



European  
Commission

# Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth 2019

## The future of Social Europe post 2020

### Conference Report 2019



20 May 2019

Crowne Plaza, Brussels

Social  
Europe



INCLUSIVE  
GROWTH  
IS KEY  
FOR A FAIR  
SOCIETY

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## CONTEXT

# Social Europe ... to infinity and beyond

**In the lead up to the 2019 European elections, the European Commission's Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth (ACIG) laid down the gauntlet to current and future leaders to not lose sight of the importance of 'Social Europe' amid the noise and distractions.**

Inequalities between and within Member States, ageing populations, a looming demographic crunch, 'flexible' labour markets (such as zero-hour contracts) straining people and social protection systems in need of reform... the challenges facing Europe are not likely to go away on their own.

In 2019 attention is on what Social Europe will look like post-2020. Will progress on implementing the **European Pillar of Social Rights** (hereinafter 'Pillar') continue? Will our new leaders carry on with the same verve or be side-tracked by the politics of the now? What will come next?

With its rich programme and diverse appeal, ACIG brings together civil society representatives, policy makers, trade unions and academics from 35 countries (EU Member States and Candidate Countries), as well as EU-level policymakers and civil society representatives. ACIG has become a centrifuge for the tough questions, unflinching debate and insightful views. Plenaries, workshops, speed dating and side-events keep the action flowing during the annual event.

## Parallel workshops

- 1 Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights as the vehicle for the Sustainable Development Goals in the social area
- 2 Improving social policy governance in Europe: cross-sector collaboration, public-private partnerships
- 3 Let's talk to each other: how to improve communication with EU citizens about Social Europe
- 4 Adapting to the future of work: shaping lives and jobs through inclusive lifelong learning
- 5 How the next Multiannual Financial Framework and its funding instruments can be best used for inclusive growth
- 6 The future of the EU Disability Strategy
- 7 Social services: integrated approaches as a means to deliver the European Pillar of Social Rights

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Entering its fourth year, ACIG first cast its gaze backwards for tangible evidence of progress towards a truly inclusive EU in every sense of the word, and then forwards to assess how Social Europe will look after 2020 when the **Europe 2020** strategy runs its course. Attention was on policy-makers' continued commitment to a strong social agenda for inclusive growth and jobs as the foundations of a sustainable market economy.
- Through presentations, workshops and interactive sessions, the Convention thus stimulated the exchange of ideas and best practices focused on how to continue building Social Europe in the years ahead. Key questions: What social policy priorities should be proposed to the next European Commission? How to ensure that the next generation of funding instruments can foster inclusive growth?
- European elections and a new European Commission and programme made ACIG's timing perfect, according to Director-General Joost Korte: "So, we very much look forward to your discussions. We need your input and your advocacy."
- The EU has committed to the Pillar by promising to turn "rights into realities" and "principles into policies", and by putting "social at the heart of our governance ... by focusing on jobs, growth and fairness". Unemployment is at 6.4%, the lowest since the start of this century! (Commissioner Marianne Thyssen)
- The European Semester is a true tool for change with the Pillar present in every stage, and all with the help of organised civil society. Progress has also been made with the creation of the social scoreboard, minimum income, mainstreaming disability, the Skills Agenda and the Accessibility Act making products and services more accessible.
- But greater effort is still needed. Social protection systems are under pressure from ageing populations, unconventional forms of employment and global challenges like migration, digitalisation and climate change compound the problem.
- Solidarity is needed to help all vulnerable groups, improve working conditions, labour mobility and safety, work-life balance, and gender equality in the labour market; all demanding new reflections on policies aimed at sustainable growth, inclusion and job-creation alongside social equality, justice and life quality.
- It is time to analyse what worked and what needs fixing from Europe 2020, and to use these insights to get closer to EU citizens. Civil society needs to think outside the box, get out of information silos, and encourage active participation in conversations leading to win-wins on critical topics.
- ACIG's seven workshop presentations in the afternoon provided a neat roundup of their conclusions and recommendations which can be found in the relevant section of this report.
- Policy-makers and civil society must work in close partnership with Member States who make policies a reality on the ground, which means better listening and communication because the stakes are high; around 130 million Europeans are still at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- Ambitious targets post-2020 are needed because policy gaps remain in issues like inequality, discrimination, and challenges linked to affordable housing and health (issues addressed in the Reflection Paper on a **Sustainable Europe by 2030**).
- The social agenda needs to be part of the broader agenda and clearly prioritised at the highest level, with the 2030 Agenda and Pillar, to tackle inequality and reach social exclusion. More high-level summits like Gothenburg in 2017 are needed.
- The conflict and overlap between priorities under the European Semester, such as issues concerning social governance or the mismatch between social reform and financial sustainability remain a major concern.
- Overcoming the democratic deficit and trust issues, through open and regular dialogue, is the best way to reconnect the EU with people.
- Placing people at the centre of policy-making is vital but demands greater understanding of how wellbeing policies and structures support productivity, economic growth, employment and stable societies in the post-2020 era.
- Sustainable and inclusive growth needs to be seen through the prism of an "economy of wellbeing", which doesn't require new competences, nor necessarily new structures in the EU, but rather improved use of existing ones. The EU has the policy tools and mandate for this, but "policy courage" is needed to move ahead.
- **The wrap:**
  - most of the challenges we face today are global (such as migration and digitisation), so the long-term solution is a global strategy for inclusive growth capturing the essence of the Pillar and the **Sustainable Development Goals** (hereinafter SDGs);
  - the Skills Agenda addresses key future labour market concerns but can go further in getting businesses and education centres to cooperate more;
  - social services need to be more integrated and flexible in line with today's needs and ensure that "no one is left behind";
  - the EU's multiannual financial framework and the programmes connecting it to the Semester priorities show great progress and promise, but ongoing effort is needed to "make the European Semester more social";
  - and better communication is essential (both to and through civil society) to tackle the rise in fake news and misinformation.

## ACIG 2019 in numbers

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- **35** countries represented
- **450+** delegates representing all areas of civil society
- **3** keynote speakers
- **5** side events
- **7** workshops
- **7** speed-dating sessions
- **100s** of ideas
- **1000s** of possibilities
- **400** tweets on the day, making #ACIG2019 trend in Belgium
- **1902** views of the Periscope live video feed



## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

- Der Jahreskonvent für Inklusives Wachstum (Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth – ACIG) geht jetzt ins vierte Jahr. Er schaute jetzt erstmals zurück, ob greifbare Anhaltspunkte für Fortschritte hin zu einer wirklich inklusiven EU im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes erkennbar sind, gefolgt von einem Blick in die Zukunft, wie das soziale Europa nach 2020 aussehen wird, wenn die Strategie **Europe 2020** ausläuft. Aufmerksamkeit erhielt das fortgesetzte Engagement der Entscheidungsträger für eine starke Sozialagenda für integratives Wachstum und inklusive Arbeitsplätze als Grundlagen einer nachhaltigen Marktwirtschaft.
- Mit Vorträgen, Workshops und interaktiven Sitzungen regte der Konvent den Austausch von Ideen und besten Praktiken an. Es wurde die Frage diskutiert, wie der Aufbau des sozialen Europas in den kommenden Jahren fortgesetzt werden kann. Schlüsselfragen waren: Welche Prioritäten der Sozialpolitik sollen der nächsten Europäischen Kommission vorgeschlagen werden? Wie ist sicherzustellen, dass die nächste Generation von Finanzierungsinstrumenten ein inklusives Wachstum fördern kann?
- Laut Generaldirektor Joost Korte machten die Europawahlen und eine neue Europäische Kommission das Timing der ACIG perfekt: „Wir freuen uns deshalb sehr auf Ihre Diskussionen. Wir brauchen Ihren Input und Ihre Fürsprache.“
- Die Europäische Säule sozialer Rechte steht für das Versprechen, „Rechte zur Realität“ und „Prinzipien zu Politiken“ werden zu lassen sowie „das Soziale ... durch Konzentration auf Arbeitsplätze, Wachstum und Fairness ... in den Mittelpunkt unserer Regierungsarbeit zu stellen“. Die Arbeitslosigkeit liegt bei 6,4 %, dem niedrigsten Wert seit Anfang dieses Jahrhunderts! (Kommissarin Marianne Thyssen)
- Das Europäische Semester ist ein gutes Instrument für Veränderungen, wobei die Europäische Säule mit Unterstützung der organisierten Zivilgesellschaft in jeder Phase präsent ist. Fortschritte wurden auch bei der Schaffung des sozialpolitischen Scoreboards, dem Mindesteinkommen, der durchgängigen Berücksichtigung von Behinderungen, der Agenda für Kompetenzen und dem Rechtsakt zur Barrierefreiheit erzielt, wodurch Produkte und Dienstleistungen leichter zugänglich gemacht werden.
- Es sind jedoch noch größere Anstrengungen erforderlich. Alternde Bevölkerungen und prekäre Beschäftigungsformen setzen soziale Sicherungssysteme unter Druck. Außerdem verschärfen weltweite Herausforderungen wie Migration, Digitalisierung und Klimawandel das Problem.
- Zur Unterstützung schutzbedürftiger Gruppen und zur Verbesserung von Arbeitsbedingungen, Arbeitsmobilität und -sicherheit, der Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie sowie der Gleichstellung der Geschlechter auf dem Arbeitsmarkt ist Solidarität notwendig; neben sozialer Gleichheit, Gerechtigkeit und Lebensqualität erfordern sie alle ein neues Nachdenken über Politiken für nachhaltiges Wachstum, Inklusion und die Schaffung von Arbeitsplätzen.
- Es ist Zeit zu analysieren, welche Elemente der Strategie Europa 2020 funktioniert haben und wo Nachbesserung notwendig ist. Die Einsichten hieraus müssen genutzt werden, den EU-Bürgern näherzukommen. Die Zivilgesellschaft muss über den Tellerrand hinausdenken, Informationssilos verlassen und zur Teilnahme an Gesprächen ermuntert werden. Dies kann zu einer Win-Win-Situation bei kritischen Themen führen.
- Die sieben Workshop-Vorträge der ACIG am Nachmittag lieferten eine gute Zusammenfassung ihrer Schlussfolgerungen und Empfehlungen, die im entsprechenden Abschnitt dieses Berichts zu finden sind.
- Die politischen Entscheidungsträger und die Zivilgesellschaft müssen eng mit den Mitgliedstaaten zusammenarbeiten, die die Politik vor Ort verwirklichen. Dies bedeutet ein besseres Zuhören und eine bessere Kommunikation, da viel auf dem Spiel steht. Nach wie vor sind rund 130 Mio. Europäer von Armut und sozialer Ausgrenzung bedroht.
- Ehrgeizige Ziele für die Zeit nach 2020 sind erforderlich, weil Lücken in den Politiken bleiben, zum Beispiel bei Themen wie Ungleichheit und Diskriminierung sowie Herausforderungen im Zusammenhang mit erschwinglichem Wohnraum und Gesundheit (Probleme, die im Reflexionspapier über ein **Nachhaltiges Europa bis 2030** angesprochen werden).
- Um Ungleichheit zu bekämpfen und eine soziale Einbindung zu erreichen, muss die Sozialagenda Teil einer umfassenderen Agenda sein und deutlich auf höchster Ebene in der Agenda 2030 und der Europäischen Säule sozialer Rechte priorisiert sein. Mehr Gipfel auf höchster Ebene wie in Göteborg 2017 werden gebraucht.
- Konflikte und die Überschneidungen der Prioritäten im Rahmen des Europäischen Semesters, wie z. B. Fragen der sozialpolitischen Steuerung oder das Missverhältnis zwischen Sozialreform und finanzieller Nachhaltigkeit, geben weiterhin Anlass zur Sorge.
- Die Überwindung des Demokratiedefizits und des Vertrauensproblems durch offenen und regelmäßigen Dialog ist der beste Weg, um die EU wieder mit den Menschen in Verbindung zu bringen.
- Die Menschen in den Mittelpunkt der Politikgestaltung zu stellen ist entscheidend. Es erfordert hier aber mehr Verständnis dafür, wie Politiken und Strukturen für mehr Wohlergehen die Produktivität, das Wirtschaftswachstum und stabile Gesellschaften in der Zeit nach 2020 unterstützen.
- Nachhaltiges und inklusives Wachstum müssen durch die Brille einer „Wirtschaft des Wohlergehens“ gesehen werden, die weder neue Kompetenzen noch notwendigerweise neue Strukturen in der EU erfordert, sondern die Nutzung bestehender Strukturen verbessert. Die EU hat hierfür die Politikinstrumente und das Mandat. Es ist aber „politischer Mut“ notwendig, um voranzukommen.

#### » Das Fazit:

- Die meisten unserer heutigen Herausforderungen sind globaler Art (zum Beispiel Migration und Digitalisierung), daher ist die langfristige Lösung eine weltweite Strategie für inklusives Wachstum, die das Wesentliche der Europäischen Säule sozialer Rechte und der **Nachhaltigkeitsziele** (im Weiteren „SDGs“) umfasst.
- Die Kompetenzagenda spricht wichtige zukünftige Arbeitsmarktprobleme an, kann aber noch weitergehen, indem sie Unternehmen und Bildungseinrichtungen zu mehr Kooperation bringt.
- Im Einklang mit den Bedürfnissen von heute müssen soziale Dienstleistungen besser integriert und flexibler werden. Es muss sichergestellt werden, dass „niemand zurückgelassen wird“.
- Der mehrjährige EU-Finanzrahmen und die Programme, die ihn mit den Prioritäten des Semesters verknüpfen, zeigt große Fortschritte und ist vielversprechend, aber weitere Anstrengungen sind notwendig, um „das Europäische Semester sozialer zu gestalten“;
- und eine bessere Kommunikation (sowohl für die Zivilgesellschaft als auch über die Zivilgesellschaft) ist von wesentlicher Bedeutung, um den Anstieg gefälschter Nachrichten und falscher Informationen zu bekämpfen.

## Die ACIG 2019 in Zahlen

- » **35** vertretene Länder
- » **450+** delegierte – Repräsentanten aus allen Bereichen der Zivilgesellschaft
- » **3** hauptredner
- » **5** nebenveranstaltungen
- » **7** workshops
- » **7** speed-Dating-Sitzungen
- » **100+** ideen
- » **1000+** möglichkeiten
- » **400** tweets am Tag, die #ACIG2019 in Belgien bekannt gemacht haben
- » **1902** seitenaufrufe des Live-Videofeeds „Periscope“



