



# Concluding report

Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth,  
Gothenburg, Sweden, 17 November 2017

**E**uropean Heads of State or Government met in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017 with EU Institutions, social partners, civil society, students and leading experts at the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth, organised by the Swedish Government and the European Commission.

Eight months on from the 60th anniversary celebrations of the Treaties of Rome, the Summit constituted an extraordinary opportunity for leaders and stakeholders to discuss topics that touch on the everyday lives of citizens. As such, it contributed to the debate on the future of the EU, which was initiated at the Bratislava Summit and shaped by the European Commission's White Paper and the five subsequent reflection papers, notably that on Europe's social dimension, presented earlier this year.

The Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth focused on how to boost inclusive growth, create fair jobs and foster equal opportunities for all men and women, while acknowledging common challenges and the wealth of experiences around Europe. Discussions took place in a unique, open and interactive format which resulted in different perspectives being heard and different solutions debated, all taking account of common challenges and the specificities of national context and priorities. Live streams allowed citizens all over Europe to follow the discussions in real time.

The Summit was an occasion to reaffirm a joint responsibility to tackle the challenges our labour markets face at all levels. It stressed that employment and social progress are first and foremost created on the ground. The wealth of experiences shared will serve as inspiration for governments and stakeholders on how to design and implement policies in the future. The need to promote convergence of our economies and societies should be met by efforts at all levels, including by the social partners. While taking account of the diversity of social traditions across Europe, further steps should be taken to improve access to labour markets, ensure fair employment and working conditions and support transitions between jobs.

At the Summit, the European Pillar of Social Rights was proclaimed by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. This reflects the shared responsibility and the need for joint efforts by all levels of government, social partners and civil society to deliver a strong social Europe. The Pillar expresses principles and rights that are essential for fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems in 21st century Europe. Ahead of the Summit, EU-level social partners agreed on a joint statement detailing how they can contribute to fair jobs and growth in the future.

In light of the European Council in December, and as part of the overall debate on the future of Europe, the discussions showed a lot of common ground on the need for Europe to be equipped with a strong and tangible social dimension. Going forward, both economic and social development will be essential.

*The Summit recalled the need to put people first through joint efforts at all levels, and to further develop the social dimension of the Union based on a shared commitment and established competences. As a first next step, the following should be taken forward:*

- implementing the principles and rights set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights, notably through the European Semester of Policy Coordination and in the Member States' 2018 National Reform Programmes;*
- facilitating a well-functioning social dialogue at all levels, including the 'new start for social dialogue' at EU level;*
- progressing swiftly on pending social files at EU level, including on Posting of Workers, Social Security Coordination, Work–Life Balance and the European Accessibility Act, as well as being ready to swiftly examine future initiatives announced by the Commission in its Work Programme for 2018;*
- following up on the priorities of the EU Action Plan 2018–2019 to tackle the gender pay gap; and*
- delivering further on the new European Skills Agenda, with a particular focus in 2018 on implementing the Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways, intended for people with the most skills needs.*

## Joint responsibility to put people first

The effects of the economic crisis left scars in individual lives and in our societies as a whole. Labour markets and social outcomes still vary significantly across and within countries. Income inequalities persist, along with employment gaps between men and women and continuing difficulties for older workers, migrants and people with disabilities. All Member States are undergoing rapid and profound changes due to demographic and societal developments. Globalisation, technology and digitalisation are also changing the way we live and work together, creating new opportunities as well as challenges.

Discussions showed that what unites us is the need to ensure that individuals and companies are well prepared for the future, as well as the need to adapt our social models to current and future challenges. It was acknowledged that there is a joint need to act and that we should use the current pick-up in the European economy and the drop in unemployment to build a more inclusive, prosperous and social Europe

for our citizens, putting fair jobs and growth first. The promotion of a well-functioning social dialogue and its importance for delivering fair jobs and growth was acknowledged. Speaking with stakeholders and not only about stakeholders was stressed and the youth perspective was brought up by many in the discussions. The important role of the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions was recognised, as was the crucial contribution of international organisations such as the International Labour Organization and the Council of Europe.

