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A window
of opportunity



Social Europe

EDITORIAL



This year, the EU economic governance process – known as the European Semester – is taking place in a new political and economic context. Political: It is the first European Semester since the new Commission took office on 1 November 2014. Job creation, economic growth, social fairness and democratic change: such is the motto of the new European Commission. Economic: it appears that the thick of the economic crisis is over. The reforms called for by the previous European Semester exercises are underway in most EU countries. The focus of attention is now shifting to the effective implementation of those reforms, at national and local level, and to addressing the legacy of the crisis: long term unemployment and youth unemployment.

“Tackling the crisis legacy”

In February 2015, the European Commission proposed to accelerate the implementation of the EU Youth Guarantee, in particular for young people neither in employment, education or training: it proposed to make € 1 billion available already in 2015 under the Youth Employment Initiative by increasing the pre-financing rate in its 2015 budget allocation from 1-1.5% to up to 30%. And later in the year, the Commission will propose a package of measures designed specifically to help the long-term unemployed back into the labour market. Human capital, as the economists say, is the EU's key asset. At a time when the EU workforce is shrinking and technological change is accelerating, social investment is crucial to increase competitiveness in the EU. Only a more competitive workforce will ensure a sustainable exit from the economic crisis and allow the EU to address the demographic and technological challenges facing it.

Improving and deepening EU economic governance requires a comprehensive vision which integrates multiple policy areas and levels of governance. The competitive social market economy which the new Commission is calling for encapsulates this vision. It requires governments and stakeholders to take ownership of the EU economic governance process and to work in partnership right through to ground level in order to make it work. On 5 March, the Commission brought together the leaders of both European and national employers' and workers' organisations to give a new start to social dialogue, thirty years after it was first launched by the then Commission President, Jacques Delors. At the time, the aim was to strengthen the European social partner's role in legislating on social issues to create the Single Market. Today, the aim is to strengthen their role in a complex, multi-level and cross-policy cooperation process – the European Semester – in much more difficult times.

Michel Servoz

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

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NEWS IN BRIEF

5 March 2015: New start for social dialogue

At a High-Level Conference on “A New Start for Social Dialogue” organised by the European Commission in Brussels, European Commissioner Marianne Thyssen, responsible for Employment, Social affairs, Skills and Labour mobility, said that “there cannot be a social market economy without a well-functioning social dialogue (...) Evidence shows that countries with strong social dialogue institutions are among the EU’s best performing and most competitive economies, with a better and more resilient social situation (...) We are committed to enabling the social partners to contribute to the cornerstones of the EU policy agenda” (see article page 10).



Re-launch: A high-level event was organised by the European Commission with the social partners.

3 March: Europe 2020 strategy still valid

The Commission has adopted a Communication on the results of the public consultation on the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, which was adopted in 2010. Europe 2020 objectives and priorities remain meaningful and serve as a compass for policy action to promote jobs and growth at EU and national level. Better ownership and involvement on the ground would serve the

strategy’s delivery. The Broad Economic Policy Guidelines and Employment Guidelines, which underpin the Europe 2020 strategy, have been adapted to the new approach to economic policy making: a coordinated boost to investment, renewed commitment to structural reform in important areas such as product and labour markets, and exercising fiscal responsibility.

12 February: Tying the social and economic sides



Hard hit: The crisis has disproportionately affected the weakest in our society, including ethnic minorities.

Speaking at the Council of Europe conference on the future of the protection of social rights in Europe, Commissioner Thyssen said that “the crisis has disproportionately affected the weakest in our society: the low skilled, people with a migration background, women, ethnic minorities, the disabled... We must address the root cause of the problem by creating sustainable growth and jobs, equipping people with the skills they need, promoting inclusive labour markets and high standards of social protection. (...) The Juncker Commission is determined to tie the social into the economic side of our social market economy to balance economic freedoms and social rights fairly. Economic growth can only be sustainable if it is truly inclusive.”

NEWS IN BRIEF

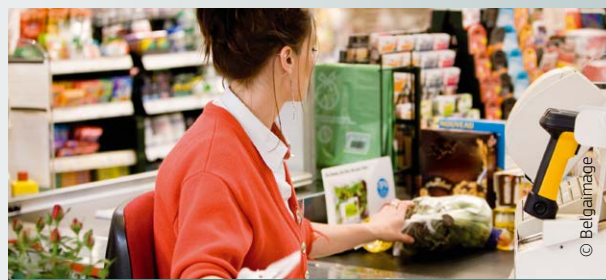
4 February: € 1 billion for youth employment

The European Commission proposed to make 1 billion euro from the Youth Employment Initiative available this year still. This will increase by up to 30 times the pre-financing Member States receive to boost youth

employment – reaching up to 650 000 young people and helping them get into work faster. Today more than one young person out of five on the labour market cannot find a job (see article page 8).

19 January: Avoiding a lost generation

At a seminar on youth employment organised by the Notre Europe-Jacques Delors Institute, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the European Economic and Social Committee, Commissioner Thyssen said that “high levels of unemployment co-exist with 2 million unfilled vacancies, an indicator that some people lack the right skills or the mobility to take up available jobs. EU growth is further hampered by the increasing numbers of people who are working below their potential. These people are often excluded from opportunities to upgrade their skills. Labour markets have to be more efficient but also more inclusive and fairer”.



Skills: More and more people are working below their true potential with no possibility to upgrade their skills.

15 January: Resilience to the crisis

Countries providing high quality jobs and effective social protection as well as investment in human capital have proved to be more resilient to the economic crisis. This is one of the main findings of the 2014 *Employment and Social Developments in Europe Review*, which looks back at the

consequences of the recession. It also stresses the need to invest in the formation and maintenance of the right skills in Europe's workforce to support productivity, as well as the challenge of restoring convergence among Member States (see article page 18).

9 January: European Year for Development



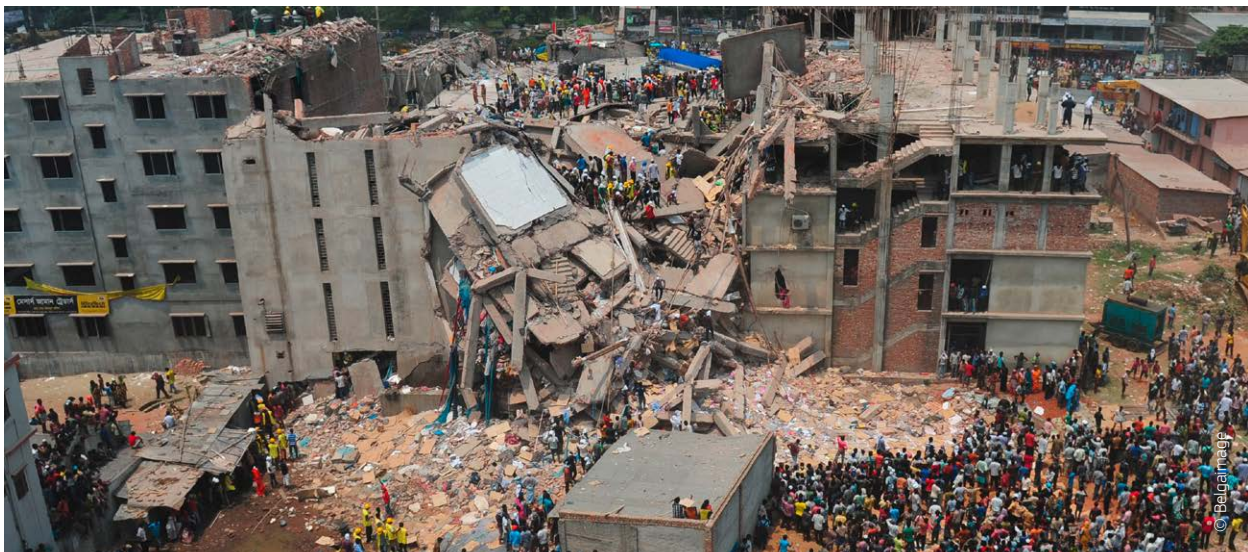
No masks: 2015 is the deadline for putting in place the Sustainable Development Goals.

Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker launched the first European Year of Development in Riga, Latvia. 2015 is set to be a special year for development, as it is the deadline for meeting the Millennium Development Goals and for the next set of goals – the Sustainable Development Goals – to be put in place. President Juncker said: “One of my priorities for this Commission is to strengthen Europe as a global actor. Europe can only be a global actor if Europeans understand how the role of the European Union and its Member States benefits us all in our interdependent world. The European Year will seek to foster the direct engagement of our citizens” (see article page 6).

INTERNATIONAL

European Year for Development 2015

Garment sector labour rights and health and safety in the spotlight



Wake-up call: The collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Savar, Bangladesh, revealed to many Europeans how their clothes were made.

More than 80% of EU citizens believe that development aid is important, and 60% actually think the EU – already the biggest development aid donor in the world – should be giving even more. Two-thirds believe that tackling poverty in developing countries should be one of the EU's main priorities. Yet 50% say they know nothing about where EU aid goes, according to a Eurobarometer opinion poll carried out in 2013.

On 9 January 2015, the EU launched the European Year for Development (EYD 2015), the first ever to focus on external relations. It seeks to explain to European citizens how EU development aid works and to demonstrate that it makes a real and lasting difference. And it shows taxpayers how their money is being used to empower people in partner countries and highlights work in the field.

Indeed, the traditional donor-recipient relationship is giving way to a world of cooperation, mutual responsibility and mutual interest.

Within the EU countries, EYD 2015 features a wide range of creative opportunities for getting involved, ranging from art and development projects to activities with schools and universities and large-scale sporting events (see the EYD 2015 website address at the end of this article).

Rana Plaza tragedy

Each month of the year is dedicated to a special theme (see box page 7): after Europe's position in the world (January), education (February) and gender issues (March), April is the month of health.

On 24 April 2013, 1 129 people died and approximately 2 515 were injured when an eight-story commercial building, the Rana Plaza, collapsed in Savar, a sub-district in the Greater Dhaka Area, the capital of Bangladesh. Many of them worked in a number of garment factories which manufactured apparel for brands based in Europe and the United States.



Demonstrating for a wage increase: Towards a permanent garment sector stakeholders' platform covering all developing countries.

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The deadliest garment-factory accident in history was a wake-up call. It helped European citizens become aware of the fact that much of the garment production imported by EU countries is not produced according to "Western" social and health and safety standards.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, Bangladesh, the EU, the International Labour Organisation and the United States of America signed a pact on ways to improve labour rights and factory safety in the ready-made garment and knitwear industry in Bangladesh.

One of the outcomes of EYD 2015 could be a permanent platform bringing together all the relevant stakeholders – governments, trade unions, international organisations, civil society and the private sector – of all developing countries where garments are produced and that EU countries import: an "EU flagship initiative on responsible management of the supply chain in the garment sector".

"The Rana Plaza tragedy could happen again in any developing country", Klaus Rudischhauser, Deputy Director-General of the European Commission's Development department, explains. "We therefore need to act in a preventive way and improve working conditions in those countries. This will contribute to their development and promote the "decent job" agenda of the International Labour Organisation (see *Social Agenda* n°30). Creating such a multi-stakeholder platform could be one of the main results of the European year, together with raising citizens' awareness of development issues. The European model is one of social inclusion. It would be cynical to provide development aid on one hand and exploit developing countries on the other".

Many deadlines

The idea of having a European Year for Development was first floated in 2011 by the European Economic and Social Committee. It was picked up by the European Parliament and by EU countries, especially those which joined the EU most recently (such as Latvia which is presently holding the presidency of the EU Council of Ministers) where, for historical reasons, public opinion is less aware of the EU's development-cooperation policy.

It is no coincidence that the project materialised in 2015, a crucial year for development-cooperation policy.

Indeed, 2015 also happens to be the year in which the Millennium Development Goals, that the world agreed to reach in 2000, expire and have to be replaced by a new global framework for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

And in December 2015, the 196 parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will come together in Paris to decide on the new international climate regime that will enter into force in 2020, succeeding the Kyoto Protocol.

European Year website directly available in the on-line version of *Social Agenda*:

<https://europa.eu/eyd2015/en>

Thematic months

The European Year for Development is structured in thematic months. Europe in the world, education and gender equality are already behind us. Up and coming are: health (April); peace and security (May); sustainable green growth, decent jobs, businesses (June), children and youth (July), humanitarian aid (August), demography and migration (September), food security (October), sustainable development and climate action (November) and human rights and governance (December).

For stakeholders involved in development policy, the EU Development Days, on 3-4 June 2015, will have a special flavour this year. It will be the biggest European Year event organised in Brussels. But the main thrust of the Year is to get across to the public at large right across the European Union.

Social Agenda will come back on specific aspects of the European year for Development 2015 in forthcoming issues.

EU CO-FUNDING

Bulk of investment programmes adopted

Employment and social inclusion investments get going for the new budgetary period



Focus of funding: Homeless and jobless people come to a municipal soup in Athens, February 2015.

Significant progress has been achieved to launch concrete investments in the Member States through the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) for the programming period 2014-2020. Of the 187 ESF programmes presented by EU countries, 150 had been adopted by the European Commission by the time of printing.

For Greece, for example, the Commission adopted three national programmes with a total volume of over € 15 billion from the ESF. These programmes are reinforced by 13 tailored strategic regional programmes based on proposals from the regions themselves, in which ESF funding of around € 800 million will play a crucial role.

Social inclusion

ESF funding in Greece will focus on promoting social inclusion, combatting poverty and creating sustainable, high-quality employment. It will also support furthering equal opportunities and integrating marginalised communities, facilitating access to quality healthcare and social services and promoting social entrepreneurship.

In the Attica region, jobs and growth will benefit from € 233.7 million of ESF funding which will promote skills and social inclusion and combat poverty and discrimination. It will support long-term unemployed people, disadvantaged and marginalised groups and social enterprises. More innovation, information and communications technology (ICT) and greater support for small and medium-size enterprises will create 2 500 full-time jobs and increase private-sector spending on research- development and innovation.

In Crete, the ESF will provide € 58.2 million of the overall € 434.8 to be invested in this region. Improvements in the education system and health and social infrastructures will support social inclusion, improve employment and access to health care, combat discrimination and create social enterprises.