## RÉSUMÉ

- L'ACIG, qui entame sa quatrième année, a recherché dans le passé des preuves tangibles de progrès vers une UE véritablement inclusive dans tous les sens du terme, avant de se tourner vers l'avenir et d'évaluer à quoi ressemblera l'Europe sociale après 2020, lorsque la stratégie **Europe 2020** sera en place. L'accent a été mis sur l'engagement permanent des décideurs politiques afin d'adopter un programme social fort pour une croissance et des emplois inclusifs en tant que fondements d'une économie de marché durable.
- Par le biais de présentations, d'ateliers et de sessions interactives, la Convention a donc stimulé l'échange d'idées et de bonnes pratiques concernant les moyens à mettre en œuvre pour poursuivre la construction d'une Europe sociale au cours des années à venir. Questions fondamentales : quelles sont les priorités de politique sociale à proposer à la prochaine Commission européenne ? Comment s'assurer que la prochaine génération d'instruments de financement puisse encourager la croissance inclusive ?
- Compte tenu des élections européennes à venir, de la nouvelle Commission européenne et du nouveau programme, le moment était parfaitement choisi pour organiser l'ACIG, précise Joost Korte, directeur général de la DG EMPL : « Nous attendons vos débats avec impatience. Nous avons besoin d'entendre votre point de vue et vos revendications. »
- L'UE s'est engagée envers le Socle en promettant de « faire des droits une réalité » et de traduire les « principes en politiques » et en plaçant le facteur « social au cœur de notre gouvernance... en nous concentrant sur l'emploi, la croissance et l'équité ». Avec 6,4 %, le taux de chômage est au plus bas depuis le début de ce siècle ! (La Commissaire européenne Marianne Thyssen)
- Véritable outil du changement, le Semestre européen tient compte du Socle à chacune de ses étapes et profite du soutien d'une société civile organisée. Des progrès sont également à épinglez : la création d'un tableau de bord social, le salaire minimum, la prise en compte systématique du handicap, la stratégie en matière de compétences et l'acte législatif sur l'accessibilité qui rendent les produits et services plus accessibles.
- Mais il faudra encore redoubler d'efforts. Les systèmes de protection sociale subissent la pression des populations vieillissantes, des formes non conventionnelles d'emploi et des défis mondiaux tels que la migration, la numérisation et le changement climatique qui compliquent la donne.
- La solidarité est indispensable pour venir en aide à tous les groupes vulnérables, pour améliorer les conditions de travail, la mobilité et la sécurité au travail, l'équilibre entre vie professionnelle et vie privée et l'égalité hommes-femmes sur le marché de l'emploi ; toutes ces thématiques nécessitent une nouvelle réflexion sur les politiques qui promeuvent la croissance durable, l'inclusion et la création d'emplois, de même que l'égalité sociale, la justice et la qualité de vie.
- Le temps est venu d'analyser les réussites et les problèmes identifiés dans la stratégie Europe 2020, et d'utiliser ces conclusions pour se rapprocher du citoyen européen. La société civile a besoin de penser différemment, de s'extraire des silos d'informations et d'encourager la participation active à des débats sur des sujets critiques où chacun y trouve son intérêt.
- La présentation des sept ateliers de l'ACIG, qui a eu lieu dans l'après-midi, a fourni un résumé clair de leurs conclusions et recommandations, à lire dans le chapitre correspondant du présent rapport.
- Les décideurs politiques et la société civile doivent travailler en partenariat étroit avec les États membres qui mettent en œuvre les politiques sur le terrain. Il faudra donc renforcer l'écoute et la communication, car les enjeux sont élevés ; quelque 130 millions d'Européens sont toujours exposés au risque de pauvreté et d'exclusion sociale.
- Des objectifs ambitieux sont indispensables après 2020, car il reste des lacunes politiques en matière d'inégalité, de discrimination, de logement abordable et de santé (problématiques soulevées dans le document de réflexion sur une **Europe durable à l'horizon 2030**).
- L'agenda social doit s'inscrire dans un programme plus vaste et se voir accorder la priorité la plus grande, y compris dans l'Agenda 2030 et le Socle, afin de lutter contre les inégalités et l'exclusion sociale. Il est indispensable d'organiser davantage de sommets de haut niveau comme celui de Göteborg en 2017.
- Les conflits et chevauchements entre priorités au cours du Semestre européen, notamment en ce qui concerne les questions de gouvernance sociale ou le déséquilibre entre réforme sociale et durabilité financière, restent un problème majeur.
- Surmonter le déficit démocratique et les problèmes de confiance par un dialogue ouvert et régulier constitue le meilleur moyen pour reconnecter l'UE avec ses citoyens.
- S'il est crucial de placer l'individu au cœur des politiques, la démarche exige une meilleure compréhension de la façon dont les politiques et structures de bien-être soutiendront la productivité, la croissance économique, l'emploi et des sociétés stables après 2020.
- Une croissance durable et inclusive doit être vue à travers le prisme d'une « économie du bien-être », qui ne nécessite pas de nouvelles compétences ou de nouvelles structures dans l'UE, mais une meilleure utilisation de ce qui existe. L'UE dispose des instruments politiques et du mandat pour atteindre cet objectif, mais il faudra faire preuve de « courage politique » pour avancer.

**» Conclusion:**

- La plupart des défis auxquels nous sommes confrontés aujourd'hui sont mondiaux (c'est le cas de la migration et de la numérisation). Ainsi, la solution à long terme consiste-t-elle en une stratégie globale de croissance inclusive qui capture l'essence du Socle et des **Objectifs de développement durable** (les « ODD ») ;
- Si la stratégie en matière de compétences s'attaque aux problématiques principales du futur marché du travail, elle peut aussi aller plus loin et faire en sorte que les entreprises et les centres éducatifs coopèrent davantage ;
- Les services sociaux doivent être mieux intégrés

et plus flexibles, conformément aux besoins actuels, et veiller à ce que « personne ne soit laissé pour compte ».

- Le cadre financier pluriannuel de l'UE et les programmes qui le relient aux priorités du Semestre sont très prometteurs et portent déjà leurs fruits, mais un effort de chaque instant sera nécessaire pour « rendre le Semestre européen encore plus social » ;
- Une meilleure communication est essentielle (à la fois envers et par la société civile) pour faire face à la multiplication des fausses nouvelles et de la désinformation.

## L'ACIG 2019 en chiffres

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» **35** pays représentés

» **450+** délégués représentant tous les pans de la société civile

» **3** orateurs principaux

» **5** événements parallèles

» **7** ateliers

» **7** sessions de speed dating

» **100+** idées

» **1000+** possibilités

» **400** tweets le jour même, rendant le #ACIG2019 tendance en Belgique

» **1902** vues de la vidéo Periscope en direct



**We need your input  
and your advocacy.”**

**Joost Korte**  
Director-General European Commission

## ◆ INTRODUCTION

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As the Europe 2020 Strategy reaches an end, the Pillar, SDGs and new Multiannual Financial Framework provide the structure for social and economic inclusion in the decade ahead.

The Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth sought to explore the landscape in which these instruments will be played post-2020 against a backdrop of wider societal and global changes and challenges. How can the EU reinvigorate the promise of a Social Europe? What social policy priorities should be proposed to the

next European Commission? How to ensure that the next generation of funding instruments can continue fostering inclusive growth?

Ahead of European elections and a new European Commission, these are indeed burning issues and ACIG's timing could not be better, according to Joost Korte, Director-General of the European Commission's DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion in his introduction; "So, we very much look forward to your discussions. We need your input and your advocacy."







**“Preserve this institution, the Annual Convention! Listen to civil society! If you want a social Europe, you need their knowledge, expertise and also their passion!”**

Marianne Thyssen  
European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility

**Annual Convention  
for Inclusive Growth**  
The future of  
Social Europe post 2020

## ◆ OPENING

### We said we'd do it ... and we have!

**But in many ways the job has only just begun ... putting social at the heart of Europe requires constant vigilance and hard work.**



"We said we'd bring social to the heart of Europe, and we did bring social to the heart of Europe ... by relaunching civil dialogues and rebooting social dialogue," declared Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, during her welcome address at ACIG 2019.

"We did this by focusing on jobs, growth and fairness. Now 240 million Europeans are at work – more than ever before, and unemployment is at 6.4%. The lowest number since the start of this century!"

