In other words, there is a huge amount of diversity amongst the Member States, as well as, within the Member States themselves, amongst regions. Training and retraining programs should target the people the most affected by digitalisation. However, vocational training and education can be seen only as partial solutions to prepare people to enter the workforce. The

local aspect should not be overlooked: the problem of brain drain should be tackled, otherwise the gap between European and urban Europe will worsen.

A one-size-fits-all approach is not possible. It is essential to respond to the specific regional and local needs of each communities. In that regard, Mr Lambertz asserted that regional and local authorities are best placed to understand what is happening on the ground. That is why it is important that they participate in the planning and implementation of programmes. This was pointed out in the CoR's opinion on the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund and on ESF+. On the long term, it will not be enough to focus only on macroeconomic convergence.

All this also highlights the fundamental role played by the ERDF and the cohesion policy. On the long term, it will not be enough to focus only on macroeconomic convergence. This is why the CoR has strongly condemned the budget cuts. The geographical, regional, and local dimension is essential.

Stijn Broecke, Senior Economist, OECD, noted that 2019 seems to be the year of the future of work: ILO has adopted a report in January; the OECD will issue a report on April 25 (containing also policy directions for the member countries).

As said by Mr Lemaître, the situation has improved, but there are also some problems emerging, Mr Broecke underlined.

The OECD is quite optimistic, as demonstrated by the fact that it has the lowest estimate for the risk of automation (i.e. 14% - which is still quite a high figure). Employment rates have been raising in most countries. Overall, this means that we are heading in the right direction and that massive technology-driven unemployment is not a realistic scenario.

However, this might not be the case at local level. The automation risk is very high at regional level (e.g. it can reach even 39% in some regions). Many jobs have been created, but not necessarily where other jobs have been destroyed. In other words, there is a concentration of activities in the big cities. It goes without saying that this has contributed to unemployment and disparities. Particularly worrisome is the situation of the low-skilled, who are at the highest risk of losing their jobs or get low quality jobs. In that regard, further research is needed on how they are likely to fail in the future.

Mr Broecke then explained that a "Future of Work" Fellowship has been launched by the OECD some years ago. One of the OECD fellows is working on this issue, focusing on the difference between urban and rural areas in terms of people with higher degrees and people without. The former tends to remain concentrated in urban areas, resulting in a geographical gap in where skills and jobs are. All of this has an impact on wages and disparities. It follows that, even though there might not be a massive technologies-driven unemployment, there may be massive technological disparities in the near future. This is the greatest risk that the OECD sees ahead.

Milena Angelova, Secretary-General of the Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association, and Acting President of CEEP, concurred that labour shortages and skills mismatches are the most serious problems that both employers and public services providers face today. This is

resulting in a 2% GDP loss and, alongside ageing and brain drain, in increasing divergences amongst the Member States.

Skill mismatches have a negative impact on the economy and on the society as a whole. They prevent citizens from being satisfied with their occupations and career path. They also erode the competitiveness of companies by limiting their capacity to innovate.

The case of brain drain is particularly critical in some Member States and regions. Some Member States have already lost more than 10% of their labour force. For instance, in Bulgaria, more than 800 000 people have left the country since 1992, which caused a EUR 13 billion loss. Employers have tried to tackle brain drain by implanting measures for better professional orientation and guidance. In this context, joint actions by social partners, including the Ministry of Labour, have proven their importance.

To answer the above challenges, there is a need for a people-based approach relying on investments. There should be a reform of education systems: education degrees can no longer be seen as a guarantee for a successful career. Employers look not only at diplomas, but, most notably, at skills and competences. Future education system should connect education and employment in new ways. The technological changes are so rapid that are making the content of some subjects outdated. The focus should shift towards digital and soft skills.

That said, equal access is the key for inclusive societies. CEEP therefore calls for quality investments in e.g. transport, connectivity, energy, social welfare, etc. infrastructures. This is CEEP's request for the next MFF and ESF+. Europe needs to create multistakeholder approaches as a basis for joint actions to ensure that no one is left behind.

Esther Lynch, Confederal Secretary, ETUC, agreed that there is a need for upward convergence. The wage gap between East and West is indeed getting bigger and bigger. The question thus arises on whether this gap can be addressed.

Some argue that this is due to differences in the productivity, but, Ms Lynch asserted, even if one factors for that, there is still a major gap. How can this be solved? What is the solution? In Ms Lynch's opinion, the only solution is to increase the bargaining power of workers. This can be done by making sure that they can join trade unions, that the laws allow for that (in line with the ILO Conventions), and that workers can bargain, also at the industry level. As far as the EU is concerned, it should make sure that it highlights this issue in the semester recommendations.

Another problem is the issue of the growing inequalities between the Member States. Some companies are getting all the benefits of the EU and of the internal market, and they are keeping them for the top of the company, not sharing them equally. This is true most notably for the digital platforms, which do not even recognise that a worker is a worker. In that regard, the Transparency and Predictable Working Conditions Directive will play a pivotal role. It represents a good step in the right direction, but the problem is that it will be implemented only in 5 years. Member States should be urged to start addressing these issues already now. For

instance, the issue of platforms can be tackled by applying a mechanism similar to the one relating to the Maritime Labour Convention.

Ms Lynch concluded by saying that the unions and employers have proved they are ready to engage in a real social dialogue in the period of digitalisation.

Biser Petkov, Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgaria, asserted that, according to the Bulgarian government, the biggest challenge is that, despite the economic recovery, there are still significant differences in terms of employment and unemployment, both at Member States level and at regional level. This requires the mobilisation of significant (organisational and economic) resources, as well as activation policies aimed at motivating jobseekers to actively seek employment and improve the employability and permanence on the labour market. This is the objective of the National Framework Agreement which has been concluded between the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education and Science, and the association of municipalities in Bulgaria.

That said, Mr Petkov agreed with the previous speakers that changes happen rapidly and that this requires maximum use of all the opportunities to create better adaptability of the work force. There should be more investments in training, acquisition of competences, and lifelong learning. Digitalisation also requires the implementation of preventive and follow-up measures for the adaptation of the workforce, as well as reliable forward-looking information on future trends on labour supply and demand.

Bulgaria takes into account not only the benefits of new technologies, but also the challenges they pose. In order to address them, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy requested specialised studies. They will provide the basis for the establishment of labour organisations and regulatory mechanisms to ensure that deficits are addressed.

It is essential to exploit the opportunities for growth while at the same time preserving and protecting the European social model, Mr Petkov argued.

A **representative from the Polish government** also agreed that globalisation, demographic ageing, and digitalisation pose challenges to the Member States and their welfare systems. From its very inception, the EU has committed to sustainable economic growth and social and territorial cohesion. The success of the European integration projects depends on the Member States' progress towards those aims.

Prior to the 2007-2011 economic and financial crisis, Member States were experiencing economic and social convergence, including Poland. As pointed out in a EUROFOUND research, convergence has resumed in 2013, although not in all Member States.

With the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights upward convergence has become a political priority. Whilst all Member States agree on the need for and the importance of convergence, there are some concerns when it comes to the methods for achieving it. It has been argued that some Member States tolerate lax compliance with social standards, but this is not true when it comes to Poland. The Polish government has consistently cooperated with the EU partners in preventing any disregard for labour standards and abuse of social benefits.

Moreover, over the last 4 years, the government has made much progress in reducing poverty through programs of income redistribution. Between 2008 and 2018, Poland has also increased its minimum wage.

That said, the representative of the Polish government held that, since progress towards upward convergence does not yield in itself precise measurements and clear interpretations, the results should be used as indicators of general trends, rather than as basis for specific policies and regulatory measures. It must be ensured that the concept of convergence does not give rise to protectionist measures.

It has been proved that convergence follows naturally when there are no hindrances to the internal market and economic and social cohesion remains robust.

Rodolfo Cattani, European Disability Forum, commented that, in both the opening session and in panel B, the word "disability" has never been mentioned. Both the EU and the Member States have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This convention requires the state parties to respect the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others. Art 27 of the Convention is very clear in that regard.

Lastly, Mr Cattani drew the audience's attention on the concept of "human capital". Immanuel Kant would not approve this definition as it connotes that a person can be "instrumental". The concept of "human resource" should be used instead.

A **representative of the German government** pointed out that the conference highlights the importance of addressing discrepancies and wage differences amongst the Member States. The EU has proven to be a success so far, most notably when it comes to the mobility of goods, capital, and services. Perhaps the problem is that labour mobility started too late, he suggested.

Labour mobility should not be achieved on an uncontrolled basis. It should be based on the European Pillar of Social Rights and on Art 46. It must be ensured that there are the conditions to organise convergence on a minimum wage which is fair. In doing so, it must be borne in mind that technology developments are accelerating these phenomena. It must also be kept in mind that all of this can be dealt with only at EU level as no Member State can do it alone, especially when it comes to transnational platforms.

A **representative of the Cypriot government** stressed that the majority of businesses will adapt to the changes posed by this new world characterised by digitalisation and automatization. However, efforts are needed to ensure that workers remain relevant in this world, including through upskilling and training programs. As far as the government of Cyprus is concerned, this has resulted in the introduction of training courses focusing on ICT skills. It must be ensured as well that the education systems continue to work together with the labour observatories so as to ensure that the educational programs reflect labour trends.

What is more, it is the Cypriot government's belief that, in order to reduce regional disparities, the implementation of the policies in the context of the MFF can be better coordinated by a single managing authority responsible for all co-financing funds. A large portion of the funds

should be devoted to social inclusion measures, including people with disabilities. In order to protect workers' rights and ensure a level playing field, steps should be taken at EU level so as to have homogenous results for all EU citizens.

The representative of the Cypriot government then concluded by saying that, if not properly regulated, digital platforms and other types of flexible work will substitute conventional forms of employment as a cheaper form of labour supply, leading to a worsening of labour conditions. Since these platforms have a transnational dimension, the legislative framework should be set out at EU level.

A **representative of the Lithuanian government** noted that, in a such a changing society, the biggest challenge is to ensure equal opportunities for everyone and maximum high-living standards everywhere. In that regard, he agreed with the previous speakers on the importance of the European Pillar of Social Rights, as well as on the fact that economic recovery has not had the same results in all Member States. Therefore, structural reforms and convergence in the area of labour market and social conditions should be a priority. The Lithuanian government is already doing so.

Marc Lemaître, Director-General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission, concluded the panel by summing up that there was agreement on the need for upward convergence, most notably wage convergence. The challenges posed by digitalisation must be addressed and the regional dimension must not be neglected. In order to do so, a multistakeholder approach could be opted for, alongside a solid cohesion policy.

Mr Lemaître closed by quoting Confucius: "if your plan is for one year, plant rice. If your plan is for ten years, plant trees. If your plan is for one hundred years, educate children". "Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace".

Panel C. GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY: The EU and the international scene Jenkins room

Muriel Pénicaud, Minister of Labour, France, Presidency of the G7, noted that, with the support of all European coordination at the ILO, they have sought ambitious objectives for the Labour Commission which produced an excellent report. We need to take the advantage of this impetus of the Centenary initiative and start thinking about the future of work and social dialogue. The conclusions of the World Labour Commission are perfectly in sync with the G7 social objectives and, in particular, the conclusions regarding the need to invest in human potential through training, lifelong learning, equality and access to universal social protection. The G7 Presidency allows them to make a contribution to the work upstream of the Centenary declaration, alongside discussions on standards to fight harassment and victimisation at work. The ILO should play a role of providing social vigilance in other international organisations. If we wish to be effective, we need to ensure that working conditions respect the international labour standards and promote decent work, while thinking about platform economy, world supply chains and a concept of economic, social and environmental responsibility.

She continued by saying that the IMF has adopted a strategic framework guaranteeing a level of social expenditure. Cooperation between the ILO, the IMF and the World Bank is very important, since it is the social standards that are not only to be addressed downstream. It is

important to note that Europe is the vector able to bring convergence with respect to challenges they are facing on a global and national level. There is a need to include references to international labour standards and responsible corporate governance in free trade agreements. There is a need for involving social partners in drafting and monitoring these agreements. Let us promote this approach worldwide, she added. Multinationals can play a key role in promoting social justice and ILO's tripartite declaration and the guiding principles of the OECD regarding responsible social conduct should be respected. She regarded the EU-textile initiative as an important project as well as the Global deal platform launched by the Swedish Prime Minister in 2016. This usefully supplements standards and it can point the way forward for the future, she noted. Finally, she said that they need go further with multilateral actions with other bodies to be more effective economically and bring more social justice.