Youth priority

In the EU at large, due to the extremely worrying situation of youth unemployment, a strong priority has been given to the programmes which have a Youth Employment Initiative component (YEI, see box). So far, 32 out of the 34 such programmes presented by the EU Member States have been adopted.



On 15 December 2014, for instance, the Commission adopted the Spanish programme specifically dedicated to the YEI, amounting up to € 2.8 billion, including € 2.4 billion of EU co-funding. Beneficiaries in all Spanish regions will be offered a personalised integrated pathway through measures that will include second chance programmes, dual vocational training programmes, trainings to obtain a professional certificate, national and transnational mobility programmes, entrepreneurship support measures, traineeships or hiring subsidies to increase indefinite contracts.

On 26 February, the European Commission had adopted all the Operational Programmes implementing the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD, see *Social Agenda* n°38), totalling € 3.8 billion in non-financial assistance to those most in need.

FEAD can co-fund material non-financial assistance, such as food, clothing and other essential goods for personal use (shoes, soap and shampoo), or non-material, such as actions that encourage social integration. It offers a lot of flexibility to EU countries, who can choose the type of assistance they wish to provide and their preferred model for procuring and distributing food and goods.

Large families

For example, Poland will receive € 473.36 million in current prices, complemented with € 83.5 million from national resources, to support the provision of food assistance to people at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Particular attention will be paid to large families and homeless people. Funding is also planned for accompanying measures, such as economic education and educational programmes promoting the principles of healthy nutrition and counteracting wasting food.

Sweden for its part will receive € 7.8 million, complemented with 1.2 million from national resources. It will support socially excluded people, in particular non-economically active citizens of other EU countries (or from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) staying in Sweden temporarily and without the

right to assistance from the social services. The fund will also facilitate activities to promote their knowledge of Swedish society, as well as health and prevention of illness.

More information directly accessible in the on-line version of *Social Agenda*:

On the ESF:

<http://ec.europa.eu/esf/home.jsp>

On youth employment:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1036&langId=en>

On FEAD:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1089>

Boosting youth employment projects

In order to boost the implementation of measures in those regions hardest hit by youth unemployment, the European Commission proposed on 4 February 2015 to make € 1 billion from the Youth Employment initiative (YEI) available already in 2015 by increasing the pre-financing rate in its 2015 budget allocation from 1-1.5% to up to 30%. This measure would reach out to between 350 000 and 650 000 NEETs, in contrast with between just 14 000 and 22 000 at present.

In February 2013, the EU Member States agreed on the creation of the YEI to focus EU funding on regions experiencing youth unemployment rates above 25% and on young people neither in employment, education or training (NEETs). The YEI also supports the Youth Guarantee, agreed to in April 2013, to ensure that all young people up to age 25 receive a good-quality offer for a job, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE

A window of opportunity

The social partners have a crucial role to play in improving the design and implementation of EU economic governance measures



In 1985, European Commission President Jacques Delors shrugged off years of “eurosclerosis” and set European sights on creating a single area for the free circulation of goods, services, capital but also people, by 1992.

This required a massive acceleration of the EU integration process and he made sure that the trade unions and employers’ organisations – the social partners – would be part of that process.

He therefore launched the EU social dialogue as we know it today at a conference in Val Duchesse, in the suburbs of Brussels. Since then, successive treaties have given the EU-level social partners a fundamental role in developing social legislation (see box page 13).

Thirty years later, on 5 March 2015, the Commission organised a high-level conference bringing together leaders of both European and national employers’ and workers’ organisations, Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the EU Council of Ministers – to reconnect with the spirit of Val Duchesse and give “a new start to social dialogue”.

Together with Commission representatives, the social partners debated on how to get more involved in the economic governance process of the European Semester, strengthen industrial relations and capacity-building at national level, anticipate skills, education and training needs and exploit the full potential of the digital single market. They also discussed the EU’s macroeconomic strategy, the need for investing in growth and in quality jobs, as well as the relationship between social dialogue and better EU regulation.

At a crossroads

The context is much more complex and challenging than in 1985. Divergences have increased in a European Union composed of 28 Member States and eight years of a deep financial, economic and social crisis have precipitated millions of EU citizens into unemployment and poverty. Employers and trade unions often disagree on the causes of the crisis and therefore on its remedies – and mistrust has emerged.

Just before the 5 March event, the Commission published the 2014 edition of *Industrial Relations in Europe* (see page 28), which comes out every two years. The 2012 report had concluded that the impact of the sovereign debt crisis and the budget consolidation pursued in a wide range of EU countries had put social dialogue under strain in various ways. The 2014 edition presents new data and confirms that industrial relations in Europe continue to change. Indeed, the report finds that the crisis has accelerated and deepened the changes affecting national industrial relations systems.

The report also raises the issue of the quality of social dialogue. It acknowledges that in EU countries receiving financial stability support (Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Cyprus), the need to implement reforms very quickly often left little scope or time for consensus-building and consulting national social partners.

According to the report “the jury is still out on the shape that post-crisis social dialogue will take. Industrial relations

in Europe are at a crossroads. The challenge now is to find the right mix of continuity and change in industrial relations systems, in order to adapt to the context of EMU and to a fast-changing globalised world”.

European Semester

The crisis has forced political leaders to make up for some of the weaknesses of EU economic governance (see Special Feature, page 14 onwards). In particular, they need to further involve the European but also national social partners at each step of the governance process, as a means of strengthening people’s ownership of the process and improving effective implementation of reforms on the ground. This may not sound as concrete and stimulating as creating a single market: it is less about creating legislation and more about taking part in a complex policy coordination exercise.

A number of European Semester country-specific recommendations have touched upon wage-setting, a core component of national industrial relations. They saw decentralisation of collective bargaining as a measure to better align wages with productivity at local and firm level.

Many of the European Semester recommendations have to do with investing in the EU’s greatest asset – its people – through education, training, creating quality jobs and developing lifelong learning.



Post-crisis negotiation in Spain: The jury is still out on the shape that post-crisis social dialogue will take.



No consensus: There was little scope or time for consulting social partners in countries receiving financial stability support, such as Greece.

Employers and workers' organisations are best placed to ensure that recommendations stemming from the European Semester are better implemented, especially at local level – the key level for employment and social policy. In particular, the social partners know best how to identify and address skills mismatches and the specific needs of localities.

Since the first European Semester was launched in 2010, the social partners have been consulted at different stages of the process. At the beginning of 2015, the Commission accelerated the drafting of country reports so as to give governments and both the EU-level and national social partners more time to scrutinise them. These reports form the basis for the country-specific recommendations which the Commission puts forward at the end of May and the EU leaders adopt in July.

Competitiveness and fairness

The new European Commission, which emerged from the European elections of May 2014 and took office on 1 November of that year, has emphasised the EU's goal of developing a "competitive social market economy". It adopted a balanced "competitiveness and fairness" approach.

Well-structured social dialogue plays an important role, as it contributes to coping with complex socioeconomic issues. As stated in the latest *Industrial Relations in Europe* report, "The verdict is unambiguous: countries with strong social dialogue institutions are among the EU's best performing and

most competitive economies, with a better and more resilient social situation than most". The problem-solving potential of social dialogue is key to international competitiveness.