A crowning moment was the adoption by all Member States of the **Pillar** whose 20 principles corral major social concerns under three broad headings/chapters: **access to the labour market, fair labour conditions, and social protection and inclusion.**

**"There will be those among you who say: 'You haven't done enough!' And I agree. When it comes to social inclusion, it can never be enough. But even so, I am proud of what we have achieved."**

**Marianne Thyssen**  
European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility

Europe has committed to the Pillar, she said, promising to turn "rights into realities" and "principles into policies", and by putting "social at the heart of our governance". This has been achieved by fully integrating the Pillar into the European Semester, the EU's annual cycle of economic policy coordination. A social scoreboard has been developed to follow social developments at a glance. Now the Semester is a true tool for change with the Pillar present in every stage, and all with the help of organised civil society, she added.

The Commissioner spoke of progress with the minimum income, mainstreaming disability, the Skills Agenda, the Accessibility Act making products and services more accessible, and more. "Once again, you were there, at the birth of this."

She cautioned against trying to solve all problems at once. There are still large inequalities in Europe both between and within Member States. Social protection systems are under pressure from ageing populations and unconventional forms of employment. Global challenges like migration, digitalisation and climate change compound the problems facing Social Europe going forward.

"There will be those among you who say: 'You haven't done enough!' And I agree. When it comes to social inclusion, it can never be enough. But even so, I am proud of what we have achieved."

She acknowledged the challenges to preserving Social Europe after the current Commission mandate expires and offered one small piece of advice to her successor: "Preserve this institution, the Annual Convention! Listen to civil society! If you want a social Europe, you need their knowledge, expertise and also their passion!"





## A stronger Union, together

Romania's State Secretary of Labour and Social Justice was welcomed to the floor by Joost Korte who applauded the country's programme and accomplishments since taking over the rolling six-month European Presidency in 2019.

"The Presidency has been a challenge for us, [but also] an opportunity to demonstrate our determination, and to show our support for the European project and that we want to contribute to its development," she said, stressing the importance of implementing the social dimension and the principles of the Pillar in all Member States.

Solidarity is needed to help all vulnerable groups, improve working conditions, labour mobility and safety, work-life balance, and gender equality in the labour market. This is important, she continued, in the context of European elections, and new reflections on policies aimed at sustainable growth, inclusion and job-creation alongside social equality, justice and life quality.

Beyond Europe 2020, the Pillar will be at the heart of economic, political and social development, she suggested, to boost employment, production and social cohesion. The State Secretary mentioned a 2017 **White Paper** on the future of Europe, which she said started the debate on this post-2020 vision, asking what challenges are we going to face together and what is the EU added value in tackling them.

Implementing the Pillar – making full use of social governance to reach social objectives while boosting dialogue with social partners and civil society – is how Member States see progress can be made on the post-2020 landscape. But first, we need to analyse what worked and what needs fixing from Europe 2020, and to use these insights to get closer to EU citizens.

"We want to establish what matters to most EU citizens, and what brings us together to create a stronger Union [with] a social dimension built on common commitments and skills," she added, "with convergence at all levels ... and including partnership with civil society which mirror European aspirations."

ANNUAL CONVENTION  
for INCLUSIVE GROWTH 2019

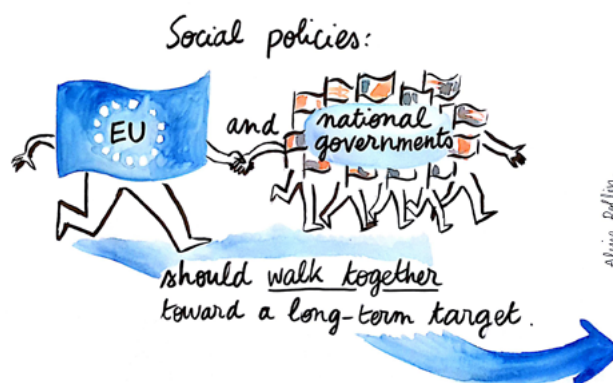
One of the priorities of the Romanian presidency is to develop the social dimension of the EU, through the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.



## From commitment to reality

Commissioner Thyssen questioned how everyone at ACIG can take their joint social achievements over the past five years – "everything we have done together" – to the next level. "Today, it's up to you to discuss how to turn this commitment into reality," she urged, by asking strategic but also concrete questions. How do we reach the SDGs? How do we improve our social governance? What's next for the Disability Strategy? How do we create a culture of lifelong learning? How do we improve our social services? How do we finance Social Europe? How do we communicate Social Europe?

The next Commissioner for Social Affairs will be asking these questions too and will be very interested in answers reached at ACIG 2019, she concluded: "Today, you can send a message to the next Commission, and I will make sure it is delivered."



## ◆ KEYNOTE

# Breaking down barriers so we can all work better together!

**This year's keynote speaker barely needed an introduction. A CNBC host, Bloomberg Television editor, and today director of Fortune Magazine's live media content, Maithreyi Seetharaman appears to be every bit the voice of global business. Wait a minute! Are we at the wrong event?**

ANNUAL CONVENTION  
for INCLUSIVE GROWTH 2019

*If you want to understand  
and move people, you have  
to understand different  
views.*



Maithreyi Seetharaman  
Co-Chair, Fortune Most Powerful  
Women International

No, the whole idea of ACIG is to stimulate debate and look at all sides of the story for realistic ideas guiding Europe's policy-makers in the best direction as they seek to further build and safeguard the Social Europe enshrined in the Treaties.

Ms Seetharaman's background in political-economics and her role as co-chair of Fortune Most Powerful Women International mean she understands how to communicate complex and interconnected subjects to diverse audiences; what it takes to break down barriers and cope with the uncertainty of change and the problem of information bias.

Through an exercise to gauge audience views on what Europeans most worry about, she established from



**“Make them listen and understand their perspective ... You might not be right all the time, so figure out how you can work together towards the solution you want to get to”**

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the start that there is often a mismatch between perception and reality. And how 'real' evidence or facts can be narrow-casted or "cherry picked" to suit the narrative, whether it is economic performance in the USA, inequality in India or social unrest in Europe despite improving growth and jobs.

Businesses are turning around; employment figures are rising: How do people perceive or use these 'facts'? Elected officials may be thinking, 'How do I win the elections with this information?' Joe at home is thinking 'I have a job, but is it going to pay my mortgage?' Civil society is saying 'Poverty is worse!'



*from Maithreyi Seetharaman's speech.*

## Life in a box

According to Ms Seetharaman, stakeholders represent one of three "boxes", which gives them a certain inalienable perspective. They identify or belong in the "business box" or the "societal box" or the "politics and policy box", and thus tend to speak to other people from that box, or sometimes another box only if it affects their life. This means the links between all the boxes are poor. And yet if every single box is interconnected, and with everyone talking to one another in a fully interlaced way, the risk of messages being cherry picked or hijacked by special interests would be much less.

Several personal examples were offered of everyday people and their struggles to make ends meet despite broadly improving economic numbers; revealing their sense of being left behind by technology or a self-interested society. This frustration is manifest in the

protests and palpable anger played out on the streets in Europe and beyond. Similar conclusions were reached in these examples: it is very hard to see the big picture when information is not being shared freely and/or people enter a dialogue with preconceived ideas and end points.

It comes back to the importance of open multi-casted communication, and the ability and desire to see the other person or group's perspective to reach the sort of compromises needed to achieve inclusive growth and better social dialogue. Short films were shown to illustrate the sort of language and 'bigger picture' way of communicating issues, such as disparities in disposable income between EU Member States, and what drives people to migrate for work in higher-paid countries.

Let's think  
out of the boxes!



