



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Employment and Social Governance
Thematic Analysis

ESDE 2019 Dissemination Conference
27 September 2019, Brussels (EESC Building)

FLASH REPORT

The event: On 27 September 2019, the European Commission (EMPL.A.4), *in cooperation with the European Economic and Social Committee*, co-organised, for the third consecutive year, the conference on the topic of the 2019 annual review *Employment and Social Developments in Europe*. This year's conference was called "Sustainable growth for all: choices for the future of Social Europe", in line with ESDE's overarching topic. The conference took place in the EESC premises.

Purpose: The event was an opportunity to give high visibility to the annual ESDE report and to disseminate and discuss the most recent developments and analytical findings presented in it with representatives from Member States, international organisations, social partners, stakeholder organisations and academia.

Discussion topics: The conference discussed sustainability in its three dimensions (economic, social and environmental) and the main challenges that Europe is facing to ensure sustainable development. The conference examined in particular the evidence so far on the employment and social impacts of the transition to a climate-neutral economy and the policies that can help gain public support for this transition and make it beneficial to all Europeans.

Structure of the conference: The conference consisted of an opening and a closing session and three thematic sessions in-between. Keynote speakers for the opening were Commissioner M. Thyssen and EESC President Luca Jahier. Director EMPL.A. B. Kauffmann launched the conference into its thematic core, by presenting an overview of the main findings. Subsequently, presentations by the authors of ESDE 2019 chapters opened each of the thematic sessions and the discussion followed. Director-General J. Korte and President of the EESC Sustainable Development Observatory P. Schmidt gave the closing speeches.

The line-up of speakers consisted of decision makers, including social partners, and experts from academic or policy institutions (e.g. World Bank, ILO, ministries, central banks, social partners, etc.) in a wide range of areas, including productivity, labour markets, skills, social and climate change policies.

Participation: There were 280 registered participants in total. During the morning sessions, the audience exceeded the conference room's capacity of approx. 210, so that a number of attendees had to follow proceedings from a listening room. Even during the afternoon sessions, the attendance remained high. Given this, the possibility of using a venue of larger capacity next year should be explored. Discussants and a very lively audience from across the EU and third countries (US, Canada, etc.) praised the quality of the report and its analysis throughout the proceedings.

Feedback and social media coverage: The conference also attracted considerable attention in the social media, with tweets sent from @EU_Social during the conference generating some 500 engagements on the day (sum of likes, retweets and replies) and earning around 190.000 impressions (amount of times they were displayed on users' timelines). In addition, participants and stakeholders tweeted actively on the conference and the main messages of the report.

The review has received positive feedback on both its thematic focus (sustainability) and its analytical quality, not only from panellists and participants at the dissemination conference, but also in earlier presentations e.g. to the EPSCO Council and Council working groups, the Employment Committee, the European Trade Union Institute and the European Social Policy Network.

Summary of main messages (by session):

Opening Session:

The EU public opinion in general and the European youth in particular expect policy-makers to accelerate the pace at which they address the climate and environmental challenges as well as the persistent inequalities in the labour market and social domains, which were exacerbated by the crisis. The EU anticipated the need for policy change, spearheading coordinated action towards sustainability globally, while the new leadership of the European Commission has shown the resolve to raise policy ambition up to the level of climate neutrality without leaving anybody behind. To this end, there was widespread agreement on the need of integrating social and environmental concerns in the design of all economic policies. Opinions also converged on the urgent need for diverse investments to transition to a sustainable development model. However, there was divergence of views on whether the resources for the necessary investments should come from future growth or from existing wealth.

Thematic Session 1: Economic sustainability: enabling sustainable and inclusive growth

Given the technological and demographic trends, as well as pressing planetary boundaries, economic growth in Europe will increasingly rely on a more efficient use of factor inputs and growing productivity. The rate of technological change will crucially depend on the investments in research and innovation, and human capital. A diffusion of existing technology from high-productivity regions to the ones lagging behind is necessary. Investments in physical, social and digital infrastructure are key elements driving the productivity growth and allowing less productive companies to catch up with companies at the technological frontier.

Thematic session 2: Social sustainability: investing in people, essential services and housing

Social investment policies are instrumental to attaining social and economic sustainability. They play a dual role of alleviating unfavourable social situations, while boosting economic activity, employment and productivity. The main challenge ahead is to ensure adequate financing for the social policies and redefining their role not as a cost or burden on the public finances, but as a productive investment.

Thematic Session 3: Environmental sustainability: mitigating social impacts of climate action

The transition to a climate-neutral economy is a must as the cost of inaction will be large for MS economies, but the success of the transition has many caveats. The expected impacts of the transition on growth, employment and well-being are overwhelmingly positive but they depend on a number of conditions, so they cannot be taken for granted, not even for the sectors where our best projections tell us that the effects will be most positive. This said, no other major economy is better prepared to manage this transition than the EU. A big part of this preparation is thanks to European welfare states, which may ultimately be the best tool for managing a just transition to climate neutrality.

Closing Session:

- *The EU has what it takes to succeed in its transition to climate-neutrality. However, the costs and benefits of transition will differ greatly from person to person, industry to industry and region to region. Without policy intervention, some of them stand to win a lot and others to lose a lot. We therefore need policy intervention to make this transition just.*
- *Social policies are key to promoting a just transition. The incoming Commission intends to prioritise a strong role for social policies by implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights with an Action Plan. This will guarantee access to essential services like energy, transport and housing; it will ensure social protection for all; and it will boost skills to help people thrive and businesses grow.*
- *Social policies are not the only key to a just transition. We need to integrate social objectives into all EU policy areas, including education, taxation, agriculture and fisheries, energy-efficient upgrades of the EU's housing stock, and finance.*
- *Climate action, digitalisation and inclusive growth all are at the very top of the incoming Commission's agenda. The Executive Vice-Presidents will coordinate input from all relevant policy areas to agree and implement a European Green Deal, to promote a new long-term industrial strategy and further digital taxation, and to make the EU's social market economy work for people. To achieve progress in these areas, EU and Member States need to move together, quickly, and based on evidence. EMPL services will*

continue to deepen this analysis, including on the distributional impacts of climate policies, the quality of the green jobs and the state and perceptions of fairness in the EU economies and societies.

(full webstreaming available [here](#); documents and presentations available [here](#))

Conference website and webstreaming:

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&furtherEvents=yes&eventsId=1478&langId=en>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04utrKkuOoA&feature=youtu.be>

Photos of the event:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/socialeurope/sets/72157711083365262>

Twitter:

#ESDE2019

@EU_Social; @EU_Commission; @mariannethyssen; @EESC_SOC

Further information:

[2019 Employment and Social Developments Review](#)

[Press release](#): Tackling climate change can be a driver for growth and jobs

[Factsheet](#): ESDE 2019: Zooming in on the social impact of climate change

[Employment and Social Analysis section on the EMPL website](#)