The Commission calls upon the social partners to get more involved in the issue of skills. Huge skill shortages coexist with unacceptably high levels of youth unemployment. "We know that 20 % of Europeans only have basic literacy skills and 25 % only basic numeracy skills", Marianne Thyssen explained when closing the 5 March event. "We also know that these kinds of basic skills are expected to suffice for only about 11 % of jobs in 2025".

Social partners can help improving transitions both from education to the labour market and between jobs. And they are instrumental in developing work-based learning, as well as shaping sectoral and national skills development policies. *Industrial Relations in Europe 2014* provides concrete examples of the social partners' contribution to help overcome the high levels of youth unemployment.

Beyond employment and social affairs *stricto sensu*, the Commission calls upon the social partners to also get more involved in issues such as the digital single market, trade, migration, transport and energy.

EU funding, such as the European Social Fund, is available for helping the social partner organisations rise to the challenge in terms of capacity building, especially in those countries where social dialogue structures are weak.

A new start

From the outset of the new Commission's mandate, its President, Jean-Claude Juncker, said he wanted to be remembered as "the President of social dialogue". Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis, in charge of the Euro and Social Dialogue, and Commissioner Marianne Thyssen, in charge of Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility (see *Social Agenda* n°39), lost no time in getting in touch with the EU social partners.

Meeting them separately on 17 November 2014, they called for a "new way of working" and "a more substantial involvement of social partners in EU governance, in line with the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the development of its social dimension".

The High-Level Conference of 5 March marked the beginning of a process to deliver tangible outcomes on priority

themes for the benefit of EU citizens. For that purpose, the social partners need to be more involved in policy and law-making. This requires a renewed partnership between the social partners – and between the social partners and the EU institutions. The Commission cannot accomplish this by itself. The social partners have a genuine opportunity to seize.

More information directly available in the on-line version of *Social Agenda*:

On the 5 March high-level event:

www.ec.europa.eu/social/socialdialogue2015

Industrial Relations in Europe 2014:

www.ec.europa.eu/social/industrialrelations2014

Thirty years of social dialogue

So far, four cross-industry social partner agreements have been implemented as EU directives: the framework agreement of December 1995 on parental leave, which was revised in 2009 to increase the minimum parental leave entitlement from three to four months per employee, with at least one month being non-transferable between parents; and a framework agreement of 2007 on part-time work, establishing the principle that part-time workers must not be treated less favourably than comparable full-time workers solely because they work part time. A similar agreement had been reached in March 1999 on fixed-term work.

Sectoral agreements have been implemented in the field of working time in different transport sectors (seafarers, civil aviation, railway, inland waterways, maritime transport) and in the hospital and healthcare sector for the prevention of sharp injuries.

EU social dialogue may also result in autonomous agreements. Four such agreements have been concluded at cross-industry level so far, on: telework (2002), stress at work (2004), harassment and violence at work (2007) and inclusive labour markets (2010).

Autonomous agreements have also been concluded at the sectoral level (e.g. the 2004 agreement on the European licence for train drivers carrying out a cross-border interoperability service) and multi-sectoral level (e.g. the 2006 agreement on workers' health protection through the good handling and use of crystalline silica and products containing it).

In addition to these agreements, social partners have adopted a wide range of joint texts to address socio-economic challenges. Most of these joint texts emanate from the 43 sectoral social dialogue committees which cover most economic sectors representing more than 75 % of the EU workforce. In June 2013, the cross-industry social partners signed a framework for action on youth employment where they committed to promote solutions to reduce youth unemployment and called for national social partners, public authorities and other stakeholders to also actively work towards that goal.

More information:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en>

SPECIAL FEATURE

EU economic policy in the making

Employment and social affairs take on more and more importance

The European Semester economic governance process 2015 is in full swing, with the European Commission due to put forward recommendations for each EU country in May – and the European Council (heads of State and government) to adopt them in June.

Over the last few months, the European Commission has adopted reviews and reports which form the analytical and statistical basis for this exercise: the *Annual Growth Survey*, which kicks-off the European Semester; the draft *Joint Employment Report* and the *Employment and Social Trends in Europe* review.

This special feature provides an overview of the wealth of data and analyses they contain, as well as an explanation of the novelties that are affecting EU economic governance this year.

A first

For this is the first European Semester exercise to take place since the new European Commission took office on

1 November 2014. The college of Commissioners now has a Vice-President specifically in charge of “the Euro and social dialogue”: Valdis Dombrovskis.

This European Semester is also the first one to take place as the thick of the financial and economic crisis appears to be over. As a result, the process is evolving, already in 2015.

In particular, the Commission has accelerated the publication of its country reports, which form the basis for the country-specific recommendations. By doing so, it leaves more time for governments and stakeholders to react and shape the future recommendations.

Today, it is less a question of introducing reforms than of making sure that they are effectively implemented right through to the local level – on the ground, where job creation, training opportunities, skills matching and social inclusion may materialise.



More time: In 2015, the European Commission has given more time to stakeholders and governments to scrutinise its economic and social analyses.



Boosting investments: The EU has launched a plan to boost investment over the next three years, including in research.

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European Semester moves up a gear

Focus shifts to national and local implementation of reforms, social investment and demand-side economics

On 28 November 2014, the European Commission published the *Annual Growth Survey* (AGS), kicking off the European Semester economic governance process for 2015 – the first to take place under the new Commission.

Only two days before, Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker had presented to the European Parliament a plan to mobilise at least € 315 billion of additional public and private investment over the next three years: An investment plan which amounts to “turning a corner, completing fiscal responsibility and structural reform with innovative investment plans and instruments”.

As part of this approach, the AGS 2015 recommends pursuing an economic and social policy based on three pillars: a boost to investment, a renewed commitment to structural reforms and the pursuit of fiscal responsibility. Collective and coordinated European, national and local efforts are needed to reverse the downward trend in investments that the EU has been witnessing since the global economic and financial crisis started.

Investments are needed to modernise welfare systems, to fund education, research and innovation and to make energy

greener and more efficient, as well as to modernise transport infrastructure and roll out a far-reaching and faster broadband.

A step forward

The 2015 AGS is a step forward: the focus is shifting, from tackling emergencies stemming from the crisis to building solid foundations for jobs and growth. The Commission calls for a deepening of the EU Single Market, in particular by removing the remaining regulatory and non-regulatory barriers across sectors such as energy, telecoms, transport and the single market for goods and services.

National governments are asked to focus on making labour markets more dynamic, tackling the high level of unemployment and ensuring the efficiency and adequacy of pension and social protection systems.

Social investment – investing in human capital – is crucial for ensuring the productivity of the EU workforce in the long run. In practice, this means helping people acquire skills through education and training, using those skills in quality jobs and further developing and adapting them through lifelong learning.

SPECIAL FEATURE

For this to happen, social investment needs to reach out to the local level and be tailored to very specific needs. This in turn can only be done in partnership with stakeholders, in particular with the social partners who know best what the needs of the labour market are and how to make labour demand and supply match.

As the focus shifts - from adopting macro-economic reforms to making them actually work on the ground as well as from supply-side to demand-side economics - ownership by all actors at all levels of governance is the key. Without such ownership, the leverage effect on which the EU Investment Plan is banking to reach the sum of €315 billion will not happen: indeed, the EU is only funding 5 % of the Plan.