Deborah Greenfield, Deputy Director-General, ILO, said that she has had an opportunity to work with everyone on the panel, which attests to their efforts and of their institutions, to try to tackle collectively the challenges they face. They are aiming for an inclusive future based on social justice. She reflected on the Constitution of the ILO and the Philadelphia Declaration, and noted that they cannot separate social and economic policies – they go hand in hand. She then focused on action at international level to ensure sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth worldwide.

She said that the Global Commission on the Future of Work was struck with enduring challenges of inequality around the world, and over the course of the year, the sense of enduring challenge of inequality became more and more urgent. As events unfolded, an increase in retreat behind boundaries has been seen. They proposed framework for action, an agenda that places people and their work at forefront of harnessing change. They used the inputs of the Commission to adopt the Centenary Initiative that will guide them forward.

She then emphasised a few concrete proposals from the report which require cross border and multilateral cooperation in order to be achieved and demonstrate the ways in which social and economic policies are intertwined. For example: Common skills recognition framework. It is about harnessing skills across borders. We need portable social protection benefits, she said. The Commission proposed use of technology to monitor working conditions in global value chains in order to have greater transparency and to increase the impact of their due diligence reports. The Commission proposed greater investments in care economy, green economy, rural economy and, of course, in infrastructure (digital, physical, and social); a universal labour guarantee as well as an international governance framework for the platform economy.

All these proposals harness people's capabilities and respond to the needs of enterprises for skilled and productive workforce. Most of these initiatives cannot be accomplished without working together across borders.

The Report recognises key role that official development assistance from the public sector and foreign direct investments from the private sector must play in closing inequality gaps.

She then proposed some additional actions: trade, where she said that the EU is at forefront at promoting decent work as an integral part of its trade strategy by incorporating core

international labour standards. These efforts bear fruit as preconditions for signing trade agreements and to promote development cooperation activities after signing as well as facilitate development of value chains.

With respect to global supply chains, employment and social goals are part of EU's public procurement strategy and a greater use of these policies can act as a catalyst to generate as stronger growth and more decent work. Greater transparency with respect to decent work deficits across whole global value chains is needed to make progress, both in terms of business practices and more effective labour administration. This will be providing baseline for importing governance and measuring progress.

Finally, on strengthening multilateral system, she recognised the contribution of G7 in establishing an explicit link between reducing inequalities and more effective multilateralism. This is not an easy thing to accomplish, she noted. The ILO has the responsibility to examine economic policies through the lens of its mandate. Countries are working together to create a platform for this kind of discussion to take place. It is key to push international organisations to have this kind of dialogue, she stressed. Inequality is viewed a macro critical issue, but they are far away from achieving policy coherence.

Governments, NGOs, employers and workers' organisations, all have to take their part of responsibility. With Centenary declaration it will pave the way forward for the ILO and all member states to achieve social justice and inclusive economies in the next 100 years, she concluded.

Sharan Burrow, General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation, said that the European Commission took pride, and rightly so, for putting social issues back on the map. Still, she said the problem is international. She remarked that the EU laws do not prevent dehumanising and exploitations even of the European companies in the global supply chains. Multilateralism is in trouble, but this cannot come as a surprise. They have seen that in the '90s with the rejection of integration. Even if the WTO is not fit from purpose and tensions are rising with respect to plurilateral agreement on e-commerce, she said that even in the bilateral side agreements compliance is totally absent. National courts are inadequate to deal with the global environment and they need compliance for remedy. Even though we keep hearing leaders talking about lifting people from poverty, more people are going hungry, she remarked, showing that something is very wrong with the benchmarks and distribution of wealth.

We are three times richer, but we cannot turn a blind eye on dehumanisation of the model, she said. We are rapidly becoming an inhabitable world and economic base is at risk. Having in mind massive disruptions from technology, we need the courage from the 1919 and 1944 to put a social and environmental floor under the system of global trade, otherwise no one wins, she underlined.

She urged Europe to get involved with UN treaty negotiations. If we do not put a global framework around business and human rights with 3 pillars of the guidelines (due diligence, grievance and remedy) then they cannot correct the imbalances. No company is perfect, but they need to do their due diligence as they do financial one. Second thing Europe needs to do is to take the lead and raise their voices in the context of the declaration. What kind of world

do they want? They have a chance to shape out a vision, but the question remains if they are courageous enough to do it.

From the workers' perspective, they thought it was a very good document, as it has a human centred approach, it says that they need a social contract that is fit for purpose, but they want to know that the latter has a "floor" for all the workers. If they cannot put a universal worker guarantee, plus occupational health and safety, promise around the minimum wage, then they are not serious about social agenda. She also called for putting in the universal social protection. Many other recommendations are to be debated, but ultimately, they need to put the new standards in place. We need to look if the current rules are fit for purpose, and noted that the competition rules are not adequate. Companies like Amazon are threatening and noted that they need to be able to bargain for platform workers.

If you think that our democracies are going to survive the challenges of the crisis of multilateralism and in global economy - think again. Young people are walking away from democracy, questioning whether it is a good idea. We need to reinforce our democratic structures and we can only do that by putting people at the heart, she concluded.

Renate Hornung-Draus, Regional Vice-President (Europe & Central Asia) of the International Organisation for Employers, and Managing Director of the Confederation of German Employers' Associations, said that European and international perspectives need to be brought into relations. After everything she has heard, she expressed concerns about Centenary declaration amounting to 50 pages. We have to be open and pertinent but avoid the temptations of bringing everything into it. The challenges they have at the global level, the first point is to promote free trade, open investment and have an inclusive approach. They also have to avoid having too much of a regulatory approach without taking into account adverse effects. In informal economy, people cannot be reached by social standards hence they need to do everything they can to help the implementation. She highlighted the Vision zero fund which can really help address issues of health and safety in the work place. We have to have a result-oriented approach in policies, she stressed.

Such an approach also refers to the issue of global supply chains, and she reiterated that companies are indeed committed to do good and do no harm, but to have legal liability, you need to think of possible adverse effects. Companies doing due diligence can be even punished because of it and because of what happened in some remote part of the chain they did not have control of. Companies that do engage should not be punished but rather promoted. It is easy to delegate enforcement of legislation to private actors, but it is governments who are responsible. She would like to see much stronger focus on the ILO and the EU to work with governments and not just delegate enforcement to private actors as this creates adverse effects.

A concrete example where the EU could have an inclusive approach would be ship recycling. It is a huge business with terrible working conditions and unfortunately, the EU has not certified any of these yards in Pakistan or other developing countries. This is not exactly promoting decent work, she noted. Commission can help develop more of an inclusive approach and help improve working conditions in these countries.

To conclude, she made a point on social partnerships, dialogue and multilateralism. This is the key challenge today. A specific feature of the ILO, is that they can reach to civil society around the world, thus helping that what is decided in the ILO has a grounding in practice. This is not the case in the UN. She asked the EU, the G7, to not look only at standards but also at the real impact and involvement of social partners in policy making.

Enrico Giovannini, Co-Chair of the Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development and Member of the Global Commission on the Future of Work, wanted to play a bit of a "disruptive role" vis a vis the "Brussels bubble". Firstly, he noted that the OECD estimated that developed countries will grow at rate 1.75% per year in the next 40 years. Do you believe work has future with such a low growth? He said that it is a problem indeed. What is at stake is the future of capitalism, the Europe and the world. We should not only be focused on 17 SDGs, but also the preamble of the agreement. They are not on a sustainable path. What is really needed is a change of paradigm, he said.

At stake is the future of capitalism and many leaders are worried. He mentioned the World Economic Forum's report on global risk. The EU needs to see whether they want to adopt capitalism developed elsewhere or they want to be strong enough to try to build it in line with Art. 3 of the Treaty of the EU. If we want to give this kind of contribution, then we can build on what have been already invented in Europe over centuries.

Firstly, he named the welfare state, and noted that they need to rebuild it. With respect to the Global commission report, he said that they have put as a first point the right for continuous and long-life learning. This will maybe be the only thing that will save people from disruptive changes in the future. Our current welfare states are not based on this principle, he remarked. We need to reinvent the welfare state and the Global commission report. The Sustainable equality report of the Independent Commission contain a lot of proposals on how to do it in practice.

Secondly, he said that they need to change the accounting system, as people are not counted as an asset in companies and expenditure in education and training is counted as a cost. Europe should be proactive in changing this. In national accounts, human capital is not considered an investment. System of national accounts is now under revision. Current GDP system was designed in this way by the US government in 1944, but this way is not coherent with what is needed in the future, he remarked. The EU should now take the lead.

Thirdly, he said that the environment, society and governance principles are now entering into companies and the EU is at the forefront with the Sustainable finance package. We need to take one step furthered and say if you want to operate in Europe you must respect some common rules. This may have a cost, but it can be the only way to promote a change in capitalism.

Fourthly, he said that the current division of labour between the Union and the countries is not fit for purpose. Division of labour between economic, social and environmental policies is completely out of date. In the work done with the JRC around the concept of vulnerability and

resilience they proposed to reorganised policies around the following keywords: transform, promote, protect, prepare and prevent.

Lastly, he commented on the structure of the new Commission, and noted that for years they made an attempt to integrate different policies. What if the new Commission will have Commissioners in charge of outputs and not policies? This would be a big step forward, using SDGs as structure to provide and clarify who is in charge of what, and would increase accountability and present a way to teach the world how to reorganise governments.

Joost Korte, Director-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission, said that the shipyard in India is being certified. Secondly, he noted that, on the one hand, all the speakers acknowledged that the EU is the most advanced in all questions discussed, but it puts even bigger responsibility upon them. They will see how much Chinese will get involved in investing into multilateral rules. Skills are indeed Principle 1 of the Pillar, which embodies their values. Would it be possible for the US or the Chinese to sing up to that Pillar? He expressed doubts about that, as they have different views on how to organise a society.

Claudio Cominardi, Member of Italian Chamber of Deputies, said that right now everything is in place to achieve their ambitions, due to the fact that with a technological revolution they are able to produce more goods and services and generate more wealth. But, distribution of knowledge, opportunities and wealth is the issue. Hence, they need to set themselves objectives: they need to invest in emerging technologies like AI or blockchain. To this extent he mentioned the EU blockchain partnership. Insofar they invest in these technologies, they also need to do it in human capital. A minimum European wage and EU social welfare is needed, and they need to see how to achieve this in practice. One of the problems is coming up with a different paradigm, as capitalism knows how to produce but does not how to redistribute. We have to put that at the centre a human being, he concluded.

Special address by Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission

Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, began his speech by reminding the audience of his recent visit to Rwanda to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the genocide against the Tutsi. He then briefly mentioned the EU-China Summit, scheduled in the afternoon.

That said, he remarked that, when he took office in November 2014, his three priorities were: employment, growth, and investment. Why those three areas? Because in those three areas Europe had broken down. Unemployment was growing, growth was negative, and investment had fallen back to an all-time low since the '80s.

On those three fronts, we needed to come up with consistence and coherent measures, with the hope that they would enable Europe to return to growth, employment, and hence investment.

Looking back, it can now be asserted that there have been 23 quarters of continuous growth. At the beginning of his term, growth was very low, President Juncker pointed out. Now it has

returned in all 28 Member States. There is not a single country which is not growing, apart from Italy which is facing certain problems, but which has experienced growth over a number of years. 12.4 million jobs have been created. 240 million Europeans are today in employment. In 2014, the employment rate was 69.5%. Now the employment rate is back at 73.2%. The hope is to reach 75% in 2020.

Although unemployment remains a serious problem, it has fallen to 6.5% (it amounted to 10.2% in 2014). The same holds true for youth unemployment, which, although quite high, has seen a reduction of about 10%.

Who would ever have imagined in 2014 that, thanks to the performance of our societies, Europe would have reached levels of employment and unemployment along the lines of those spelled out above?

As to investments, President Juncker reminded the audience that investment had never been as low as it was during and immediately after the years of crisis. The Commission launched an investment plan, i.e. the Juncker plan. So far, it has generated investment of about EUR 390 billion. By 2020, it will have created additional jobs to the tune of 1.2 million. In that regard, President Juncker recalled that, when he launched the plan, he was told he would be a complete failure. It combines new financial mechanisms with the public and private sector and it has proved to be very effective. It is important to underline that it has affected not just those countries that were doing well in economic terms, but, most notably, those which were having difficulties in adapting their policies to the new national and international environment.