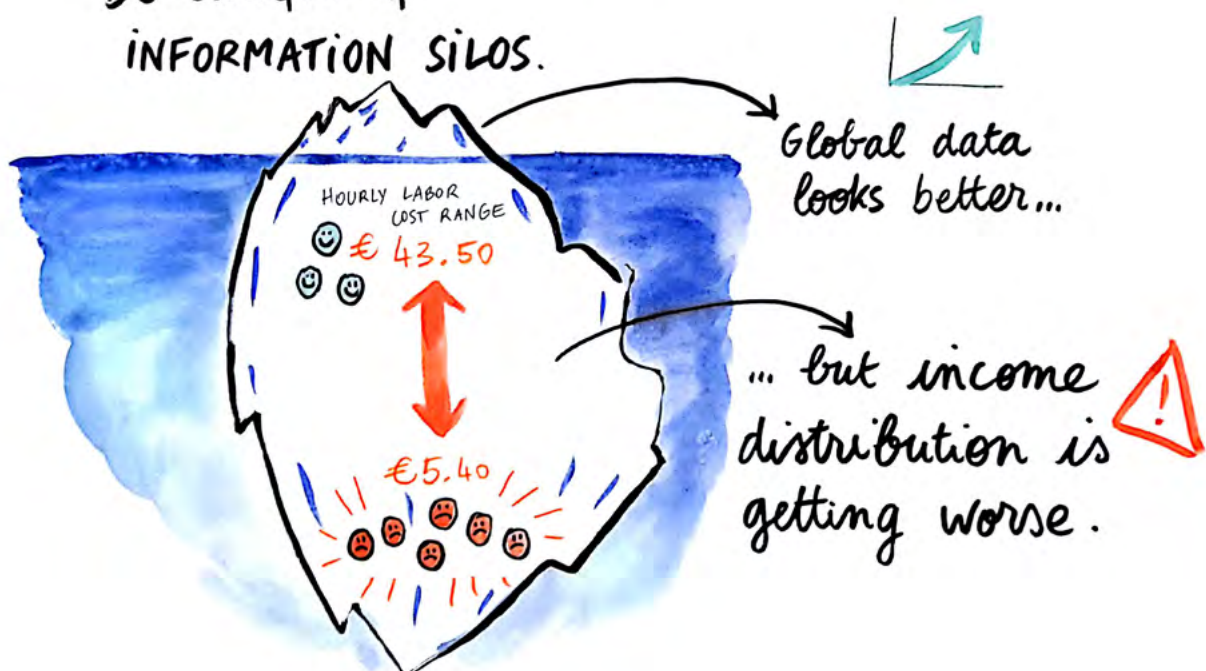
### Conversations that work

"How many people here have sat down with businesses, employees, unions and regulators to have a conversation together about what actually works?" the speaker asked by way of introducing a film on how the Danish have been exercising that kind of multiparty strategy formulation for decades. "It is about having a conversation with the people in the room that matter, about building and keeping trust," she explained. The strategy is then handed to regulators who "make it happen" because they are confident about its pedigree and potential.

She urged civil society to think outside of the box and to get out of information silos: "Go and talk to people you never thought would influence your decision-making or people you think are not listening!"

Making everyone – Joe at home, policy-makers, CEOs, change-makers etc – an active participant in the conversation improves the chances of a win-win for the critical things which are important to civil society, she said: "Make them listen and understand their perspective ... You might not be right all the time, so figure out how you can work together towards the solution you want to get to!"

Be careful of  
INFORMATION SILOS.





## ◆ WORKSHOPS

Taking place less than a week ahead of the European elections, the workshops provided a timely opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the Juncker Commission, and helped to identify key areas where action is still needed, as well as the main challenges and obstacles that the next term of the European Commission will face.

- 1 Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights as the vehicle for the Sustainable Development Goals in the social area
- 2 Improving social policy governance in Europe: cross-sector collaboration, public-private partnerships
- 3 Let's talk to each other: how to improve communication with EU citizens about Social Europe
- 4 Adapting to the future of work: shaping lives and jobs through inclusive lifelong learning
- 5 How the next Multiannual Financial Framework and its funding instruments can be best used for inclusive growth
- 6 The future of the EU Disability Strategy
- 7 Social services: integrated approaches as a means to deliver the European Pillar of Social Rights

Rapporteurs assigned to each of the seven parallel workshops had just a few hours to assemble a set of cogent messages and recommendations to be presented in the afternoon to the whole conference.

## WORKSHOP 1

# Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights as the vehicle for the Sustainable Development Goals in the social area.

The European Commission's reflection paper 'Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030', published in January 2019, aims to stimulate discussion on the EU's vision and strategy for the long-term implementation of the SDGs, as part of a broader debate on the future of the EU and the priorities of the new European Commission. One of these priorities is a socially fair transition to a sustainable economy that leaves no one behind. To this end, the reflection paper highlights the significance of social investments in education, training and lifelong learning, working conditions, healthcare and long-term care, social inclusion, and gender equality.

Three scenarios from the reflection paper were discussed to reveal pros and cons, possible priority areas and targets for the future strategy, and to explore the role of the Pillar in sustainable development and social progress:

- **Scenario 1:** An overarching EU SDG strategy, with concrete targets for 2030 for both the EU and Member States.
- **Scenario 2:** Mainstreaming the SDGs in all relevant EU policies, to ensure the SDGs continue to inspire the European Commission's political decision-making.
- **Scenario 3:** Enhancing the pursuit of external actions, enabling the EU to provide support for improvements outside its borders, while continuing to pursue improvements at EU level.

### What happened in the session?

Participants broke into five discussion groups looking at different social challenges. In the first challenge it was suggested that a new target for the future EU 2030 strategy should aim at reducing poverty and social exclusion by 50 million people. Rising inequality was identified as a second challenge, and addressing it requires concerted actions across all EU policies (intersectional approach). A third challenge identified overarching social and environmental issues, and the need for preventive measures to reduce the impact of climate change on worker health and safety. The European Semester should deepen the social and environmental focus, participants felt. The fourth area

discussed was health and well-being. Mental health was considered equally as important as physical health and must be dealt with across the life cycle. The issue of health inequality was flagged. Housing, education and transport can also impact on health. The fifth area was the future of work and quality of education. Quality jobs, decent work and inclusive education were highlighted.

### Take-homes from the session

- **Strong support:** Backing for an ambitious overarching EU SDG strategy
- **Political will:** Intention and implementation are crucial
- **Poverty:** Europe 2020 target and 50 million reduction by 2030; the role of the Multiannual Financial Framework; implement the Pillar through legislation
- **Rising inequalities:** Mainstream not only social aspects; pursue intersectional approaches, analysis backed by action; all supported by political will
- **Overarching social and environmental:** Preventive measures to reduce climate change; deepen social and environmental within the European Semester
- **Good health and well-being:** Concerns about mental and physical health across the lifecycle; health inequalities and poverty; encompasses all social policies
- **Future of work and quality education:** That means inclusive and high quality; in an uncertain future, education needs to boost resilience in everyone

**"We have to recognise the intersectional experience of inequality ... experienced by different people and in different times in their lives."**





## WORKSHOP 2

# Improving social policy governance in Europe: cross-sector collaboration, public-private partnerships

Often overlooked by the wider public, EU governance involves numerous actors with different views – stemming from diverse political beliefs and economic theories – as well as varying interests. Striking a balance between differing approaches is a challenging and time-consuming task. This applies across the board, including social policy. Notwithstanding the shared political ambitions spelled out in the Pillar, there are significant differences in approaches towards securing and improving social standards.

The workshop sought to identify those differences, presenting the issue from three perspectives: the political-strategic level of the European Commission, the national administrations of the Member States, and the private sector. It explored the role of public-private partnerships, and the extent to which social governance can be implemented with the help of the private sector, in a bottom-up and decentralised manner.