Social performance

Together with the AGS 2015, the European Commission adopted the *Joint Employment Report* which presents an

overview of reforms and measures introduced by the EU countries over the last 12 months, to improve their employment and social performance.

The Report contains the second edition of the scoreboard of key employment and social indicators: unemployment in general, youth unemployment in particular as well as the rate of those not in education, employment or training, household disposable incomes, the at-risk-of-poverty rate and income inequalities.

The findings of the scoreboard indicate persistent socio-economic divergences between EU countries, although divergence increase has slowed down compared to last year. The divergences remain visible in the rates of unemployment in general, of youth unemployment and of young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training. The decline in household income and

A balancing act

The Annual Growth Survey is accompanied by the Alert Mechanism Report which aims to identify and address imbalances that may hinder the performance of national economies, the Euro area or the EU as whole.

When the Euro was created on 1 January 1999, a Stability and Growth Pact was introduced in order to ensure sound public finances across the EU. However, the way it was enforced before the crisis did not prevent the emergence of serious fiscal imbalances in some EU countries.

The Stability and Growth Pact was therefore reinforced in two stages: by the Six Pack in 2011 and the Two Pack in 2013. A Treaty on Stability Coordination and Governance (a fiscal stability treaty), which also came into force in 2013, largely mirrors the Six Pack and Two Pack.

The Six Pack introduced a system to monitor broader economic policies, so as to detect problems such as real estate bubbles, issues in external sustainability or falling competitiveness early on. This is called the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (MIP).

The MIP can be launched if the Commission concludes that excessive imbalances exist in a Member State. In which case the country concerned must draw up a corrective action plan, including deadlines for new measures. This plan must be endorsed by the Commission and the EU Council of Ministers.

If the Commission repeatedly concludes that a corrective action plan is unsatisfactory, it can propose that the EU Council of Ministers levy a fine of 0.1 % of GDP a year for Euro area Member States. Penalties also apply if EU countries fail to take action based on the plan. The sanctions are approved unless a qualified majority of Member States overturn them.

The Two Pack introduced a new cycle of monitoring for the Euro area, with EU countries submitting draft budgetary plans by 15 October to the Commission, covering the following year. The Commission then issues an opinion on them by the end of November.

SPECIAL FEATURE

an increase in inequalities and poverty rates are evident in most Southern European Member States of the Euro zone, but not only.

The Report was endorsed on 9 March by the EU Council of Ministers and will be sent on to the European Council of Heads of State and governments in order to feed into the European Semester process. It serves as a basis for further analyses, surveillance and coordination throughout the EU economic governance process.

More information directly available in the on-line version of *Social Agenda*:

On the Annual Growth Survey 2015:

http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/annual-growth-surveys/index_en.htm

On the Joint Employment report and the European Semester in general:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2159&furtherNews=yes>



Inequality: Decline in household income and increases in inequalities are evident in most Southern EU countries, but not only.

The 2015 novelties

For the first time, the European Semester is working in synergy with the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (MIP, see box page 16) in terms of procedural steps and documents.

In November 2014, the Commission put forward in one go the Annual Growth Survey, the draft Joint Employment report and the Alert Mechanism Report. And in February 2015, it adopted an economic surveillance package addressed to the EU Council of Ministers for opening, stepping up or de-escalating the MIP for particular EU countries.

Another first: Still in February, the Commission published country reports (including macroeconomic in-depth reviews) which used to be published in May - thus allowing more time for discussions with social partners and other stakeholders, and more ownership by Member States (see article page 20).

Introduced in 2010, the European Semester ensures that EU countries discuss their budgetary and economic plans for the following year between themselves and with the European Commission at specific times throughout the year.

This allows them to comment on each other's plans and enables the Commission to give policy guidance before the European Council (heads of State and governments) adopts country-specific Recommendations in spring.

The Recommendations offer EU countries tailored advice on actions for the following year to undertake deeper structural and fiscal reforms, which often take more than a year to complete.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Putting people at the centre

2014 Review stresses the need to support productivity by investing in people



Mistrust: The crisis has eroded people's trust in European, national and even labour market institutions.

Forward-looking, the new issue of the *Employment and Social Developments in Europe Review* focuses on the most important issues facing the new European Commission between now and 2019.

Democratic change, for a start: Seven years of increasing unemployment and poverty have eroded people's trust in institutions. The Review addresses the fourth part of European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker's motto: job creation, economic growth, social fairness and democratic change.

"There has been quite a strong decline in the trust that citizens put in the capacity of governments to do the right thing, to get them out of where they are", explains Isabelle Maquet, in charge of the Review in the European Commission's Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion directorate general. "It is significant that President Juncker puts so much emphasis on democratic change".

At EU level, this will translate into paying more attention to the potential employment and social impact of

all Commission proposals, as well as carrying out a specific social assessment before taking measures where the Commission has direct policy-making powers. Re-launching social dialogue (see page 10) is also an important way of restoring democratic legitimacy.

Put to the test

Beyond the political institutions, the labour market institutions – such as public employment services, unemployment benefit systems – and welfare systems have also been put to the test by the crisis, as to their capacity to accommodate for a huge increase in unemployment in a context of budgetary constraints.

"We have seen that differences between social and labour market institutions partly account for differences in the degree of resilience between EU Member States", Isabelle explains. "Where labour market institutions and welfare systems were robust and well designed, countries weathered the crisis better".

SPECIAL FEATURE

Germany and Spain

Contractual arrangements are also key. The contrast between Germany and Spain in this respect is striking. At the beginning of the crisis, both countries experienced a drop in gross domestic product (GDP) of similar magnitude.

In Germany, employers tried to keep people at work while working less, with the unemployment benefit systems compensating for lost revenue. This partly explains why the drop in GDP had little impact on employment.

In Spain, where many people were on temporary jobs, the employers strongly reacted by not renewing their contracts. As a result, the impact of the drop in GDP on employment was disproportionate. And because the unemployment benefits system in Spain was not designed for a prolonged crisis, an increasing number of people lost entitlements. As a result, household incomes dropped, which also contributed to fueling the huge household debt problem in Spain.

Activating the unemployed

In countries where social protection and the unemployment benefits systems provide good income support and cover most of the unemployed, it is easier to reach out to the people who have lost their job and help them get back to work.

“Beyond making employment protection legislation more flexible, which many countries have done, the institutions that matter are the ones that can ‘activate’ unemployed people: support them and help them return to work through training and job search assistance”.

Lifelong learning is then key to keeping people inside the labour market once they have a job, and that is also a matter of business culture. “Lifelong learning and education is not only the business of governments: enterprises have a major role to play, not only in investing in training staff but in valuing their skills and organising their companies in such a way that workers are able to develop their skills and competencies”.

Job quality

The Review contains a whole chapter dedicated to the crucial issue of job quality and work organisation. It shows that “to ensure that investments in skills and competencies turn into actual productivity gains, a specific effort must be made to promote job quality: jobs in which employees or workers can actually use and develop their skills and where the way work is organised empowers workers – or at least gives them more autonomy, more margin to figure out solutions and take decisions. Work organisations that put human capital in the centre. The countries that are doing better are those which invest the most in human capital”.