The Stability and Growth Pact has also become more flexible. New components were added, and the system of assessment has been based on economic cycles. It took account of the structural efforts made by Member States. The efforts made through the investment clauses were also taken into consideration. It took account as well of extraordinary phenomena like the earthquake in Italy and the costs of the migration crisis. Thanks to the efforts of the stability pact and to the degree of flexibility, which was not appreciated by everybody, the deficit was reduced from 10 to 0.8%.

There has also been a reduction in the number of poor, with 10 million fewer poor people in Europe thanks to the efforts of Commissioner Thyssen.

That said, President Juncker mentioned the adoption of the Pillar of Social Rights in 2017. Additionally, 24 legislative texts have been adopted. The underlying idea was that, for every job, there should be fair salary, fair remuneration. However, it is not correct to affirm that the European Commission has proposed a European minimum wage. The idea was rather that in each Member State there should be a minimum wage. In other words, no harmonisation of the levels of minimum wage was sought.

Another important achievement was the revision of the legislative framework on seconded workers. The establishment of the European Labour Authority in less than 12 months was also an important achievement. The same holds true for the Directive on Work-Life Balance, which aimed to target the pressure on salaries most notably for women.

The Commission also tried to relaunch the social dialogue. The hope is that the Council will agree soon on the coordination of social security systems, which does not call for total harmonisation. The objective is rather to ensure that there are no second-class citizens.

That said, President Juncker asserted that social policy is also about taking account of the problems in other continents. In that regard, he mentioned Africa, which has become a continent in which Europe and private enterprise can invest.

[...]

Please follow the [link](#) to access President Juncker's full remarks.

Panel D EMPOWER PEOPLE: Life-cycle transitions, education and skills challenges

Ann Mettler, Head, European Political Strategy Centre, European Commission, the Moderator, highlighted that one of the conclusions of the morning discussions was that the notion of a "job for life" is no longer a reality. It is known that higher educated people are 3.5 times more likely to participate in life-long learning in comparison to lower skilled people. Educational opportunities are being provided to everyone, including those who least need it and, still, around 10% of young people leave educational training without at least an upper secondary degree. Many of these 10% are most likely going to be the unemployed of the future.

Ms Mettler underscored that digitalisation is the area where inequality is most visible today. 35% of Europeans still lack basic digital skills. Immigrant students are twice as likely than non-immigrant peers to perform below the baseline level of proficiency in science. Skilled jobs and income inequality are so fundamentally interlinked that, if efforts are not increased, there is a risk of widening the gap between the low qualified and the high qualified. Inequality is very much based on skills, which needs to be considered when discussing social outcomes.

Ms Mettler outlined that the EU is working hard to address this matter. The European Pillar of Social Rights was one of the ways that the EU used to try to address this situation. In many ways, it was revolutionary to state that social protection covers everyone and not just the employed ones, plus to recognise the increasing importance of the self-employed. The EU spends a large amount of funding on skills and life-learning opportunities. Therefore, the Moderator expressed her interest in discussing what precisely the EU needs to do better. Even though there are many initiatives and funding, the social outcomes do not seem to be the hoped ones.

Ms Mettler stated that Ireland has done good work to attract technological companies, so Ireland must make sure that these people have the correct skills for this work. So, the Moderator asked Minister Doherty to expand on this matter.

Regina Doherty, Minister of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Ireland, stated that, when looking at economic and labour market developments, it is possible to see that, from a human perspective, there was a strong benefit from the Irish economic recovery. Over 2.2 million people are now working, so more Irish people working in the economy than ever before. Almost 400.000 new jobs have been created in Ireland since the low situation in 2011.

The rebounding of the economy is a testament to the flexibility of the Irish labour market, alongside active and innovative public policy responses. Nevertheless, the Irish economy will transform rapidly as the impact of new technology and decarbonisation shape the jobs and the skills landscape in the future. It is now the time to future-proof the workforce for the economic challenges.

Minister Doherty highlighted that a recent OECD study estimates that the median Irish workforce faces a 46% probability of their job being automated by 2030. While the full impact of this technological revolution is unlikely to be felt in the short-term, it is necessary to work to position Ireland to respond to these profound changes. Technological changes are already impacting several sectors, such as manufacturing, finance, retail, and transport. These means challenges, but also possibilities. Certain job roles will disappear or will be redefined, while some brand-new jobs will appear, requiring different skills and actions. This should be seen as the new norm for all countries and economies. Some sectors will be impacted more than others. Automation and manufacturing have grown for many years.

Minister Doherty outlined that the increased use of robots and advanced technologies, plus the advances in artificial intelligence, with increasing processing power have fundamentally changed international trade and service sectors, such as the financial sector. The retail sector is being radically reshaped due to several technological trends, the expansion of online shopping, and self-serving in the supermarkets. Technology is also transforming the transport and the logistics sectors, due to the advances in autonomous vehicles and drones. At the same time, the opportunities are driven by technology. Policymakers need to focus on the positive opportunities arising in data analytics, 3D, advanced materials and manufacturing, robots and automation, fintech, among others. These markets are only emerging and developing.

Minister Doherty emphasised that the Irish government is working extremely hard to ensure that Ireland is at the cutting edge of all these technological advancements, in order to ensure international competitiveness. For example, the Irish future jobs strategy sets out a range of initiatives to future-proof the current jobs, to identify vulnerable sectors, to identify likely opportunities, and to take immediate action, so that people are as equipped as possible to take up the jobs of the future. Ireland is also increasing its life-long learning vision to encourage workers to reskill and upscale, plus to provide workers with the opportunity to do that all throughout their life. Therefore, Ireland will be helping and encouraging people to have multiple careers. Irish SMEs and businesses are investing in upscaling of their workers. Ireland is looking into adaptation to technological disruption and exploiting opportunities that arise from the new digital and green economies.

Minister Doherty explained that the Future Jobs for Ireland 2019 report was launched by the government last March and focused on requiring policy reforms to enhance productivity, to create quality and sustainable jobs, and to build a resilient, innovative, and globally-connected economy. Even though the future is uncertain, Ireland will focus on the areas where there are strong ambitions and desires as well as the skillset to achieve. Furthermore, the Irish skill strategy, which is a roadmap for between now and 2025, was developed by the Department of Education. The vision of that strategy is that Ireland will be renowned as a place where talent is thriving and is encouraged.

Minister Doherty argued that it is also necessary to face the challenge of transitioning to a low carbon economy. This will require the transformation of economies, workplaces, enterprises, labour markets, and will encompass a focus on sustainability, on energy efficiency, and on renewable energy, combined with a decrease in reliance on fossil fuels. Alongside these changes, it is also necessary to retain the focus on the needs of today's schoolchildren who will largely work in jobs and industries that have yet to be imagined or created. The future of work and youth unemployment are still too high, so the public policy agenda must ensure that there is flexibility and skills provision to address the needs of this growing community. Ms Doherty stated that, even though it was possible to take pride on the developments in Ireland, nothing can be taken for granted and there is no room for complacency. There are still challenges related to technological disruption, meeting the needs of the new generation, the transition towards a low carbon economy, reskilling the workforce, and meeting the needs of business and communities, she added.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, asked Minister Doherty about the current unemployment rate in Ireland.

Regina Doherty, Minister of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Ireland, responded that it is currently 5.4%, which is down from the 2011 level of 16%.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, asked for more information about digital skills in Ireland.

Regina Doherty, Minister of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Ireland, responded that the situation is improving and that probably everyone under the age of 50 has digital skills. Still, there is a difficulty with the older generation. There are training courses in Irish towns and communities to try to teach the older generation how to use the Internet, how to do online shopping, and how to communicate with their friends. This training is providing benefits. Historically, through the investment in Ireland and through cooperation in universities and colleges, Ireland has taught how important it is to future-proof that particular skillset in younger people.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, asked Minister Doherty if there was any sort of European programme or European perspective to her work. Plus, if Minister Doherty looked at anywhere else in Europe for inspiration.

Regina Doherty, Minister of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Ireland, responded that the European commitment to life-long learning was probably the most radical change seen from social Europe in the past few years, apart from the solidarity openly displayed towards each other. Minister Doherty underlined the importance of encouraging people to have multiple careers. The support of life-long learning by the European Commission is very important, she added. Ms Doherty stated that, every time she attends a European meeting, she learns about a new initiative.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, asked for more specifics on the mentioned European commitment, including if it was related to funds provided by the EU for training courses and other measures.

Regina Doherty, Minister of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Ireland, stated that there was a top-down support in the commitment from the European Commission to recognise that life-long learning is necessary. Still, there is inspiration from the grassroots communities as well. Minister Doherty expressed her satisfaction with the European Commission's action on that matter in the past years.

Jean Arthuis, Member of the European Parliament, highlighted that there are two challenges to face: digitalisation and that companies are moving. It is necessary to have the professional skills to meet those challenges. Mr Arthuis explained that he recently met with WorldSkills, an organisation that organises professional competitions to compare skills. Regarding what the EU can do convince people to acquire professional skills, the MEP argued that programmes such as Erasmus are one way to protect against unemployment. Concerning the obstacles to professional mobility, it is known that countries with high levels of apprenticeships do not have high levels of youth unemployment. Therefore, the Parliament looked into the possibilities of combining Erasmus with traineeships, but the EU Member States have different employment legislation, so it is not easy to allow apprentices to go to another country for several months. The Parliament developed a pilot project that aims to achieve that.

Mr Arthuis explained that the EU does not have any competence concerning vocational training and education. There are some tools, such as the Erasmus programme. It is also possible to use the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund to help countries develop strategies and invest in equipment and to finance programmes. It is necessary for companies and vocational training centres to be able to actively get involved in mobility programmes, so that apprentices can go to other countries for, at least, six months and to help them welcome people from other countries. Governments need to help harmonise legislation in the area of vocational training, he argued. Certificates need to be recognised in other countries, so perhaps a European label system is needed. The MEP argued that vocational training is one of the best investments possible.

Mr Arthuis emphasised that, since 2014, the Erasmus credits were almost doubled. It went up from 1.5 billion € to around 3 billion €. This is not enough, if one wants to include vocational training. In the next MFF, the Commission is proposing to double the amount of funding available and the Parliament wants to triple it. Still, governments need to come on board, so that legislation becomes more similar and the projects can really take shape. These programmes help young people become more employable and make the economies more competitive. Apprenticeships remain a good practice throughout life, so people can adapt to the future challenges, he added.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, stated that this issue has been under discussion for a very long time. Mobility is widely recognised as helping. Still, the problem remains with the lack of recognition of degrees, competences, and qualifications. There is a budgetary allocation for these matters, still the reality on the ground continues to be overly difficult. Therefore, the Moderator asked for Mr Arthuis's views on why this problem continues.

Jean Arthuis, Member of the European Parliament, responded that the public authorities are still "trapped" by their national traditions in administration. It is necessary to have more political will to commit on this matter. Future difficulties in Europe are expected due to this

situation. Mr Arthuis stressed that vocational training is one of the best investments to be made in the future, highlighting the importance of harmonisation of legislation on vocational training. The MEP drew attention to the adoption of a law in France to remove certain obstacles by paying apprentices throughout their work, even if they leave after six months. If there is convergence and harmonisation of legislation, then it will be possible to take a major step forward to converge labour law in Europe, which would be important for the European project.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, commented that the situation was particularly difficult, when compared to recognition of university studies.

Jean Arthuis, Member of the European Parliament, stated that, concerning universities, it took time and there was the Bologna agreement. Universities are the ones that issue diplomas and they reach agreements among each other. While, for apprenticeships, it is the academic authority that is responsible for issuing the certificate. Therefore, there are administrative obstacles and clear instruction are needed on mutual recognition. Administrative authorities need to show more pragmatism and trust the vocational education and training institutes. The pilot project showed where the obstacles were. European legislation and regulations are not simple in this matter. These rules are not going to facilitate innovation on their own, he added.

Michel Servoz, Senior Adviser, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence and the Future of European Labour Law, European Commission, agreed with Mr Arthuis's comments on competences. When looking at education policies, it is an addition of 28 differences. Mr Servoz urged the next Commission to strive for more convergence. It should not be only about recognition of diploma, but also more convergence in curriculums. Regarding what needs to be changed, the Senior Adviser argued that it is a matter of focus. The European education systems are focused very much in facts and knowledge. When there is artificial intelligence and multiple careers, the focus should be on resilience. The focus should be on soft skills, such as creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, and reacting to unpredictable circumstances. Europe should try to lead on these transversal skills.