## We need more men and women in employment, ensuring easier access to the labour market

Improving access to European labour markets requires tackling key challenges, such as better reconciling work and private life, supporting disadvantaged groups and bringing down obstacles to job creation. As globalisation, technological progress and demographic change take hold, more and better skills will determine employability. It is therefore essential to focus on low-skilled people who face the most serious difficulties. Stepping up efforts to equip young people with relevant skills is important to promote inclusive growth and equal opportunities.

Some telling practices were shared, notably on how to increase the participation of women in the labour market, how to facilitate the entry of young people, newly arrived persons and vulnerable groups, and how to make the most of the experience of older people. Structural and social reforms aimed at equal opportunities, increased mobility, life-long learning, vocational training and apprenticeships, access to free child care and initiatives for fast-track integration of immigrants were raised in the debate. The contribution of SMEs and the self-employed to European economic growth was highlighted. It was acknowledged that entrepreneurial and soft skills were often acquired outside formal educational structures.

In addition to the Youth Guarantee, several EU-level initiatives under the New Skills agenda were mentioned. These included the Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways and the agenda for the modernisation of Vocational Education and Training.

## We need fair employment and good working conditions

We need to ensure decent jobs and fair working conditions for all workers, regardless of their employment relationship. New forms of work and the need to offer flexibility and security for workers and businesses alike pose new challenges. We must also look at the knock-on impact in terms of productivity and wages, working conditions, health and safety at work as well as access to welfare and social protection. Special attention should be given to the persistent gaps between men and women as regards employment, working conditions, career opportunities, pay and pensions. The effects of an ageing population and automation/digitalisation were also debated.

Different practices were shared, ranging from shared parental leave to adequate social protection for all types of contracts, actions to ensure health and safety at work, rights for workers to require flexible working arrangements. The role of social partners was stressed by many as being important in meeting challenges related to fair employment and good working conditions. A well-functioning dialogue can, for example, be an effective tool in finding solutions to flexibility and security issues for both workers and business.

Ongoing EU-level initiatives include the modernisation of the health and safety legislative framework, the revision of the Written Statement Directive and an initiative on improved access to social protection.

## We need to invest in people to facilitate transitions between jobs

Ongoing efforts to facilitate transitions between jobs must be carried forward. These include reskilling and upskilling, the preservation of social protection rights over a lifetime, as well as public employment services and activation support to help adapt to rapid economic adjustments and longer and more varied careers. The transitions from school to work and from parental leave back to work are important and challenging stepping stones.

Some significant practices were shared where digitalisation and automation had created new conditions and challenges for the EU's global competitiveness. Vocational education and training and access to lifelong learning that focuses on new skills that keep pace with technological development and facilitate transitions from one job to another were highlighted. The role of social partners was seen as

being particularly important in this respect. Investments are needed, with both national and EU funds mentioned. Intense cooperation with universities and the social partners was also identified as being important. There was a common view that the EU's social model should be protected and preserved, and that the EU should avoid a race to the bottom, both within the Union and on the global market. Protecting workers – not protecting work – was seen as key.

There are several EU-level initiatives focusing on fair mobility, such as the revision of the rules related to posting of workers and social security coordination, as well as the proposal to set up a European Labour Authority.

## Further action

In December, the European Council will follow up the Gothenburg Summit, addressing the social dimension in the discussion on the future of the EU.

As co-host of the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth, the European Commission will continue to play its part in the follow-up to the discussions. The European Semester of Policy Coordination should be the main framework for taking the discussions on the social dimension forward. The European Commission will relay its priorities as part of the European Semester, which starts with the Annual Growth Survey 2018.

The Summit witnessed the joint proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission. This sent a strong message of unity and political commitment. The European Pillar of Social Rights sets out 20 principles close to the everyday lives of European citizens and reaffirms the commitment to shared values. The focus now needs to shift to delivering on those principles and rights so as to ensure that they are a reality for all men and women. This is a joint task and requires a collaborative effort among EU Institutions and Member States, social partners as well as civil society.

The Summit was a first milestone in the debate on the future of Europe on the road to the meeting of EU Leaders in Sibiu on 9 May 2019. The co-hosts look forward to the continued efforts of the Estonian, Bulgarian and Austrian Presidencies to continue the work on the social dimension of Europe as part of the 18-month Programme of the Council of the European Union (July 2017 – December 2018), as well as to the further work of the European Parliament in this field ahead of the European elections in spring 2019.



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