Security over the entire working life

The crisis had a deep impact on people and societies, while cross-country differences in terms of resilience to the economic shock can be explained by several factors: segmentation of labour markets, efficiency of social protection systems, availability and use of short-time working arrangements, investment in lifelong learning and activation, as well as the availability of unemployment and other social benefits and their link to activation – i.e. policy and institutional setups focused on providing stronger employment security over working life, rather than in a single job.

Structural trends underline the need for investment in human capital to support productivity. Policy support to formation and the maintenance and use of human capital are instrumental for strengthening competitiveness and sustaining the EU social welfare model.

Increasing the supply of skilled human capital needs to be matched by the supply of quality jobs. Structural changes generate opportunities for creating high quality jobs.

Restoring socio-economic convergence is another important goal facing the EU. At the national level, reforms combining employment and social policies can promote social fairness and enable countries to address both their social concerns and their competitiveness challenges.

SPECIAL FEATURE

The crisis legacy

The opening section of the Employment and Social Developments in Europe Review 2014 provides an overall review of developments, challenges and responses.

It is followed by thematic chapters on: the legacy of the recession, resilience and challenges; investing in human capital and responding to long-term societal challenges; the future of work in Europe (job quality and work organisation for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth); restoring socio-economic convergence between Member States in the EU and its economic and monetary union.

The review also sheds new light onto the key issue of convergence and divergence between EU countries.

It is conventional wisdom to state that, before the crisis, the EU countries were slowly converging and that, as a result of the crisis, they are diverging significantly. But the Review shows that “beneath the apparent convergence that took place on the surface before the crisis, imbalances were building up, for instance in terms of human capital formation and productivity development. In some countries, productivity growth was not in line with overall growth. Clearly, the

divergence which came out in the open during the crisis had started before”.

The Review touches upon the issue of how to bring more convergence between social systems and labour market institutions. “You need to continue carrying out structural reforms at the national level but if you don’t also provide additional European support to better adjust to shocks at the same time, these reforms will take longer to bear fruit”.

Most countries have started reforming their labour markets and making them more flexible. However, not all of them are tackling the “activation” dimension: redesigning unemployment benefit systems, providing training and lifelong learning. “Of course, the framework conditions for job creation must be restored and notably businesses must have access to finance. Structural reforms must be carried out and aggregate demand restored”, Isabelle explains. “However, you also need to invest in skills through education and these skills need to be used through quality jobs and maintained through lifelong learning. So you need these three pillars: invest, use and maintain!”.

More information directly available in the on-line version of Social Agenda:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7736>



Job quality: Creating and designing work organisations where employees can use their skills and be more autonomous.

SPECIAL FEATURE

EU economic and social governance

Jeroen Jutte, head of the European Employment Strategy and Governance service in the European Commission, explains how EU economic governance is evolving



Jeroen Jutte: One step at a time, real change is taking place in EU countries thanks to joint economic governance.

The EU has already been through four cycles of the European Semester process of economic governance. How is it working?

The European Semester is a process whereby the EU analyses the situation in each of its Member States and comes up with country-specific policy recommendations (CSRs). These CSRs range from simple things, like asking for the monitoring of a particular situation, to fundamental reforms

such as linking up retirement age with life expectancy or a re-think of a country's employment protection legislation: making it more flexible and allowing for a better performing active labour market policy which helps unemployed people acquire new skills. Now that the process has been running for some years, we can take a medium-term perspective. And we see, I am glad to say, that we are making very substantive progress. In many EU countries, labour market reform has taken place. We are slowly shifting the focus onto Public Employment Services and Active Labour Market Policy, with an emphasis on skills development, and the effectiveness of social benefit systems. It is one step at a time, but real change is taking place.

Are the European Semester recommendations promoting a social investment approach?

Yes. The demographic trend facing the EU is such that its workforce is beginning to shrink. Economic growth will therefore increasingly have to come from productivity growth, which itself is linked to the workforce's level of skills. We have to invest in people, especially in those that are under-represented in the labour market: women, the long-term unemployed, older workers and disabled people. There is also technological change, which is bound to go deeper and faster and will have an impact on the division of labour. People need to be able to cope with such changes. Doing better on skills development is crucial for a prosperous future.

So it's not so much about the crisis itself?

The crisis makes it all the more difficult to address those challenges, as it has negatively impacted budgets and dramatically increased the number of long term unemployed people and of unemployed youth. Extra efforts therefore have to be made to integrate them, both economically and

SPECIAL FEATURE

socially. If we are not successful, the crisis will be permanent for those that remain behind and do not succeed in re-entering the labour market. Such outcome would be socially unacceptable, and economically self-defeating.

The economic crisis has turned into a social one or are the two intertwined?

There is a strong economic rationale behind the social investment concept. In the thick of the crisis, we had to act quickly and concentrate on surviving here and now by keeping our public finances afloat and preventing financial institutions from downing. Now that the financial situation has improved, we can have a more balanced, medium-to-long term approach where employment and social considerations play a stronger role. A return to profits for the business sector is not the end of a crisis. We will only be there when unemployment figures go down substantially, which in turn implies that businesses must see opportunities for growth. The bottom line is that we need to invest in our businesses *and* in our people. This combination is key to our future competitiveness and prosperity.

They are key to sustainable growth?

Yes, skills and quality jobs are key. At the same time we need to address the immediate impact of the crisis, and in particular the youth and long term unemployment legacy, head-on. This starts by getting people back into the labour market framework, for example through targeted training or

apprenticeships. Active policies are called for. This is also why the European Commission launched the Youth Guarantee (see page 8) and is now preparing an initiative in favour of the long-term unemployed. The Youth Guarantee will take time to have an impact but we can already see through the European Semester that it is triggering reforms which go beyond the youth issue: some EU countries are reviewing their labour market policies, e.g. the way their public employment services are organised and interact with other services such as social services, schools and universities. The Youth Guarantee therefore plays a very central role in the European Semester and practically all countries which have received Recommendations related to it are acting upon them.

Shouldn't the European Semester be rather called the European Year?

EU countries have complained that they do not have enough time to scrutinise the Commission analyses, as well as the Recommendations based upon them. This year we have brought these analyses forward from the end of May to the end of February. This will allow Member States to better involve stakeholders (social partners, civil society) and create more ownership of the European Semester at national level. The Commission will carefully listen to the comments made on its analyses and it will have a more targeted approach with recommendations concentrating more on the most important issues. Those Recommendations will be proposed in the course of May and adopted by the European Council in June.



Biology lesson: Investing both in business and people is the key to future competitiveness and prosperity.

SPECIAL FEATURE



Social partners: Their role in EU economic governance was under-developed in terms of ownership and partnership.

On 5 March, the European Commission brought together the EU-level and national-level social partners to re-launch the social dialogue (see page 10). Is the aim to involve them more in the European Semester?

We felt that the role of the social partners in EU economic governance was under-developed in terms of ownership and partnership. We want to inter-act with them much more. Before we publish the *Annual Growth Survey* (see page 15), in which the Commission sets its main priorities for the coming year, we will in the future have an exchange with them. And in particular, publishing the Country Reports earlier allows for more interaction with them. We will reach out to national social partners, both on a technical and on a political level, strengthening the capacity of social partners to take part in the debate on what reforms are necessary.