In relation to computer science, Mr Servoz stated that, in many primary schools in Europe, there is code education. The Senior Adviser argued that this is the wrong approach. It is necessary to teach young people how to use computers and to understand artificial intelligence and robotics. Computer science should be given the same space as geography and biology in the secondary curriculum.

Concerning adult learning, Mr Servoz agreed that the EU has put a large amount of focus on life-long learning. However, this is enough. University cycles could probably be shortened and provide students the opportunity to return every five years or ten years to do a retraining, helping them manage their career changes. On the responsibility, the Senior Adviser stated that there is a view that the State is responsible for education, but, in his view, employers need to take up much more responsibility. When a company needs an employee with different skills, the company simply fires the current employee and hires another one with the skills, but Mr Servoz considers this to be the wrong approach. The public employment service should change into something different. Instead of dealing with unemployed people, the services should help employed people deal with their transition.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, stated that there is evidence that teams that consist of humans and machines are actually more productive than just teams of humans. Ms Mettler asked Mr Servoz about how to make employers understand that collaboration may look very different in the future.

Michel Servoz, Senior Adviser, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence and the Future of European Labour Law, European Commission, responded that the debate on the issue has been, in many ways, wrongly launched. The discussion has focused very much on displacement. The effect of artificial intelligence and robotics is, in many ways, to augment the capacity of workers, removing routine tasks and helping them to focus on the most important tasks. The Senior Adviser argued that there will be a very long transition before any actual displacement. In the meantime, it is necessary to help workers work with machines and help workers focus on the tasks that they are best at.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, agreed that it is not only about teaching coding, but also about teaching "cyber-resilience", since technology can be used to manipulate and to nudge certain behaviours.

Michel Servoz, Senior Adviser, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence and the Future of European Labour Law, European Commission, stated that people are currently hostages of digital systems. It is important to understand how the systems work, in order to be better protected. Many people have the impression that social media is a free service, when, in reality, people are the product. This awareness is very important as a worker, a consumer, and a citizen.

Luc Triangle, General Secretary, industryAll European Trade Union, stated that, concerning the future of industry in Europe, people agreed that it is important. Industrial policy covers issues related to investment, innovation, energy, trade, among others. Industry goes through many transformations, such as digitalisation and climate change. This will transform industries, but also regions. One of the main ways to deal with the described situation is through the skills agenda.

Concerning the regional dimension, Mr Triangle highlighted Europe is not united on this matter, which is seen in the difference in the educational systems as well as the employment and economic realities. There are countries where every skilled worker is recruited to work elsewhere. The most important migration in Europe happened in the past 20 years when 20 million people moved from the East to the West. This was due to a lack of quality employment in their region. Skills will be important to streamline and to have common policies, he added.

Mr Triangle emphasised that, for trade unions, education and skills are a priority. If Europe wants to be the most innovative region in the world, Europe needs highly skilled people. If companies want to be global leader, they need educated and qualified people. These companies can create quality jobs, and, for workers, it is very important to be trained. Every worker needs to be trained, because it increases their employability. In order for people to continue to be employable, they need to be trained throughout their whole career. The General Secretary argued that investments need to be sped up on training and education in Europe. There is currently not enough spending and investment in Europe. He agreed with Mr Servoz

that this is not only the responsibility of public authorities. Companies have a huge responsibility to invest more in people, preparing for the future economy.

On his recommendations, Mr Triangle outlined that skill intelligence needs to be increased in Europe. Access to training is important for all workers, including the lower skilled ones. More work is needed on the recognition of skills. There should be more investment on funding for work and vocational training and companies need to that responsibility. There should be social dialogue in the governance of the educational system. Social partners need to be fully onboard on the design and debate concerning the future skills and education, he concluded.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, highlighted that, in the period between 2014 to 2020, more than 27 billion € of the European Social Fund's budget has been allocated to education and vocational training for skills and life-long learning. Therefore, Ms Mettler stated that funding did not seem to be the problem and asked Mr Triangle about the actual problems.

Luc Triangle, General Secretary, industryAll European Trade Union, responded that there is spending, but it is also a matter of harmonising and streamlining the spending, plus of wondering if the funding is spent throughout the entire workforce. In many companies, when the spending on training of the workforce is analysed, it is possible to see that those who already are highly skilled receive even more training.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, wanted to know why there were not more results from the 27 billion € spending.

Luc Triangle, General Secretary, industryAll European Trade Union, responded that it is also a matter of coordination among Member States and Europe. Investments in skills need to happen locally, even if Europe coordinates. Additionally, more work could be done on the exchange of best practices.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, stated that, in her experience, the workers' digital skills experience is achieved in the workplace. Still, there are problems with the certification and the recognition of these skills, making it difficult to transfer the skills, even though companies are providing training.

Danny Van Assche, CEO of the Flemish organisation for SME, and Vice-President of SMEunited, expressed his agreement with Mr Servoz's intervention. Mr Van Assche stated that, when looking at the labour market, the policy has fundamentally changed in the last 10 years. In the past 20 or 30 years, the labour policy was always focused on fighting unemployment and searching for jobs. Currently, it is about searching for people for jobs, in order to fill the vacancies. Therefore, labour market policy needs to change fundamentally. One of the reasons for this difficulty in finding candidates for these vacancies is the skills mismatch. There is a lack of technical and digital skills, but also about vocational training for crafts companies. It is expectable that the situation will worsen. The digitalisation and greening of the economy will make it harder to find the right skills.

On how to deal with the situation, Mr Van Assche emphasised that employers do not search any more for this exceptional candidate with all the right skills. Employers search for the

candidates with the correct attitude and solid basic skills. Employers then invest and train them, educating the employees on the spot. The CEO argued that there is a large necessity for life-long learning. It is not only a responsibility for employers, but also for the workers. Questions remain on how to organise and fund this life-long learning. This is particularly a problem for SMEs. SMEs are afraid that they will invest in their workforce, but that, as soon as the workforce is fully trained, they will lose them. There are obligations to provide life-long training, but, the more an employer trains its workers, the higher the risk is of losing them for larger companies that can afford higher payments. The CEO argued that one of the solutions could be to have strong sectoral training funds, so that the cost can be solidarized between employers and workers.

Mr Van Assche underscored that entrepreneurs also need to be skilled. The EU has abolished all thresholds to start a business, which he considers to be a positive development. Still, at the same time, this destroyed any preparatory training to start a business. Quality training is also required for future entrepreneurs and employers. The CEO argued that education systems should focus on solid basic skills, especially STEM skills, vocational training, and soft skills. For vocational training, the CEO expressed his belief in work-based learning. As for life-long learning, he argued that governments should share the costs and create institutions for this issue. Governments should create training clauses in labour law, in order to protect investment in training, specially by SMEs, so that employers can be sure that they will enjoy the investments.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, emphasised that skills are mobile. When workers that go through training return, they might ask for a higher salary or be poached by another company. Therefore, there are issues of expectations. Ms Mettler asked Mr Van Assche about ideas on how employers could enjoy the investments in training.

Danny Van Assche, CEO of the Flemish organisation for SME, and Vice-President of SMEunited, responded that it is necessary to convince them of the need to invest in life-long learning, training and education. If every employer participates, then every worker is trained and more skilled, making it easier to find new employees, when there is a vacancy. There is a collective responsibility to invest. Yet, if small businessowners invest in training their workers, they know there is a high risk that, in two months, the worker will move to a larger company that can provide a higher wage. The investments need to be legally protected the investments made by the employer. For example, after the training, the worker should be legally required to remain in the company for a certain period. The investment could also be tax deductible or use social funds contributions, he argued.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, highlighted that more than 99% of European companies are SMEs, of which 90% are microenterprises with less than 10 employees.

Danny Van Assche, CEO of the Flemish organisation for SME, and Vice-President of SMEunited, exemplified that, if a SME only has two or three workers, sending one worker for a long training has a high impact in the workforce of the company.

Stephan Howeg, The Adecco Group, VET Week Ambassador, argued that it is necessary to change perspectives. There is a move from an employer to an employee market. Mr Howeg

drew attention to a study launched by a large financial institute according to which, this past Monday, there were more 65-year olds than 5-year olds globally. Employees can choose where they go, what they learn, and where their opportunities are. The situation in apprenticeships is nothing new, but there is a change in the workforce. Regarding the required skills, Mr Howeg argued that employers should hire for attitude and train for skills. The speaker drew attention to the changes in marketing work in the past decades, meaning that everyone needs to change their view on their work and use the acquired skills. He highlighted the importance of creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking.

Concerning the creation of awareness, Mr Howeg argued that it was not a matter of more spending but of smarter spending. It is necessary to guide young and older people through the opportunities without creating fears about the past changes. There should be accountability between the companies, the workers, the employees, but also governments to have a social dialogue on the investments. For employees to stay, it is necessary to provide them with a great workplace. Mr Howeg supported the idea of a life-long employability fund, seed by employers, individuals, and governments. This would force employers to make changes and take the opportunities, he concluded.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, concerning the government's responsibility for workers' attitude, wanted to know how that could be assessed.

Stephan Howeg, The Adecco Group, VET Week Ambassador , exemplified that, when his organisation received new team members, the new members are not assessed by the brought skills, but by their flexibility when exposed to challenges and interactions with other colleagues.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, concerning the idea of a life-long employability fund, drew attention to an initiative in Singapore. Under this initiative, everyone is entitled to 500 dollars to spend how they feel fit. This provides people's agency to study something that they feel need or that they want. The other purpose was also to make people feel responsible for the advancement of their skills.

Stephan Howeg, The Adecco Group, VET Week Ambassador , agreed with the importance of empowering workers. Workers are also provided responsibility for their own career. The company does not provide a life-long career, but the worker can navigate through the opportunities. There is a need for a fluid educational system to facilitate when workers are looking for opportunities, he added.

Biser Petkov, Minister of Labour and Social Policies, Bulgaria, expressed his agreement with the panellists that, in order to respond to the changes in demand for new skills, it is necessary to continue developing the life-long learning approach and to provide workers with learning opportunities at every stage and career transition. This can be achieved by providing more flexibility and accessible forms of learning as well as formal and informal learning by using innovative methods, such as digital learning tools. There must be an intensification of the efforts to make education and training open and flexible to changes in the labour market. It is necessary to provide a new impetus for the vocational education training, in order for it to achieve its attractiveness. This must be coupled with extended opportunities for learning basic

skills, ensuring faster adaptation to changes. Employers should be actively involved in this process.

Minister Petkov underscored that Bulgaria is an example of the positive development in this field. In the recent years, employers and trade unions have been involved in the development of competence models. They provide information on the knowledge, skills, and competences needed to successfully perform job positions in individual economic sectors. Information is needed for employers to access work and for their human resources training as well as for education and training institutions to develop training standards and curricula. Bulgaria is working together to ensure that training meets future demand. Bulgaria put into practice a national model for labour demand forecasting with the assistance of academia. Currently, the forecast is being updated with the Horizon programme. Exchanges of good practices should continue among all stakeholders to manage changes related to the digital transformation of the economy and the required changes in the workplaces, while taking into account the need for sustainable funding.

Minister Petkov argued that it is essential to provide access to participation in life-long learning for disadvantage groups through the active labour market policy. There should be targeted initiatives, developed within European cooperation. Such initiatives require an increase in targeted national and European investment and more efficient utilisation of structural funds, particularly the European Social Fund, he concluded.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, recalled that, during the debate, it was mentioned that around 20 million people moved from the East to West in Europe. Ms Mettler asked Minister Petkov if these people are returning or if there are efforts to bring them back, taking into account the large "brain drain" and loss of skills.

Biser Petkov, Minister of Labour and Social Policies, Bulgaria, responded that "brain drain" is probably the largest problem in the Eastern countries, particularly in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian has been organisation meetings in the countries with the highest concentrations of young Bulgarians. Since the beginning of the present year, there have been several meetings, including in London, Vienna, and Berlin, to explain the new possibilities in the labour market. There is a need for convergence, in order to attract young people, he concluded.

Jean Arthuis, Member of the European Parliament, stated that it would be a good idea to progressively have convergence in the levels of payment. In Eastern Europe, workers are coming from Belarus, Ukraine, and Georgia, and who do not see an advance in wages. Therefore, there is a real call for action there.