### What happened in the session?

The European Political Strategy Centre's Ruby Gropas recalled the ambitions and priorities of the Juncker Commission (recovery from the crisis; standing up against anti-EU forces; bringing the social dimension back into EU policy-making and strengthening economic governance, i.e. through the European Semester). Rait Kuuse, Deputy Secretary General on Social Policy in the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs and chairman of the Social Protection Committee, stressed the need for more effective communication of social policies, both at national level (explaining their rationale and mechanisms to citizens) and the intra-EU context (making sure that national administrations understand each other's decision-making processes). Introducing the Pillar's principles into national legislation takes time and can backfire if done too quickly, he stressed. Gabriella Sebardt, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, spoke about her country's approach to social governance, which relies on bilateral negotiations and agreements between social partners. She stressed the long tradition (over 100 years) and good outcomes (especially in real wages, lay-off agreements and gender equality) of this approach. Referring to the implementation of the Pillar, Dr Sebardt stressed the importance of sharing good practices adapted to local conditions. Asked about advice for the next Commission, Dr Gropas gave two do's (address fairness in all its aspects – intergenerational, regional, educational; maintain and develop a participatory approach) and two don'ts ("don't take anything for granted, as rollback in democracy is

still possible" and "don't limit social to social" because addressing poverty and skills means dealing with macro-economic issues as well).

### Take-homes from the session

► **EU priorities for social governance for the future:** Address regional disparities, demographic change, technology developments (e.g. "future of work") as a priority; clear political commitment and ensuring civil society participation are key; evaluating the social impact of diverse policies (economy finance, housing, education ...) and setting clear and measurable targets are important; the Pillar remains a compass

► **Social areas to be dealt with at EU or national level, or both:** Both have a role, bearing in mind the subsidiarity principle ... "lowest level is always best" but EU intervention is sometimes needed (e.g. pension rights transfer) and to ensure standards; fixed costs of social policies should stay with Member States (locally taxed) and targeted EU investment is important to support reforms

► **Role of the private sector to improve social policy outcomes:** Social responsibility elements need to be better integrated into private-sector functions seeking profit and growth; collective bargaining in the private sector can stimulate policy changes in social fields; funding should be put to good use (reduce bureaucracy); innovative technologies (artificial intelligence or apps) can support social policies and their implementation

**"For all of this to happen, we need strong political commitment from the new European Commission and Parliament, top down."**

## WORKSHOP 3

# Let's talk to each other: how to improve communication with EU citizens about Social Europe



During ACIG 2019, it became clear that communicating about social issues is instrumental in advancing the social agenda in the EU. Much has been done since the proclamation of the Pillar in November 2017. However, such a vast and challenging undertaking cannot be fully accomplished without a communication strategy.

Communication both reinforces the implementation of the principles of the Pillar and reconnects citizens with the European project. Against the backdrop of increasingly Eurosceptic and populist sentiments, and ahead of a new term for the European Parliament and the European Commission, it is more important than ever to place communication at the core of policy development.

Through real examples, group work and brainstorming, the workshop explored the need for structured communication on Social Europe and reflected on possible methods for reaching out to citizens regarding one of the most sensitive and life-changing issues: social rights. The outcomes of the brainstorming exercise could be used by the European Commission as building blocks for a communication strategy on Social Europe.

**“Talk about social Europe is not a one-way communication exercise. We want to use the tools and language that works best for individuals and more engagement ... Europe needs more superheroes.”**

### What happened in the session?

The workshop was structured into two main parts:

- ▶ Inspiration from panellists (Kathy Lindekens, VRT youth expert; Mercedes Acitores, Interact; Carlos Lozano, Spanish Social Economy Employers' Confederation)
- ▶ Collective brainstorming using the world café method.

Communicating about Social Europe is important, the panellists said, to engage and spark enthusiasm among Europe's youth and citizens using real-life stories. “It is not just about the numbers.” (Carlos Lozano). Citizens are not aware of how EU projects affect their lives in practice and communication on social matters must address this gap by focusing on testimonies and stories with impact. To implement the social agenda, communication must follow a well-planned strategy, focusing not only social media communication because “Tweets are not enough!” (Mercedes Acitores), but on speaking with citizens in meaningful exchanges online and offline to break down the silos through two-way communication. Involving local and regional stakeholders in partnerships is key to understanding and responding to citizens' concerns on social matters. Success factors included: using testimonials, such as the ‘Generation What?’ video project by Flemish broadcaster VRT giving young people a voice and raising awareness on social matters; communication based on feelings and empathy create an authentic connection beyond data and figures; show the cost of a no-Europe scenario on the social agenda, and stress the vital role of the social economy (representing 8% of the EU's GDP and employing 2.8 million Europeans).

Participants came up with answers to three questions and voted on concrete ideas to feed the next Commission's communication strategy for social Europe.

- 1) Why do you think communicating Social Europe is important? To reconnect EU institutions with people, show how the EU impacts their lives in practice, raise awareness on the concrete implications, and empower people and communities, especially those coming from marginalised and vulnerable backgrounds.
- 2) Which audiences do we need communicate with and why? Build a direct relationship with people and gain their trust in the EU institutions. Engage with end-beneficiaries of EU funds and civil society stakeholders to raise awareness and foster the feeling of being part of a European community. Show people outside or unaware of the EU project (e.g. rural populations, the elderly, young people, and those without internet) how it responds to their concerns as well.
- 3) How do we need to

**“Communicating social Europe is of outmost importance to implement the EU social agenda. However, it is critical that communication is integrated at the very start of policy-making and that it is understood not as a one-way supply of information, but as a two-way process which includes the listening of citizens’ concerns, especially of those who are farthest from the EU project. Tweets are not enough – Europe needs more super heroes, will you be one?”**

communicate with these different audiences? Speak to the heart (through testimonials) and the mind (through facts), combine different channels and unconventional methods (TV, songs, etc.) targeted at different audiences. Build partnerships with institutional and non-institutional

actors at the local level to ensure that communication is relevant and cooperate with influencers and ambassadors as advocates of a more Social Europe. “Europe needs more superheroes! Normal people like us who strongly advocate for EU values.”

#### Take-homes from the session

- **Why:** Reconnecting EU institutions and people; raise awareness of #SocialEurope; empower people and communities especially from vulnerable backgrounds; show how EU impact people’s lives
- **With whom:** Actions should be aimed at people directly where possible, especially those furthest from the EU (rural areas, limited internet access, Eurosceptics ...); also aimed at local stakeholders including government, civil society, and at beneficiaries of EU funding
- **How:** Targeting message to audiences is key; speaking to the heart (testimonials) and the mind (facts); direct participation (go local!) is powerful; combine different channels including unconventional ones; explore partnerships; reach out to influencers, ambassadors and heroes

## ◆ WORKSHOP 4

### Adapting to the future of work: shaping lives and jobs through inclusive lifelong learning



Our ways of living and working are constantly evolving, and people need the tools to cope with this changing environment. Lifelong learning is arguably the best social protection that can be offered. Individuals are increasingly confronted with the need to become the architects of their own, unique learning pathways. It is therefore crucial to empower them to do so, while taking into account wider societal changes.

Learning how to navigate the transitions between education and training, and the world of work is key. This may mean returning to education in order to change jobs, going to university after obtaining a vocational diploma, or validating non-formal learning outcomes for further formal learning.

Participants in this workshop looked at the transitions between different sectors, exploring how individuals navigate them and examining what is done or could be done to make these transitions smoother – especially for disadvantaged groups. Different profiles were considered: the learner, the training provider as well as guidance and validation experts. The workshop also examined different sectors of education and training, with a focus on vocational education and training (VET) and adult learning, guidance, counselling and validation of learning outcomes as enablers of lifelong learning.