For a few years now, the Commission has been working on the issue of deepening the EU Economic and Monetary Union. Would that mean a more “social” EMU?

Deepening EMU will require on the one hand strengthening the governance of the EMU and further enhancing the coordination and consistency of Member States’ policies. On the other, it will mean finding the right balance between fostering competitiveness, employment and social cohesion. The Juncker Commission on several occasions has highlighted the

need to strengthen the EMU by reinforcing its social aspects. This process has started with an increasing attention being paid to social challenges in the European Semester. The Juncker Commission is also aiming at a stronger involvement of social partners in this context. And it intends to develop social impact assessments of structural reforms. In short, there are a number of important shifts taking place, aiming at a better balance.

Will not the main challenge in the future be to ensure economic and social re-convergence within the EU and especially the Euro zone?

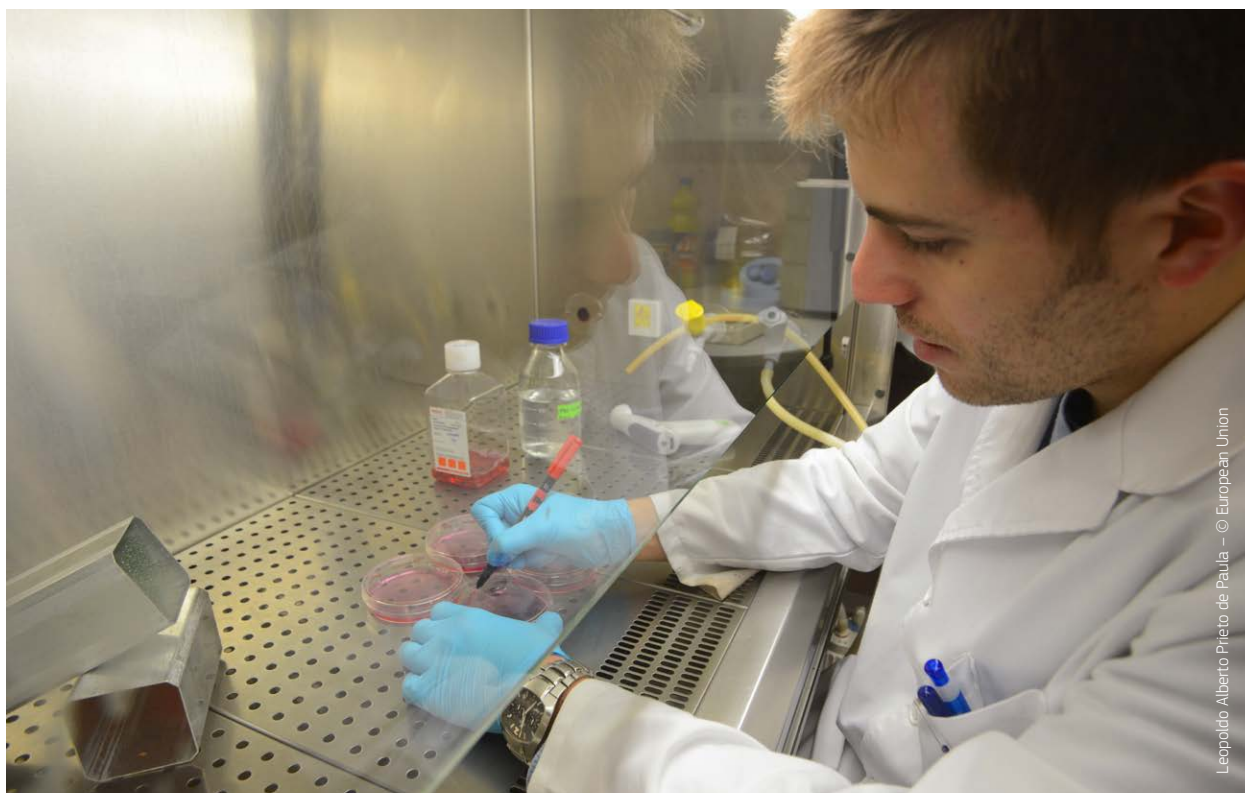
Indeed, one of the legacies of the crisis is that we have moved from slow convergence between EU countries to more divergence. Fortunately, many countries have launched fundamental reforms. Spain, for example, will probably be the country experiencing the highest economic and employment growth in Europe. This year it expects economic growth to reach 2.4% with substantially higher employment growth. The latest data for Italy and Portugal seems also to be going in the right direction. So let’s hope that this phase of divergence is behind us.

More information directly available in the on-line version of *Social Agenda*:

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/economic_governance/the_european_semester/index_en.htm

ESF BENEFICIARY

Carlos – Clinical biology researcher



Leopoldo Alberto Prieto de Paula – © European Union

Cancer research: Carlos did an internship at Salamanca's Cancer Research Centre, where his tutor suggested he apply for a grant co-funded by the ESF.

In the Spanish region of Castile and León, 200 young researchers from universities and research centres have taken part in a training project supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) between 2007 and 2013. Among the beneficiaries was Carlos, who had a Master's degree in the clinical biology of cancer and who was doing an internship at Salamanca's Cancer Research Centre. He then specialised in prenatal lung maturation and respiratory responses to injury. Along with assisting individual researchers, the ESF package also helped Castile and León to increase its Research-Development and innovative capacities. It provided funding for networking activities between the region's universities, research centres and innovative companies.

Over to Carlos:

"I have always been fascinated by life sciences. When I was small, I was captivated by the insect world, plants and animals. I am fascinated by infinitely small things, by the way the universe around us is organised and how it regulates itself.

When I was a child, I spent a lot of time in the forest, in the countryside, observing flowers and insects. My father, who is a professor of biology, used to take me with him. I think that my interest in biology comes from my father sharing his passion with me. He taught me how the animal and plant worlds work. I was very curious about everything and bombarded him with questions. I was lucky to be his student



Fighting to beat cancer: "I hope that our work will save lives someday. That's what motivates us all".

for seven years at school, so it seems natural that I focused on biology at university.

Our world throws up more questions than answers. I thought I could make my own small contribution to research. University opened lots of doors for me. I think I chose the right one.

Cancer has affected me personally as numerous members of my family have suffered from it. After university, I did an internship at Salamanca's Cancer Research Centre. There, my tutor suggested I apply for a grant co-funded by the European Social Fund. My thesis consisted of testing new anticancer drugs on colon and breast cancer cells.

The European Social Fund enabled me to meet other young people who share my values and enthusiasm. Everyone, at this level, is fighting to beat cancer. My mission is to test out new drugs to fight colon cancer cells. I hope that our work will save lives someday. That's what motivates us all.

Perfectionist

I am a perfectionist. I love to work in an ordered way. In my head, everything is organised. I hate improvising. In my work, as in everyday life, I am very structured. I appreciate that this isn't always easy for those around me... especially as I sometimes have a very impulsive personality. Some of them might hate me for that. But I can accept that. Once the ice has been broken, everything goes smoothly.

Our work requires a great deal of steadfastness, concentration and patience. We must be very flexible. To successfully conduct our research, we need lots of time. My first months were difficult and even frustrating. I wasn't making much progress. But my determination bore fruit in the end. I consider myself lucky as I got good results that could help other researchers.