Kazimierz Kuberski, Undersecretary of State, Poland, agreed that there is a move from an employers' market towards a market of employees. However, in the global race for skills, the first step is to look for the internal talents, supporting development. To attract skills, it is necessary to create conditions, in which talented people will want to live and work. This included high wages, flexible forms of work, and opportunities to develop their skills in life-long learning. The activities undertaken to attract skills in the field of attracting skills by the EU and Member States should be complementary and take the principle of subsidiarity into account.

Mr Kuberski highlighted that one of the most important factors with impact on the labour market is education. Formal education should promote and prepare students to gather knowledge throughout their life. Challenges related to their lifecycle and other transformations to digital work will lead to significant civilizational changes. Life-long learning is a key element to prevent professional exclusion. The Polish government works to face the challenges faced by employers and employees resulting from technological progress, digitalisation, and globalisation of the economy. In order to support employers in the adaptation of employees' qualifications to the new requirements, the National Training Found was established. Special attention is given to life-long learning, with several different measures, including training for people above 45 years of age, he concluded.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, stated that the Polish case has been studied as a best practice, highlighting that Poland has quite a lot of deep expertise in advanced digital skills. Some people even refer to Poland as "the back office of the city of London" due to outsourcing. Poland has essentially created educational institutions from scratch to provide highly advanced digital skills. Ms Mettler congratulated Poland for their achievements on digital skills.

A representative of CSI Europe expressed his surprise with the list of panellists, since it includes two or three companies, when he was expecting to hear more from SMEs, large enterprises, and entrepreneurs on how to deal with the future of work. The audience member underscored the importance of actually visiting companies and schools on the ground, in order to understand the future of work. Concerning the Erasmus programme, the audience member recalled that the programme was created 30 years ago. One of the objectives behind it was to accelerate the Bologna reform. ErasmusPRO is a possibility to accelerate the Bologna reform of VET, which is why he urged for further strengthening of ErasmusPRO.

Nina Monjean, EU Advocacy Officer, RREUSE, expressed her interest on Mr Servoz's comments regarding adult learning and going back to university, so the audience member asked him for suggestions on issues related to social exclusion, such as long-term unemployment.

Susanne Kraatz, Research Administrator, European Parliament, drew attention to the concept of career management skills. The Administrator highlighted that a lot of work has been done on this concept, including through career guidance services to make the bridge between the individual and learning offers.

Oliver Grün, Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, argued that a common European strategy with massive funding, a sector approach with the social partners at the centre, and a focus on services and mid-skills jobs is needed, since these are the key parts of the economy.

An entrepreneur explained that his work consisted of bridging academia and the world of entrepreneurship. In his work, he analysed people's difficulties in relation to regulations and institutions in relation to learning. The audience member highlighted that entrepreneurship is a great way of learning to build strategic knowledge and abilities. Learning should be imbedded to the workplace and promote a more entrepreneurial approach. The audience member

expressed his support for the entrepreneurial discovery process in the context of the European Commission.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, asked the panellists to succinctly explain if they learned anything during the debate. Ms Mettler also asked them for their takeaways from the debate, particularly their recommendations to the European Commission.

Luc Triangle, General Secretary, industryAll European Trade Union, stated that, looking at the future of industry and the economy, transformation is presented. Skills will be crucial to deal with these changes. The workforce is the most important capital in Europe, so no one can be left behind during this transformation. People must be empowered to fully take training, but access to training must also be guaranteed to all, which currently is not happening.

Jean Arthuis, Member of the European Parliament, responded that there were no real surprises in the debate. Mr Arthuis highlighted the importance of taking back ownership of traineeships by public authorities. Training in companies is an investment in the future. Apprenticeships are becoming more and more popular in the context of higher education. Mobility by young people demonstrates attitude and responsibility by moving out of their comfort zone to undertake training. In the Erasmus programme, the Commission is stressing a new concept that, for mobility, each vocational training centre must be of excellence. Added value from the training centres must be ensured, he added.

Regina Doherty, Minister of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Ireland, underscored that the largest asset of any country is its people. Policymakers must design systems that support people from when they enter school until they conclude their careers. Minister Doherty recognised that policymakers cannot do policy in isolation, since there must be cooperation.

Michel Servoz, Senior Adviser, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence and the Future of European Labour Law, European Commission, responded that he was surprised by the question on long-term unemployment. There have been many discussions on how to adapt education systems for the jobs of the future, but the mass of people in long-term unemployment might be forgotten. The disruptions by digitalisation accelerate this polarisation. There will be a socially excluded margin of the population and unemployment. Mr Servoz highlighted that 25% of the European population has literacy and numeracy problems, which will be a huge issue in terms of employability. The Senior Adviser emphasised the discussion on competences, subsidiarity, adding that, in his view, education should be viewed in a similar manner as the construction of the euro. In the next political cycle, it is important to think about the curriculums and the recognition of diplomas, he concluded.

Danny Van Assche, CEO of the Flemish organisation for SME, and Vice-President of SMEunited, stated that life-long learning is a responsibility for everyone, including employers, employees and governments. Life-long learning is also about learning for adult people. The required investment is also for people above 55 years-old, since they still have about 1/5 of their career in front of them. Mr Van Assche agreed that entrepreneurship is one of the best trainings possible. The CEO expressed his surprise with the high number of low skilled people unemployed, since there are still many low skilled jobs, while middle skilled jobs are

disappearing. Therefore, a question remains on the lack of matches in the situations where no skills are needed.

Stephan Howeg, The Adecco Group, VET Week Ambassador , expressed his surprise with hearing about all the challenges, but very little about the opportunities. Mr Howeg called for a change in perspectives. The future has never been better for employers and employees with all the potential opportunities. Mr Howeg urged governments to share best practices.

Ann Mettler, the Moderator, stated that the discussion on these topics has been shifting from how to handle unemployment to discussing a skills gap and a skills mismatch, which is a major shift. Ms Mettler expressed her surprise with the lack of discussion on the need to attract talent from outside of Europe.

Panel E PROTECT AND INVEST: Modernising welfare systems, making them sustainable and inclusive

The Moderator, Mr Vladimir Sucha, Director-General of the Joint Research Centre, European Commission, started the debate by saying that 40% of the work force in the EU are self-employed or under non-traditional contracts. Then, 76% of those under traditional contracts are at the risk of poverty, while 20% of those under non-traditional contracts are at the risk of poverty. Small interventions by the governments, like obligatory contribution to the social security system, can improve the situation by 50-60%. He concluded that it is not artificial intelligence that changes the nature of jobs, as the change had started already years before.

Ms Ylva Johansson, Minister for Employment, Sweden, said that social cohesion and inclusive labour markets can be closely linked to innovation and competitiveness, as they can foster each other. She gave an example from Sweden, where they subsidised home PCs for low-income workers since 25 years, and that led to a boom of gaming industry in the country today. So, when you invest in inclusiveness, it can also foster innovation, growth and competitiveness. Sweden has the highest employment rate, because it is one of the most generous countries when it comes to welcoming refugees. It is also linked to the high level of welfare and social protection, as they finance each other. Guaranteeing parental leave or after-school care enables more women to participate in the labour market, whilst also supporting the fertility rate. There is also support for people with disabilities, as jobs are subsidised by the state. There is a state-owned company that would easily employ you if you face difficulties being employed elsewhere. Moreover, Sweden is characterised by a positive approach to new technologies. The aim is not to protect jobs, but to protect people. There is the principle: "we are not afraid of new technology, but of old technology". The competitiveness of companies is favoured, but if they fail, the focus is on protecting its employees. Social protection is compulsory for everybody, while the amount paid for the social system is the same no matter what type of contract. If a worker is on sick leave, they still contribute to the public pension system. Everything counts, she stated. She added that it is necessary to think about social protection systems and see how they could contribute to competitiveness and innovation. Both do not exclude each other, but it is necessary to find a way how the one is not the obstacle but the opportunity for the other.

Maria João Rodrigues (S&D, PT) agreed with the Minister that innovation and social cohesion can indeed go together. On imagining the next European welfare systems, it is necessary to invest in people and to update the protection of people. Investing in people means to see how healthcare can be adapted to new wellbeing and the SDGs. Ensuring healthy lifestyle also touches housing, smart and clean housing, she stated. There is a lack of investment in that, she added. Then, it is about education which needs to be reinvented, as the new phase of digital transformation is coming. Artificial intelligence will come everywhere, so it is necessary to prepare young people to live in that world, she explained. On social protection, the Minister was clear that updated welfare systems must be mandatory for all citizens. The big challenge is to get portable protection across countries and across time. In this regard, she mentioned two ongoing developments: the European Social Security Card and the Personal Activity Account. On financing, she echoed the Minister that the best way is full employment. So, exploring all the ways to provide full employment in all countries is key, and it is not a utopia. Then, it is taxation, as a digital taxation should be introduced somehow in order to finance particularly education. Demographic trends must be also taken into account, she added.

Mr Sucha, the Moderator, fully agreed on the need to reinvent education.

Mr Paul Schoukens, Professor, KU Leuven agreed with Minister Johansson that protection must apply to any type of work with equal value. It is true though that self-employment differs, so specific protection for some types is necessary, based on the working capacity. When it comes to platform work and other new forms of work, the protection seems to move to protection of income, and this will be quite a challenge for the future. A general approach is needed on that. Platform work on the computer is usually transnational, its social security aspect must be seen, as it needs to go transnational too. It is necessary to accept that some people work in a country, but they do European work, so a European social protection is needed. There is concern that platform work might mean the end of social security, mainly when it comes to care, but Mr Schoukens did not believe that. In any case, introducing platform work to social security seems like a challenge, he concluded.

Mr Sucha, the Moderator, added that 2% of workforce have platform work as a full-time job, while 10% use it as one among other sources of income.

Ms Anne-Sophie Parent, Secretary General, AGE Platform Europe, said her organisation is a diverse group, but there is agreement that social protection is strongly related to society, maintaining growth and opportunities for future generations. Today social protection systems are under pressure, but any reforms must be fair to those that would have to carry them, she insisted. That means to pay attention to specific groups; Sweden is good in monitoring and identifying which are those specific groups. Having the best tools is not very easy, as there are issues such as what is considered standard work. She welcomed that the European Commission had supported her organisation's argument that that profile must be expanded. Social protection systems must remain at the core of societal policy, and the current trend in public spending must not continue. The models that rely too much on family need to learn from the Scandinavian model. The challenges on women's participation are not still well understood, she added. In this regard, she welcomed the Swedish approach with good child care.

Mr Sucha, the Moderator, highlighted Ms Parent's point on fairness.

Ms Ilka Wölfle, Director, European Representation of the German Social Insurance, and Vice-President, European Social Insurance Platform, said Germany is considering whether the current social security system can continue, or new models should be embraced. There is a very wide protection for everyone, also covering certain groups of self-employment, but there are loopholes, as it is a taxation-based system. She then wondered how a sustainable system could exist in Europe. Their position is that the best solution is contributing financing, so that security, solidarity and independence are ensured. There should be more exchange of data, such as from tax authorities, in order for loopholes to be tackled, she added.

Mr Sucha, the Moderator, wanted to emphasise more on the European dimension of the debate.

Ms Johansson, Swedish Minister, responded by referring to the so-called 'female trap', meaning that incentives given to women workers should not be too much resulting in encouraging part-time jobs. She said one cannot be blind about men-women different realities, but this should not be enforced. Employers must be forced to offer full-time jobs to women. This is important for the discussion on EU regulations as well.

Mr Linas Kukuraitis, Minister, Lithuania, said that post-Soviet period was characterised by a lot of workers' protection, but digitalisation is now changing things. Universal and compulsory social security is their approach. The European Semester and the Structural Funds are the main instruments at EU level to help growth at national level, he added.

Mr Claudio Cominardi, State Secretary, Italy, said that technological evolution offers great opportunity for growth, but the question is how to distribute that well. It is necessary to invest in human capital and social capital. It is problematic that social inequality is worsening, so those excluded from the labour market must be supported through training, necessary for emerging technological markets. He then mentioned that workers in some countries, such as Italy and Greece, work more hours than in other countries. Better labour policy is needed in order to achieve more homogeneity at European level and reduce those hours of work and distribute them for more employment and consequently more contribution to social systems.