**“We don’t have to reinvent the wheel. We have to find the resources and make true social investments.”**

### What happened in the session?

Discussion centred around four main themes:

► **Flexibility of education and training:** Learners are asked to adapt to systems rather than the other way round. Learning/career pathways are not evolving in line with constant societal change. Participants cautioned against terms like “atypical pathways ... which don’t exist”; individualised pathways and guidance (tailored pedagogy, innovative ways to assess skills, relevance to labour market, etc.) motivate learners and offer them a new, dignified path to work. Transition between education and training systems (including from country to country) or between education and work needs to be easier. Flexibility should also apply to the way public authorities perceive adult learning providers who must comply with pre-defined standards to receive subsidies while trying to preserve their identity and working methods (especially non-formal learning organisations). Flexibility also concerns the working environments to make sure they are conducive to learning for all workers, including the most disadvantaged.

► **Skills needed today:** “Learning to learn” was considered very important alongside “navigation skills” which include soft skills and personal traits that relate to both professional and personal pathways. Participants called for a better balance between “soft and technical skills”, and the need to promote a lifelong learning culture.

► **Role of support, guidance and counselling:** The example of the Cité des Métiers network showed that a holistic approach to individual support is possible – a one-stop shop where a person can find all the information and services needed, and where providers can experiment with new projects together. A more user-centred approach (less institutional) is best: What problems do people face? How can counsellors empower the end-user?

► **Stakeholder partnerships:** Less silo thinking, more cross-sectorial dialogue leading to one-stop shops are needed to build bridges between education sectors, and education and work. For these partnerships to be sustainable, stakeholders need to increase coordination (speak the same language and share values), define common curricula and skill assessment mechanisms, and develop agreed quality assurance standards. There is no need to “reshuffle the whole system” to forge open and inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships; just widen the circle to organisations who don’t usually get a say. In a collaborative system like this, partners should have equal opportunity to be involved in the governance and monitoring, and to see where the added value is for them.

### Take-homes from the session

► **Value of learning:** Individualise learning pathways and rethink our perception of what is a “valuable” one

► **Variety and identify:** Need to keep on supporting the broad variety of adult learning providers while preserving their identity

► **Always learning:** Promote a culture of lifelong learning, including at work, and the importance of “learning to learn”

► **Getting support:** Acknowledge the essential role of guidance and counselling

► **Added-value partners:** Go beyond standard or recommended stakeholder partnership arrangements, and think about what makes them work; share language and values, added value for each stakeholder, genuine cooperation, build trust via agreed quality assurance standards, etc.

## WORKSHOP 5

# How the next Multiannual Financial Framework and its funding instruments can be best used for inclusive growth

Tackling unemployment and persistently high rates of poverty remain priorities throughout the EU. Social and employment issues are a primary concern and an area where more is expected from the EU and its funding instruments.

“We recommend enabling a long-term strategic approach by strengthening the link between the European Semester and EU funding while embedding EU values throughout.”

In May 2018, the European Commission adopted a proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027. This includes a proposal for the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the main EU instrument to invest in people, and a key tool to strengthen social cohesion, improve social fairness and competitiveness across Europe. ESF+ now incorporates the Youth Employment Initiative, Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, Employment and Social Innovation programme and the EU Health programme, and complements other funds, such as Erasmus, the Asylum and Migration Fund, and the European Regional Development Fund.

These proposals pursue the shared objective of European institutions and Member States working together to deliver the principles and rights enshrined in the Pillar. Offering concrete examples where EU funding has made a difference in promoting social inclusion, the workshop discussed key factors and barriers to success in the design and implementation of projects, and identified recommendations for the programming period following the European elections.



#### What happened in the session?

Four speakers presented different types of practices in a story-telling mode. The first speaker, Patrick de la Hamette (LU), showed how EU funding can improve the digital skills of refugee job-seekers, organise language courses for refugees and digital literacy classes for people who have no prior computing experience. The second speaker, Joaquín Miranda (ES), presented a project designed by the local employment agency of Gijón for 200 youngsters with university diplomas, vocational training or without formal qualifications to fight youth unemployment. This project was funded by the Erasmus+ and the ESF. The third speaker, Patrick Manghelincks (BE), presented a project in which a 'youth work' approach is used to empower and reinforce young people in the urban context. The last speaker, Jitka

Modlitbova (CZ), presented a social housing project to address the needs of vulnerable groups. Participants also shared their insights and experiences related to the key topics. The EU value added was repeatedly highlighted, as none of the projects presented could have been carried out without ESF, Erasmus+ or EaSI programmes, and led to innovative projects and approaches to achieve social change. However, challenges remain concerning limited flexibility, lack of information on access to funding for beneficiaries and involvement of all relevant partners throughout the programming cycle. In this regard, participants claimed that the EU Code of Conduct on Partnership should be revised, and that outcomes should be measured according to the funds' impact on individuals, communities and society. Participants provided a set of recommendations on how to overcome such challenges in order to make the best use of EU funding for inclusive growth.

#### Take-homes from the session

- **Embed a culture of evaluation** based on measured outcomes on individuals, communities and society, and the capacity of those outcomes to respond to the most vulnerable
- **More flexibility** is important to match local needs and foster an integrated, collaborative approach, and not penalise failure
- **Organise partnerships** at the earliest stage of programming to formalise commitment and shared responsibility, and revise the EU Code of Conduct on Partnership
- **Broad definition of social innovation** for the sustainable replication of successful practices also within a combination of private/public funding
- **Enable a long-term strategic approach** by strengthening the link between the EU Semester and EU funding while embedding EU values throughout

## WORKSHOP 6

### The future of the EU Disability Strategy

The workshop provided different perspectives on key concerns and priorities relating to disability policy. Speakers hailing from various organisations promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as specialists in disability policy, shared their field experience on the current situation.

**“The future strategy needs to focus on impact and actions that transform the lives of people for the better.”**

The European Disability Strategy was adopted in 2010 and will end in 2020. As this ten-year period draws to a close, the achievements are clear to see, including the adoption of the European Accessibility Act and the pilot project on the European Disability card. The Strategy has also been used as a tool for implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to which the EU and all its Member States are party. Now, we must take stock, evaluate the results and start preparing for future developments in disability policy at the EU level.

Participants shared their experiences to help address the challenges faced by EU-level policy responses, and their insights informed possible follow-up actions based on existing results and remaining challenges.



**EU DISABILITY STRATEGY:**

*We need more impacts  
and actions that transform  
society and people's lives.*

**What happened in the session?**

Three panellists (Mark Priestly, professor of disability policy at Leeds University, Rodolfo Cattani, European Disability Forum board member, Gerard Quinn, professor of law at National University of Ireland) led discussions on the main challenges; shared competences between EU and Member States; good practices to be shared and channelled into disability policy; and how disabled voices can be better heard in this process. Prof. Priestly offered some background and insight into the current state of play, asking how the Disability Agenda can intersect neatly with other major political agendas ... European Semester, new budget programmes, new European Parliament and Commission, the end of Europe 2020, etc. Disability mainstreaming has increased as visibility and recognition in the EU has grown, it was revealed in the session. Eurostat now includes disability statistics and measures in a more granular way,

but it was felt that more can be done. The real story today is the link between disability and poverty, low work intensity and low incomes etc and other legacy issues that remain despite disability mainstreaming and improving economies. A carefully constructed strategy and priorities are important but policy-makers in consultation with stakeholders always have to think about implementation, how to do it institutionally. A comprehensive framework is needed which covers European strategy, national positions and how to bring all these together to exchange information and improve coordination. For this, "collective ownership" is clearly needed. Other issues raised by the panellists and discussed by the workshop group are summarised in the take-homes that follow.