My bosses concentrate on designing and carrying out experiments. They provide me with the necessary equipment and

I apply what was learned. I analyse the results for them. We test new drugs, which seem promising, to fight colon cancer cells. We get good results in vitro. But that doesn't mean they will cure cancer. It is likely, however, that in the near future they will be the subject of clinical trials.

I hope to be able to continue to put my energy into this work that I love so much, for many years. And I also hope that, in the future, many people will benefit from the results of my research. I would love to continue to work for the centre I am currently employed by, but times are hard for everyone in Spain. It has become rare for a researcher to get a long-term contract. My future, no matter what, will be in research, in my ongoing struggle against cancer. Here or somewhere else".

Taken from:

"Seven lives – on the road to success with the European Social Fund", ISBN 978-92-79-30126-1

Video:

<http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=564&langId=en&portaitId=255>

More information directly available in the on-line version of *Social Agenda*:

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

€125 million

The project of training researchers in Castile and León was set up by the Ministry of education of the Castile and León region. The ESF contributed €125 million out of a total project budget of €156 million. The project ran from 2007 to 2013.

OTHER
VOICES

Social dialogue vital in agriculture

A joint article by both sides of this sector



Looking back in amazement on what has been accomplished:
Arnd Spahn (left) and Chris Botterman (right).

The agricultural sector is one of the first economic sectors that was organised on a European level. In the Common Agricultural Policy in the 1950s, three main objectives were paramount: there must be sufficient food in Europe (this was essential, especially in a time period in which World War II was still at the front of people's minds); food must be available for the consumer at affordable prices; and the farmer must be able to receive a right price for his/her products and obtain a viable income. These three basic principles of the Common Agricultural Policy remain important even today.

At quite an early stage, the representatives of the employers and employees in the agricultural sector gathered on a European level at the request of European leaders to take a stance regarding social themes. This is how the European social sectoral dialogue for the agricultural sector started. In 2013 we celebrated the 50th anniversary of our sectoral social dialogue.

Pioneer

The agricultural sector was a pioneer and trailblazer for social dialogue at European level, encouraging and inspiring the social partners in other sectors to follow in its footsteps and utilise European-level dialogue to further workers' and companies' interests.

Over the years, EFFAT (European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions) and GEOPA (Employers' Group of Professional Agricultural Organisations) have pushed through a great many important changes in the sector. Nowadays, a good relationship between the social agricultural partners at a European level is vital.

Many permanent employees as well as flexworkers earn an income in the agricultural sector. Many agricultural undertakings are also often run in a family context. When reforming the Common Agricultural Policy or when entering into free trade agreements at EU level, we also constantly take into account the social impact on the farmers themselves and on those working in this sector as employees. The sectoral Committees for social dialogue can also study these aspects and link recommendations to them. That is why we have completed a study regarding the impact of the Common European Agricultural Policy on employment. It is also important in this context to possess proper figures.

The technical evolution is going fast and it is important for the farmers to have a sufficient number of well-educated employees at their disposal. Knowledge must be kept at a proper level and employees must be able to take further



Highly specific: Agriculture is not comparable to other economic sectors in every respect.

training and perfection courses. The agricultural social partners call for increasing the amount of attention paid to training and education.

Working under safe conditions is a basic prerequisite. It is important that the social agricultural partners can participate in the meetings of the work groups that discuss construction conditions of tractors and equipment. Another crucial point is the safe handling of plant protection products. Our goal should be that we can reduce the amount of accidents and periods of occupational disability through prevention, proper agreements and good follow-up.

Reinforcing mobility in the European Union was a desire from the start. There is a need for many labourers that often come from other countries in the European Union. It is important for both the employers and the employees in the sector that the competences and experience expected by a potential employer, on the one hand, and the knowledge present in a possible employee, on the other hand, can be matched in a quick and easy way. Modern technology can help us realise a well-performing and easy-to-use system. It is also important to look at the competences that will be required in the agricultural sector in 2025.

More mobility in the European Union in practice also often leads to uncertainty and discussions in the field of applicable salary and employment conditions and to possible cases of unfair competition, of which the *bona fide* employers in the agricultural sector can also become the victim. It is important that clear agreements are made for the secondment of Member States and that, for example, there are clear rules for contracting and subcontracting that are

based on avoiding disloyal competition and on respect for the employees.

Highly specific

We cannot stress enough that agriculture is a highly specific sector. It is not comparable to other economic sectors in every respect. For instance, we could stop producing televisions in Europe – not that we want to – but we cannot get by without a strong agricultural sector if Europe does not want to depend too heavily on other countries to supply it with basic foodstuffs.

A strong, sustainable and competitive agricultural sector is absolutely essential if the European project is to succeed in the future.

The social agricultural partners can look back in amazement on what has been realised in the past 50 years in our common sectoral dialogue. It is fitting to extend a heartfelt thanks to the European Commission and all authorities that have made this social dialogue possible.

It will be impossible to overcome the substantial challenges without a constructive, fruitful social dialogue. With that in mind, the social partners EFFAT and GEOPA need to be even more ambitious in addressing the major social problems in the agricultural sector in the future. That would improve matters for all concerned and boost agriculture's image.

Chris Botterman
GEOPA

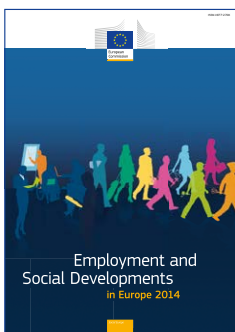
Arnd Spahn
EFFAT



Industrial Relations in Europe 2014

The 2014 edition examines the fallout of the economic and sovereign debt crisis in relation to industrial relations and social dialogue. It includes in-depth analyses of developments in wage bargaining systems; industrial relations in Member States receiving financial assistance, as well as industrial relations and youth employment. In addition, it presents an update of recent developments in European Social Dialogue and Labour Law. This publication is available in printed format in English (see article page 10).

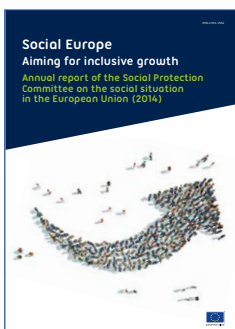
Catalogue No.: KE-AS-14-001-EN-C



Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2014

This year's Review provides a broad overview of the challenges facing the European Union over the coming years as it slowly emerges from the worst recession in its history. It highlights the scale of the challenges but also the benefits of continuing to invest in education, training and wider labour market and social policies alongside the actions being taken to restore economic growth in the light of the Union's 2020 employment and social goals. The review is available in printed and electronic format in English. All the graphs and tables can be downloaded both in gif and excel format by accessing the individual chapters (See article page 18).

Catalogue No.: KE-BD-14-001-EN-N



Social Europe – Aiming for inclusive growth – Annual report of the Social Protection Committee on the social situation in the European Union (2014)

This report provides an analysis of recent trends in the social situation in the Member States and the European Union. It shows that there has been little improvement in the overall situation in the EU, although trends are more mixed than in preceding years. Continuing disparities occur across Member States and the situation is worsening in several. The report focuses on the results from the latest edition of the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM), which is based on a set of key indicators for monitoring developments in the social situation. This report is available online in English.

Catalogue No.: KE-BG-14-001-EN-N

Useful websites

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

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

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

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

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