A representative of the Executive Committee of the European Disability Forum welcomed the clear approach of the Swedish Minister. He then referred to the importance of participation of women and persons with disabilities. He rejected the term vulnerable, as disability is an interlink of personal situation and the reality of barriers in real life. He believed the Swedish way would improve the participation of people with disabilities.

The Moderator welcomed the point of view of disabled persons, as they represent a huge community.

A representative of the Dutch Christian Trade Union Federation asked about the tension in the issue of transferability of unemployment benefits, as well the case of high percentage of part-time jobs in the Netherlands, and the role of atypical work.

Mr Schoukens, KU Leuven, replied that transferability of unemployment benefits is always a delicate issue, but the real problem is differences in labour mediation. Unless a proper European labour mediation is established, the discussion will be endless. On atypical work, he said that moving from wage employment to self-employment is not so much about giving incentives for non-traditional forms of work, as long as the protection is equal. When there are jobs of low income that correspond to low contribution, should that mean lower protection. So, it is preferable to subsidise upfront than subsidise later on with social assistance.

Ms Johansson, Swedish Minister, said that part-time work is a problem for Sweden too, especially for women. The state tries to force citizens to have full-time work, so that a good welfare system is maintained; they go hand in hand.

Maria João Rodrigues (S&D, PT) mentioned an upcoming vote in the European Parliament on an important Directive establishing that all workers must be covered by social protection no matter their type of work, be it self-employed or platform worker or any new type of work. Moreover, the European Semester is the best way to encourage innovation and cohesion going on the same direction. As regards the challenges of financing, she explained that the EU budget has the Social Fund, while the new phase of the European Investment Plan will have more focus on social investment.

Ms Wölfle, German Social Insurance/ European Social Insurance Platform, said that access to social protection is not one country's problem. The European Social Pillar must be implemented in order to support member states for upwards convergence. Platform work has very important international dimension, and they need adequate social protection. The EU debate should include exchange of good practices, like the recent positive example in France.

Mr Sucha, the Moderator, added that 56% of platform workers come from Asia, and only 13% from Europe. So, there is a risk of displacement of jobs outside Europe. There is space for a European solution, but that is not enough, he added.

Ms Parent, AGE Platform Europe, said that modern welfare system means taking care of those that are excluded from the labour markets. Countries can choose any system they want, but the EU could ask member states to measure what they do and assess if their system really delivers to social protection.

A Secretary from Germany said that beside digitalisation, there is also geographical change as a driving force for new social systems; they must both be seen together. Platform economy, mainly that form of intermediary work, raises risk of disabilities in elder ages. He then believed that contribution-based social systems raise concerns of sustainability. In Germany, there is the idea of basic pension, no matter of type of work. Self-employment is also attempted to be integrated. A modern system should reflect all those elements. A tax-based system is needed, he added.

A Secretary from Cyprus said that the new forms of employment in EU labour market make it more difficult to distinguish employment from self-employment. Moreover, digital communication tools and mobility of workers further complicate national and EU legislations. So, the conditions favouring undeclared work are increasing with negative impact to social

security systems. Legislation must be modernised to combat undeclared work. In this regard, the European labour authority is well set, he added. He then mentioned the Cypriot example of adopting the guarantee of minimum income, ensuring minimum living standards.

Ms Gloria Mills, President of ETUC Women's Committee, referred to the high gender pay gap in Europe, as it represents a big unfairness. Women's part-time jobs in child and elder care sector should be better counted in some member states. A system of every-cent-counts, like in Sweden, is necessary.

The Moderator commented that fairness is generally, not only gender-based, important for the European society.

Ms Johansson, Swedish Minister, said that it would be very difficult to have one system of social protection across Europe, but this does not mean there not things to do together. She agreed that the European Semester should further push member states to deliver results on the social pillar. Upward convergence is needed, but one-size-fits-all would not be useful at EU level.

Ms Parent, AGE Platform Europe, agreed with Ms Mills that specific attention is needed to some groups, like in women working on childcare. She also agreed with the importance of the social pillar of the European Semester. It is important for citizens not to lose their trust to European social protection systems.

Ms Wölfle, German Social Insurance/ European Social Insurance Platform, agreed that it is necessary to ensure that all those working must have adequate social protection. Each member state must do their own homework, while the European Semester must be used for measuring progress and for promoting upwards convergence.

Mr Schoukens, KU Leuven, raised attention on the income thresholds that countries introduce more and more. On the European Semester, he believed a clear European social story is necessary for what the EU wants in this regard.

Maria João Rodrigues (S&D, PT) said that the European Social Pillar is the latest episode of that long EU story. Beside the Directive to be adopted the following week, there is also a Recommendation of the Council that all workers must have access to social protection. Those must be adapted to the platform economy, she insisted.

The Moderator, Mr Sucha, summarised the main highlights of the debate by saying that there is a common denominator for all countries that mutual recognition is necessary for all types of work to be treated equally. It is important to focus on people, rather than on jobs. On fairness, he said it is important to always aim at it, as it is a dynamic process, changing across time. On platformisation of economy, he said a more European approach is necessary, as platforms are multinational. On the social pillar recommendations of the European Semester, he said good jobs are necessary, but we must go beyond that. The ESF plays crucial role. All those are necessary in order to achieve fairness in European social models.

Panel F MANAGE CHANGE: Governance and partnerships

Marko Pavić, Minister of Labour and Pension System, Croatia, stressed the need to engage in an open dialogue that covers all the different aspects of the changes that the world is witnessing in everything that was considered the norm up until not long ago. According to the Minister, all research suggests that young people will have to make several career changes, that the skills that are and will be needed are much different than the ones in the past, and that 10% of current jobs will disappear due to digitalisation, without the possibility of envisaging what other new jobs will be found in the future.

In his view, when educating young people, they need to be prepared for the unknown, developing skills that are necessary for the future labour market. For this reason, Mr Pavić considered STEM to be particularly important, since they teach communication skills, problem-solving, and analytics.

That is why Croatia has used the European Social Fund to support 10.000 STEM scholarships, it has opened a grant for science communication, and has promoted STEM from kindergarten to PhD. Nevertheless, a holistic approach for him would be to respond to these new skills requirements while preserving an adequate level of social protection, which is why Croatia supports the social Europe model within the context of the next European Commission and many other Commissions to come.

In his view, the new market dynamics, in which there are those who are self-employed through new forms of work, deserve much more attention and to be regulated in a way that provides them with the same level of protection as the rest of EU citizens.

Another serious challenge for Mr Pavić is the lack of appropriate skills to match job requirements: he stated that 45% of Europeans aged 60-74 lack even the most basic digital skills. For this reason, Croatia has instituted a curriculum for the development of individual digital skills and pupils will receive a tablet through the ESF fund.

Long-term skills have to be more structured along long-term unemployment. There is a lack of skills that prevent entries to the labour market. Pension reforms in Croatia have enabled pensioners to work half-time, allowing the doubling of the workforce, without occupying the jobs available for young people entering the labour market. Croatia, according to the Minister, has doubled investments in active labour measures and has tripled the money available for young people in self-employment schemes.

The most important issues in the upcoming EPSCO Councils for the Minister will be re-skilling and up-skilling, considering that only 3% of Croatians participate in life-long learning programmes compared to the 11% EU average. This year, the government will be conducting a pilot project for the re-skilling and up-skilling of low-skill workers and plans to take this issue to EPSCO and the UN in order to initiate a debate on universal entitlement to life-long learning as an economic and human right of the future.

Oliver Röpke, Head of the Brussels Office, Austrian Trade Union Federation and President of the EESC Workers' Group, explained that the first condition for managing this

particularly challenging change is building consensus around what type of future is desirable, if the future of work is to be safer, more inclusive, offering more opportunities, and with a labour market based on quality jobs, decent wages, and effective social protection coverage for all workers. In his view, the work carried out by the ILO Global Commission for the Future of Work is a sound basis for building such consensus towards a human-centred agenda for the future of work.

The second condition, Mr Röpke explained, is the need for effective and open dialogue at all levels: it is the key element needed to build consensus for the management of change. According to him, countries that developed social partnerships and effective social systems are among the most successful, resilient, and competitive in the world, and yet there are many, both inside and outside Europe, where social dialogue is weak or even non-existent. A strong dialogue between social partners promoted by national governments in the spirit of mutual respect is essential, he said.

Governments for Mr Röpke have thus a responsibility to promote and facilitate social dialogue while respecting the autonomy of social partners. All Member States in his view should establish the frameworks that are needed in order to carry out collective bargaining and worker's participation in the workplace, or workplace democracy, as key ingredients that must be strengthened.

Collective bargaining should be promoted at all appropriate levels, with Mr Röpke indicating that the EESC has already recommended the collection of data on coverage throughout Europe through specific indicators within the European Semester, while fully respecting national practices and industrial relation systems. According to him, this would be an important step in identifying the need for action in different Member States.

Furthermore, governments also have an important role for him with regards to governance and for providing the right political environment and legal framework that would allow trade unions to operate freely and independently so that workers can be able to exercise their right to freedom of association.

Mr Röpke explained that there are already examples of national trade unions that have already shown to be capable of adapting to this new world, looking at organising non-standard workers and self-employed. In this instance, he mentioned an agreement reached in September 2018 by a Danish trade union for a 12-month pilot collective agreement with a website platform providing cleaning services for 1.700 customers across Denmark.

At European level, he noted that European social partners in their 6th Work Programme for 2019-2021 have also committed to negotiate an agreement on digitalisation that will consider issues such as the acquisition of digital skills, work and safety, and working conditions. Furthermore, he noted that the change of the world of work and the question of governance touches upon the issue of mobility, because migrant workers, posted workers, cross-border operating companies are growing, which requires appropriate rules at all levels.

When the EU is capable of enforcing traffic penalties across borders, then it is time to also enforce sanctions against companies which do not pay the same wage in the same place for

the same work to their workers, he said, expressing his hopes that the future European Labour Authority will be able to remedy that.

José María Lacasa, President of the Confederation of Employers and Industries of Spain, and Chair of the Social Affairs Committee, BusinessEurope, underlined that what is most important for him to bear in mind when dealing with these problems is that it all has to do with training skills as a basic point to cope with the challenges of digitalisation.

Secondly, he stated that there is a need to guarantee that employment markets have the flexibility and security built in them for the benefit of both employers and employees. In his view, the ILO Conference should guarantee two important objectives: the first, is to underscore the values and principles that should be at the heart of its work, given that this is a new world with new conditions; secondly, that the Conference should agree on a clear roadmap with clear priorities.

Additionally, Mr Lacasa stressed that the ILO's work needs to be seen in conjunction with the G8 talks on the development of businesses, investment, economic growth, and decent work, so as to have broad international reference points on which to build this work in Europe. Furthermore, he noted that there is unanimous support in the SDGs with their clear objectives and indicators, while recalling that in the 2019-2021 Work Programme, social partners in Europe have included negotiations on an agreement on the impact of digitalisation on employment and working conditions. For him, this was a risky decision, because social partners are stepping into an entirely new world from the traditional ones that both sides of the industry were used to.

For this reason, he suggested that, before negotiations start in June, a fact-finding seminar should be established in order to get the 'pulse' of the real world. Instead of over-regulating, there should also be mechanisms in Mr Lacasa's view to exchange experience and benchmarks between countries and sectors so as to create practical tools that will help SMEs, workers, and young people needing a job.

In terms of governance, he stressed that the problem always lies in implementation. In addition to this, in many Member States there is a plethora of social regulation that narrows the scope for proper social dialogue and leaves less room for manoeuvre, which is the best way to deal with a changing world, he concluded.

Carina Autengruber, President, European Youth Forum, underlined how important it is to have youth representation in these discussions since it will be young people that will have to live in the changing situation and experience it directly. One of the most important aspects for her was to look at all these issues in a broader perspective, not just at technological advancements, but also at the other mega-trends that the world is facing, with demographic changes and climate change in particular. The European Semester, she suggested, could be a good way for Member States to follow-up on these mega-trends and find solutions in this regard as well.

The second aspect that she wanted to highlight is that a siloed approach will not work, particularly within the European Commission and at government level. Youth organisations

must also be involved, with Ms Autengruber stressing that education needs to prepare young people with a strong focus on employability but also the necessity to provide the ability of critical thinking that robots cannot replace. Furthermore, questions need to be asked as to why young people are finding it difficult to access public employment, or why they are not becoming members of trade unions, or why they decide to go into certain professions and not others.

Given that there are many young people between 18-34 currently working in the platform economy and atypical work, Ms Autengruber emphasised that their social rights need to be ensured, since often they are facing 0-contract hours with no social protection, no contributions to pension systems, and other problems that may even amplify with future developments of the labour market. That is why she called for legislation to be set in place that ensures that social protection mechanisms are accessible to young people.

At the same time, she suggested to look at legislation that would introduce new ways to make social protection more sustainable, such as a robot tax due to increasing automation. Lastly, Ms Autengruber wanted to stress the need to work for both European solutions and potentially global solutions while focusing on mega-trends for holistic solutions in place so that the future labour market becomes more accessible to young people, in a greener economy, where the rights of all people are guaranteed.

Fons Leroy, Chair, European Public Employment Services Network, emphasised that these challenges are not only linked to digitalisation and robotisation, but also to climate change and the demographic shift that will all have a significant impact on public employment services and their business models.

According to him, this is a transition phase in the labour market, and like in all transitions, there is a need for a conductor. The first building block that is needed for public employment services to become such a conductor is to strengthen social partners in governance structures and decision-making processes. The second building block, he explained, is to shift from traditional public employment services to career guidance support services, because there will be people on the labour market who are active but in transition, needing to stay in work according to their competence and expectations.

The third building block is a common language in the labour market, which should no longer be about occupations and diplomas, but about competences and skills. Mr Leroy highlighted that this is not just about technical occupational skills, but 21st century skills: namely critical thinking, entrepreneurial skills, STEM, communication, collaboration skills and in the case of updating the European framework, green competences. These last ones will be needed in his view in order to improve the circular thinking and circular acting of Europe's populations to ensure that the challenges of climate change are faced properly.

Mr Leroy suggested that career guidance policies should be combined with training and education policies. Regarding business model, with the third cycle on bench-learning supported by the Commission, the time is mature in his view to talk about public employment services on different aspects: HR management, activation policies, partnerships, but also to change management, along what he called as the 'Triple A: Ability, Agility, and Accountability'.

Agility because in a changing world, agile solutions are needed, and the only way to provide it, according to Mr Leroy, is to have broad partnerships through proper stakeholder management. In terms of labour market implementation, he noted that new concepts are being introduced, such as the principle of co-design and co-creation of policies, actions, and measures that can increase the agility while including different partners in a holistic approach.

In terms of ability, Mr Leroy suggested that public employment services should introduce the principle of 'digital first' in relation to its clients and partners. This implies the collection of significant amounts of data so as to provide the best possible services in the future.

Q&A Session

Representative of Oxfam International, explained that Oxfam is directly involved in this debate because the Executive Director was one of the members of the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work. Oxfam, she explained, sees work as a tool to reduce inequalities, and it is its mission to promote not only more jobs, but more decent jobs, especially for the most vulnerable such as women, young people, and migrant workers. The promotion of a different work needs a new vision for business that includes cross-sectoral, multilateral cooperation and consensus. For Oxfam, the EU can be a catalyst helping to create business cases for companies so that they pay higher wages and higher taxes. Concrete measures that she proposed were to stop companies from paying dividends until workers are paid a decent wage, or make a company publish and reduce the pay ratio between executives and workers; to promote participation by ensuring that workers have a seat at the table. According to her, alternative ways of doing business already exist, such as social enterprises, employee-ownership of companies, innovative new cooperatives and hybrid models that can give much power and value to work in communities. Lastly, Oxfam believes that decent work is part of the broader picture that includes fair taxation and universal social protection for all. Making companies pay their taxes, particularly in the digital economy, is a way to empower people and take control of the digital economy and not the other way around, she said. Oxfam is thus on the frontline to tackle corporate tax avoidance because a fair distribution of taxes is not possible without correcting inequality and without mobilising domestic resources to improve social protection and decent work.

Véronique Willems, Secretary-General, SMEunited, said to have lost the Accountability in the Triple A description.

Fons Leroy, Chair, European Public Employment Services Network, replied that public employment services work with public money, meaning that there is a need to spend efficiently and effectively: firstly by increasing agility through collaborations with different partners and increasing ability through the use of data, which makes services become cheaper. As such, the way money from the government is spent is also an issue of accountability and transparency of outcome, he concluded.

Representative of Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) noted that the issue of migration was not so present in the discussions so far, even though labour migration is one of the key ways for addressing labour shortages in key sectors across Europe. She suggested that solutions need to be put forward by looking at whether

admission schemes are in place and that they are fit for purpose, promoting decent work for migrant workers, where labour standards are in place that can be enforced. In PICUM's analysis, all these things are not yet the case, and said to be keen to work with all relevant actors to put in place such measures. Furthermore, she indicated that Ministers of Labour should also include organisations representing migrant workers as partners, even though they are not considered traditional social partners in such dialogues.

Carina Autengruber, President, European Youth Forum, noted that when it comes to equal pay, many Member States have inserted minimum legal pay but with different age categories, becoming legal barriers for equal pay, even if young people do not spend less on food or rent. This is the same case as migrants, she said, who are often paid less. Ms Autengruber suggested that the issue of transparency in the labour market needs to become central, especially due to the platform economy.

Oliver Röpke, Head of the Brussels Office, Austrian Trade Union Federation and President of the EESC Workers' Group, said to fully agree that there can be no age discrimination and stressed that many things can be done at national level as well, instead of always blaming Europe. He described the European Pillar of Social Rights as a very positive development that represents a compass and a commitment for the future for more upward social convergence. When it comes to labour migration, he linked it with the issue of preserving the four fundamental freedoms: in this sense, while a floor of equal rights should be foreseen and enforced cross-border, with provisions on wages, but also the necessity to avoid unfair competition through the exploitation of workers coming from countries with lower wage levels, he said.

Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Denmark, highlighted that, when discussing the enforcement, cooperation, and management of labour market in the Nordic context, social partners have a very strong role to play, which is why in his view, the European Labour Authority will be a very important tool with a strong role to play. He then explained that Denmark is a country that has 10% of its workforce constituted by EU labour, and that it works well and is actually sustaining the labour market. In his view, the European Labour Authority will have a very strong role to play when it comes to data: Denmark collects a lot of data on the unemployed, but the flipside is the risk of surveillance, affecting the privacy of individuals. In his view, there should be a limit as to how much data a public employment service can collect because it has different ethics than the private sector. The answer to this question in Denmark was to establish an Ethics Council which is going to advise the government on data issues like this.

Tindar Singh, member of the ILO Commission on the Future of Work, wanted to know what role governance has had in unemployment coming down recently. In his view, it is businesses and enterprises that have done much of the work, and that the real reason behind an unemployment decrease in both Europe and the US is ageing. He also welcomed the concept of having a new language in the labour market, but wanted to know how it can be possible to standardise skills such as creativity and social skills.

Fons Leroy, Chair, European Public Employment Services Network, replied that in his view, people will acquire skills in two ways: firstly, by the pedagogical approach through

education and training systems; and secondly, from companies investing in creating diverse people in teams that guarantees the acquisition of these skills. All the actors in his view will be needed to be involved in guaranteeing the acquisition of these skills, from formal education and training, placement officers, and companies, offer these skills. According to Mr Leroy, this is not an academical approach, but a practical one that ensures the acquired competences are visible.

Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Denmark, intervened to explain that, at least in Denmark, demographics have nothing to do with the decrease in unemployment because there have never been so many pensioners active in the labour market as they are now. People are working longer and longer, which he said is a general trend in Europe due to the fact that people stay healthier. More than demographics, is an increase in health, he said, specifying that in Denmark, there are currently more than 100.000 people still working even if they could retire instead.

Perspectives from the social partners and civil society

Ann Mettler, Head, European Political Strategy Centre, European Commission, stated that this conference is a significant milestone in the ongoing discussions on the future of work, a discussion that has been central to the Commission's agenda, she said, not only in the view of the current mandate, but because of the upcoming new institutional cycle.

She then proceeded to provide some of the key outcomes of the parallel sessions, stating firstly that across all Member States and actors, everyone seems to agree that change is on its way with a significant transformation underway. Ms Mettler underlined that the opportunities by new business models, digitalisation and circular economy are formidable, and that there is a general recognition of the particular role the EU can play in supporting these challenges and transformations, especially when it comes to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the use of the European Semester in addressing social challenges.

Furthermore, she continued, there seems to be strong clarity that innovation is key in the way people are trained throughout their lifecycle and in the social protection offered. According to her, the period ahead will be crucial and critical for the programming of the Multiannual Financial Framework and the European Social Fund+ (ESF+) regarding the way future skills policies will be funded to support transitions that will be defining in the decades ahead.

What this means, Ms Mettler explained, is conducting active labour market policies better and to improve the quality of public administrations so that they can more effectively deliver the services citizens and societies need. This will require better involvement and a closer working method between employment services, skills providers, and businesses.

Another takeaway that she wanted to highlight is that there is a consensus on strengthening a level playing field at global level; hence, the importance of multilateral institutions in today's economy for ensuring that there is no race to the bottom. In Ms Mettler's view, this requires efforts from all levels of government and all actors and civil society.

Luca Visentini, General Secretary, ETUC, welcomed the fact that the ILO has placed the future of work as the core element for the discussion for the centenary of the organisation: this is not only the major mandate for the ILO but also the major challenge in the field of labour, he said. At the same time, Mr Visentini welcomed the Commission's initiative with this conference, because it cannot be a discussion that goes on only in the framework of the ILO.

For him, this revolution that is taking place in the world of labour affects Europe primarily, which is why it should be Europe the one that manages it. ETUC believes that the reports the Commission has produced are positive and that the tools now available at the European level are particularly important: the European Pillar of Social Rights, the social scoreboard with social objectives and targets, and the European social dialogue.

The first message that he had was for European Institutions, saying that social partners need to be active and bring proposals and ideas on Commission and Parliament initiatives, the results of which have to be taken into account the moment the ILO will start its conference.

For ETUC, there are some challenges that need to be addressed not only by the ILO, but also by the next European Commission, European Parliament, and social partners in the framework of this common work. The first is that, while it is true that Europe is recovering from the crisis and employment rates are going up, the right to obtain a decent job after training and education are not completely implemented. According to Mr Visentini, the point about the quality of jobs is an emergency for the EU, which is why the mobilisation of investments should be one of the elements to discuss in the framework of the future of work.

The second element is that to make a job decent, there is a primary need for a decent wage, which according to Mr Visentini, is not the case in different Member States. The issue of filling the gaps between the East and the West, between sector, for women, and for young women especially is an emergency, and must be linked to the living costs and the productivity levels in each Member States. He underlined that it is not acceptable that, in Germany, where productivity is at 80%, the wages are down to 20%. The capacity and the autonomy of social partners to mobilise proper negotiations to address this issue in their own autonomy becomes particularly important in this respect.

He stressed that, at the moment, there is a large number of atypical workers, such as freelancers, self-employed workers who do not have access to collective bargaining, mainly because they are not considered by law as workers, regardless of the fact that they are not protected, and do not have any influence in determining their income and working conditions. As such, Mr Visentini stated that addressing the problem in the EU linked to the non-standard work developments taking place in the labour market becomes a fundamental emergency.

Another point that he wanted to make is that there is a need to address the transition that is happening due to climate change, digitalisation, and automation, since these transformations are having a serious impact on the labour market. According to him, this is not about protecting existing jobs, but about helping people have a good transition from one job to another, with clear alternatives, investments in training, and to ensure that people are given an opportunity without leaving anyone behind.

To do all these things, what is needed is policy, legislation, regulation, and action from different actors. Lastly, Mr Visentini pointed towards the need for equal treatment, since there are millions of people, either coming to the EU as migrants or refugees or moving across borders within the Single Market that are often not ensured equal treatment in the workplace or society. Combating this social wage dumping is essential in order to create and design a fair future of work for everybody, he said. That is why he suggested that these elements should be framed in an EU strategy so as to also help global institutions in designing a better work for everybody.

Markus Beyrer, Director General, BusinessEurope, indicated that Europe is the best place to live, work and do business, as it was expressed in BusinessEurope's ambition for Europe 2030. The social dimension is an integral part of this, but based on economic success in order to make it sustainable, he said.

According to Mr Beyrer, the creation of jobs is slowing down, primarily because of global reasons such as trade tensions, protectionism, Brexit, but also internal reasons relating to the lack of management and reforms that are necessary. In his view, the European Semester is the right tool to get social reforms done based on increasing growth and competitiveness.

He then explained that in Asia or the US, they think that Europe is nice and they would love to have as many bank holidays as Europeans do; but many of them do not believe this is sustainable. Mr Beyrer said to disagree, but there is a need to prove it in order to become a role model in the world.

For him, there is a need to embrace flexible approaches with a wide range of employment reforms and by achieving the best possible digital transformation. For this reason, the Director General said to believe that social partners need to be very much engaged and focused on this work through their work programmes.

Lastly, Mr Beyrer mentioned that skills shortages are not only linked to digital, but are a real bottleneck; companies in this respect are ready to train and to invest in lifelong learning, but the framework needs to improve through a social dialogue at all levels and walking the talk through a social policy that is empowering people and facilitating the creation of jobs.

Ann Mettler, Head, European Political Strategy Centre, European Commission, noted that this was one of the issues that came up in the previous session, namely that for so long these kinds of debates have been focused on unemployment, but that now there is more talk about skills mismatches and gaps.

Valeria Ronzitti, General-Secretary, European Centre for Employers and Enterprises Providing Public Services (CEEP), wanted to bring attention to another element that will become important in this context, namely the European elections, since work and employability are one of the things that are of most interest to European citizens, the ones who are going to vote in a few weeks. A key word summing up the conference so far in her view is employability, she said, throughout the cycle of a person's career.

From CEEP's point of view, there are three main elements relating to employability: the first is the need to accompany enterprises towards finding new sustainable working models.

Promoting skills, up-skilling and re-skilling become especially important, since anticipating change will mean changing the way services are provided. Enterprises will be faced with decarbonisation and sustainable finance in a way that public administrations will need to provide new models.

The main message is that there is a need for an infrastructure that can deliver innovation and upward convergence, as well as to reduce inequalities between Member States and regions. This can only be achieved, according to Ms Ronzitti, through the cooperation of social partners, Member States, regional, and local authorities.

Veronique Willems, Secretary-General, SMEUnited, stated that when people refer to employability they should go forward, because there needs to be acceptance of the fact that entrepreneurs provide their own jobs and have to ensure their own employability. Within the group of SMEs, she explained, those who are developing the future of work and adapting to it have also adapted to the transition towards a digital world.

In such a fast-changing world, Ms Willems underlined, the basis is the education system and ensuring that they can adapt as well to this new situation. In her view, what is most important is to teach people how to learn in order to handle new situations, which she described as entrepreneurial skills: seeing opportunities, grabbing them, and executing a plan in order to do so.

On the challenges, Ms Willems indicated that they are unstoppable: digitalisation, climate change, e-commerce, these all have to be seen as opportunities for her, which is why institutions need to provide support to those who want to tackle these transitions. That is why another important element for Ms Willems is ensuring that there is fairness for the self-employed in those new systems, respecting diversity, and having them in mind also at the European level.

Catherine Naughton, Vice-President, Social Platform, noted that several important trends have been addressed during the conference that will have a major impact on the future of societies: globalisation, technological change, digitalisation, and migration. These developments can contribute to growing inequalities and threatening the social protection systems, she said, which is why it is crucial to limit their negative consequences.

What this requires, according to her, is a paradigm shift towards a more conclusive model of growth, quality, sustainability, and the protection of the environment. Ms Naughton then wanted to present some conditions that Social Platform has identified that can lead to a positive paradigm shift: firstly, she mentioned that the European Pillar of Social Rights is a good framework to base this on in the coming years. Measures must include quality and sustainable employment; adequate minimum wages to protect people in employment; ending insecure contracts; guaranteeing social security; decent working conditions for people in atypical forms of work; arrangements for work-life balance; reasonable accommodations and adjustments for people with disabilities and chronic illnesses; investments to ensure professional progression for all people; adequate income support for the working and non-working populations; minimum

income schemes; pensions; child and disability benefits; and overall, a stronger connection between employment and social inclusion to the social welfare system.

For all these things, she underlined, adequate social investment is needed together with an ambitious implementation of the principles contained in the European Pillar. That is why she called for more EU legislation in these fields to be properly implemented and a continued strengthening of the social dimension of the Semester Process. Ms Naughton also stressed the need to shift towards people-centred policies through the relevant funds so that Europeans feel the benefits, that they are being invested in, particularly in their employment and social protection.

She suggested that budgetary flexibility through the Sustainability and Growth Pact do not differentiate enough between services and expenditures. According to her, these rules fail to take into account social investments and limit Member States, who instead need to commit by reforming the tax systems in view of the wealth that escapes taxation. Given the increasingly important role of platforms in the economy, these should also be adequately taxed.

Lastly on the issue of social dialogue, Ms Naughton wanted to draw attention to the importance of civic dialogue at both EU and national level to ensure that people are involved in all the decisions that are going to affect them.

Q&A Session

Representative of the European Disability Forum wanted to express satisfaction for having had the opportunity to participate in this conference, but wanted to express a slight dissatisfaction due to the low attention given to the problems of persons with disabilities in the general discussions and presentations. However, he underlined that this is not the attitude of the European Union, of the Commission, or of the Parliament, since the EU has ratified the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, showcasing commitment also in the field of employment. For the European Disability Forum, there is more that needs to be done because persons with disabilities are still in a difficult situation concerning employment, while the issues that have been presented during the conference have been a bit optimistic. The crisis is not over in his view, and Member States need to do a better and stronger job in improving employment and the social security of persons with disabilities.

Official from the European Commission said to have been intrigued by the last intervention that called for an increased strengthening of civic dialogue, while others have talked about social dialogue. He then asked whether the panellist could clarify what the difference in her view is between civic and social dialogue

Ruth, Deputy Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Thyssen, indicated that the current situation is that there are people in work and SMEs that are not represented in the normal social dialogue and through established social partners. She thus asked what could be done to increase their representation.

Catherine Naughton, Vice-President, Social Platform, stated that social dialogue might be better for employers and employees, for businesses and unions, while civic dialogue includes civil society organisations and social platforms or NGOs working in the social field.

Luca Visentini, General Secretary, ETUC, noted that social dialogue is defined in the Treaties, and that every official in the Commission should know that. The shape and the deliverables of the social dialogue, however, have been changing over time: it is no longer only a bilateral dialogue delivering agreements and asking for transforming agreements into law, according to him, but they are now shaping the policy of the EU. When it comes to civic dialogue, he stated that it has often been neglected, but there is a need to seek ways to involve other organisations in a meaningful dialogue so long as it reaches the results it is established for. In his view, it is only in the traditional areas of the labour market that new types of jobs or unprotected jobs are experienced, because they are not considered as workers by the law, which means it is impossible for them to join trade unions or employers' organisations for proper collective bargaining. There is a clash in most of national labour law frameworks between labour law and competition law. Some analysis for Mr Visentini is required in order to seek representation for the self-employed people, distinguishing between self-employed entrepreneur and worker.

Markus Beyrer, Director General, BusinessEurope, indicated that indeed, there are different forms of self-employment, which does not make the debate easy, but the important conclusion is that everyone in some form be covered. For Mr Beyrer, there should be no holes in the social security system, but at the same time, the recognition that there is not a one-size-fits-all model. That is why he called for a precise debate in order to not have inappropriate holes in coverage. When it comes to civic dialogue and social dialogue, he said that both are needed but there is a need to resolve the classical debate between effectiveness and inclusiveness.

Ann Mettler, Head, European Political Strategy Centre, European Commission, noted that a lot of these topics were supposed to be addressed through the European Pillar of Social Rights, which does recognise different categories.

Valeria Ronzitti, General-Secretary, European Centre for Employers and Enterprises Providing Public Services (CEEP), said that the difference between social dialogue and civic dialogue is in the deliverables: employers and workers have a mandate to collective bargaining, but should not be mixed with civic dialogue, since "the more you are, the better it is" is not true, she said, since there are different mandates and different deliverables. The questions regarding the inclusion of self-employed is a demonstration in her view that legislation alone is not enough. She suggested that negotiations should start on a Directive on predictable working conditions, specifying that a Directive will not be enough, since there is a need to be innovative also in the way that trade unions are covered.

Veronique Willems, Secretary-General, SMEUnited, said to be of view that if a worker is not a worker, then he is a self-employed entrepreneur. Trade unions do not have to be involved in collective bargaining, they need a different approach to protection, she said, recalling that in the 1970s and 1980s, there was a fight to protect the rights of self-employed who were franchises of large supermarkets. The platform-to-business regulation is also an example, in

her view, of how to ensure that self-employed who might not have an equal market power towards big platforms can at least get their position and rights protected. What is needed is to discuss with all the freelancers and self-employed that have appeared in the last few years to find out what their specific needs are and that these are taken into account in the representation of their interests.

Ann Mettler, Head, European Political Strategy Centre, European Commission, stated that there are two overriding global trends: digitalisation and decarbonisation. From the discussions so far, Ms Mettler underlined that the labour market went from a buyers' market to a sellers' market, much more focused on skill shortages and skill mismatches. She thus asked the panellists what needs to be innovated considering the big issues to come, from migration, demography, a downturn in a volatile world, trade wars, Brexit, and a lot of volatility.

Markus Beyrer, Director General, BusinessEurope, said to believe in benchmarks, and that Europe needs to benchmark itself to the world, especially in the light of demographic change. There is also a need in his view to benchmark internally as well, since there are many things that can be learned from those who do better.

Valeria Ronzitti, General-Secretary, European Centre for Employers and Enterprises Providing Public Services (CEEP), talked about self-confidence, saying that social partners can shape the labour market through bargaining.

Luca Visentini, General Secretary, ETUC, underlined that if there is to be innovation in social dialogue, there is a need to be open-minded and be able to consider the reasons of others in order to avoid to stick to old definitions. Reality is evolving, despite the definitions, making it even difficult to define what an entrepreneur is, he concluded.

Veronique Willems, Secretary-General, SMEunited, suggested to work more on entrepreneurial skills such as creativity, planning, and seeing new opportunities, since that is the main challenge.

Catherine Naughton, Vice-President, Social Platform, indicated that she does not want to propose innovation because there are already the EU Treaties, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Agenda 2030, and the Human Rights Convention. What needs to happen is to make all these promises reality and promote more democratic and transparent societies in Europe by creating more inclusion and accessibility.

Concluding address: looking ahead

Valdis Dombrovskis, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, European Commission, recalled that ten years ago, 67% of Europeans worked in the services sector and 36 million Europeans worked part time; today, this has risen to 72% and 41 million respectively, while over the same period, the number of workers on temporary contracts has increased by nearly 2 million.

In terms of the near future, Mr Dombrovskis underlined that some jobs will be lost, since nearly 1 in 10 jobs could be fully replaced by automation, but at the same time, new jobs will be created. In order to avoid the situation of creating "winners" and "losers", what is necessary is to ensure that social models are fit for purpose.

According to him, this is being done through the European Pillar of Social Rights, providing a framework for future-proofed policies and institutions at EU and national level. He also spoke about how the European recovery is improving public finances and investments, with employment at record levels, but warned that resilience and sustainability of public budgets especially merit more attention than ever before.

The three themes that the Vice-President wanted to highlight from the conference was adaptability, fairness, and cooperation, referring specifically to education, training, and life-long learning, the Skills Agenda, the growing need to cover groups of self-employed workers, job mobility, and the new Council Recommendation on Access to Social Protection, agreed in December.

In terms of tackling the issue of how workers can combine their professional and private lives, Mr Dombrovskis pointed towards the Work Life Balance Initiative, the Directive that will improve working parents' and carers' conditions, and lead to a higher employment rate for women, better earnings and better career progression. Furthermore, the Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions that will enhance the rights of workers, regardless of their contract type, therefore also protecting the most vulnerable ones, he said.

His next point addressed was that on taxation, stressing that the proposed European Social Fund Plus, with up to €101 billion in funding, should help us address EU social challenges of today and tomorrow, including those arising from new technology such as automation and the related new forms of work.

When it comes to economic disparities among Member States, the key for the Vice-President is in upward convergence by enhancing economic and social cohesion across the EU, something that according to him, is reflected in the proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

One important element that he wanted to stress is the need to have a well-functioning social dialogue, something the European Commission has put great emphasis on. Effective policymaking relies on inputs from social partners not only to help identify solutions, but also to implement them. We need to ensure social dialogue remains relevant and effective in this, the new reality.