**Take-homes from the session**

- » **Mainstream disability equality** to reach the 'last mile', the people in most need of support
- » **More impact** and actions that transform society and people's lives
- » **Cooperate more** through inter-institutional activities and align European agendas
- » **Close the gaps** in education, employment and poverty
- » **Full inclusion** by addressing intersectional discrimination
- » **Look ahead** and include answers to future challenges like artificial intelligence and an ageing society
- » **Seven thematic areas** prioritised by disabled persons' organisations

## ◆ WORKSHOP 7

# Social services, integrated approaches as a means to deliver the European Pillar of Social Rights

The Pillar was created to deliver new and more effective rights for citizens. Good quality and accessible social services play a key role in supporting people throughout their lives, in particular those who have found themselves in vulnerable situations. Social services enhance the capacity for citizens to participate in society, live with dignity and enjoy their fundamental rights.

The Pillar, through its principles, underscores the right for everyone to have access to quality social services. However, citizens living below the poverty threshold continue to face many barriers to access these services. In response, the European Commission has recognised integrated approaches as a means to reduce

**"No more silos! An integrated approach doesn't mean bundling all services in the same plan, but as pieces of a jigsaw that can fit together."**



### SOCIAL SERVICES:

An integrated approach doesn't mean bundling all services in the same plan, but as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that can fit together.



entry barriers and to increase the effectiveness of interventions through coordinated and comprehensive measures. Many Member States have been developing these approaches, for people with disabilities, young people or the homeless.

Participants examined the degree to which integrated approaches help to deliver the principles of the Pillar, and how. Sample practices and their transferability were discussed in view of formulating recommendations for national, regional and local level authorities and stakeholders.

#### What happened in the session?

The discussion focused on how an integrated approach to social services can substantially contribute to delivering the majority of the Pillar's principles in a more efficient way. Examples of linkages between various areas, such as integration of social services and unemployment benefits in Spain within the minimum income scheme or employment services and healthcare in Germany, were shared. Information-sharing among authorities and service providers in Rotterdam (NL) was offered as a good practice of one-stop-shop file management. Participants developed on the concept of a "one-stop person" as case manager or service coordinator on the local level. Emphasis was put on the work-life balance principle. Heather Roy of Eurodiaconia highlighted the Swedish example of integrating employment and flexible hours with childcare services to help working women mainly. Policy measures such as carers' leave help to deliver several Pillar principles, including a better work-life balance, accessibility to care, and gender equality. The European Social Network's Alfonso Lara Montero cautioned against a "collective approach" to social rights which are clearly "individual", and he underlined the need to invest in children, which is not only a question of childcare services, but also education and active labour market services. Ruth Owen of FEANTSA, a European federation focusing on the homeless, said her members want integrated services and tailored approaches to boost the availability, accessibility, and quality of the services delivered. She introduced the 'housing first' model to deal with exclusion. And cautioned against working in silos – "an integrated approach doesn't mean bundling all services in the same plan, but as pieces of a jigsaw

that can fit together". Social dialogue including end-user perspectives should include all relevant stakeholders and go beyond the usual social partner negotiations, the group pointed out. And budgets need to be better coordinated and linked to national strategies, leading to effective funding distribution and sustainable financing of all service areas. From local and national inputs, attention turned to the European level and the need for cross-cutting approaches between Directorates-General, mainstreaming of the social agenda, and "clear political commitment".

#### Take-homes from the session

- **Integrated approaches** need to be mindful of key overlaps (education, employment, work-life balance, gender equality etc); action at local level ('one-stop person' or case manager), national level (ensure vertical integration and align budgets with strategies across levels, and EU level (make the Pillar a cross-cutting priority and follow up with legislation and strategy to implement it effectively) is needed
- **Availability, accessibility and quality** of services remain key
- **Take a rights-based approach** (e.g. housing first) and monitor progress
- **Participation and empowerment** with users/beneficiaries as co-producers/creators is vital
- **Coordinate budgets** to deliver on integrated services
- **Include all stakeholders** in a sustainable dialogue (social dialogue, civic dialogue)

**"An integrated approach to social services [demands] a clear political commitment at the top, followed by sustainable financing or open social dialogue and coordination. Taking advantage of integrated approaches in delivering the Pillar requires the involvement of all actors including users. Successive steps should deliver already existing rights and legislation."**

## ◆ REFLECTIONS

### Your homework assignment will be ...

**Panellists were set quite a challenge this year: reflect on what has passed and imagine what will come post-2020 while commenting meaningfully on the messages coming from the workshops in the context of global, EU and national imperatives.**



“We have to monitor progress and follow up where there are gaps in the provision of social rights.”

It was up to the panel to create a cogent picture of what had been discussed up to this point and what could realistically be achieved. First to face the music was the European Commission's Katarina Ivanković Knežević from DG Employment, Social affairs and Inclusion, who gave an insider's view on how information flows from events like ACIG through the EU machinery. She spoke

about the importance of civil society to her personally as Director for Social Affairs and all the topics this has touched, including work-life balance, the social economy, housing and social services, integration concerns. She also stressed the importance of working with civil society on cross-sectoral issues.



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"But we [in this room] are not enough; we also have to work closely in partnership with the Member States who make our policies a reality on the ground," she stressed. And echoing the keynote speaker, she said that means listening to one another because the stakes are high.

The Director touched on the ambitious targets to reduce the levels of poverty and social exclusion, which remain too high, and challenged the room to think about how to bridge the gap towards the EU2020 target in the short time left. She highlighted issues like inequality, discrimination, as well as other challenges, such as availability of affordable housing and social housing, and health. Much of this is addressed in the recent Reflection Paper on **Sustainable Europe 2030**, which presents the option for an overarching EU strategy to guide all actions by the EU and Member States towards meeting the SDGs. She spoke of the great progress made and the unique and crucial role of civil society in all of this, with a special mention for the 'one-stop-person' idea coming out of workshop 7.

The progress is captured in the Pillar, she suggested, and fully implementing it remains everyone's "homework", at EU and national levels, and for civil society, too. "If not the 20 principles in the Pillar, then what?" she posed the hypothetical question.

Kélig Puyet, Director of Social Platform, underlined the critical timing of the event and Mr Korte's remarks earlier in the day and pointed out the need to be ambitious with the social agenda, so that "no one is left behind". There are three key success factors to achieving this, she said.

First, it needs to be part of the broader agenda and clearly prioritised at the highest level – with the 2030 Agenda and Pillar as a compass – to tackle inequality and reach full social protection. More high-level summits like Gothenburg in 2017 are needed for this, she said.

Second, an issue raised in the workshops is the conflict and overlap between priorities under the European Semester, such as issues concerning social governance or the mismatch between social reform and financial sustainability concerns in some countries. "Progress that we can see in some elements of the Semester are not echoed in other elements," she elaborated.

Thirdly, she said, everyone needs to look seriously at ways to strengthen civil dialogue and ensure that it remains at the top of the agenda in the next Commission. With issues of trust a major concern, as mentioned by Commissioner Thyssen in the morning, the best way to reconnect the EU with people is civil dialogue. "I think this is true and we are ready for that, but this dialogue needs to be supported, open and regular ... and to take place at every level of the decision-making process." This imperative goes beyond the social field, she concluded. "It is really a political priority."

Mario van Mierlo, Chair of the BusinessEurope Social Protection Working Group, said he is proud of the European social model, making it one of the best places to live and work in the world. But the challenge before everyone is how to sustain it. While economic recovery has translated into employment growth and signs of poverty reduction, more is still needed because "social achievements can't be taken for granted" in these trying socio-political times.



"Progress that we can see in some elements of the Semester are not echoed in other elements."



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Mario van Mierlo  
Chair, BusinessEurope Social  
Protection Working Group

We as employers  
believe that  
work is the  
future.

Aline Rodin

He quoted a long list of figures to illustrate the importance of job creation and work in achieving Europe's goals, and emphasised the need for attractive conditions for employers to hire workers and for Europe's non-wage labour costs to be kept down, which are currently at around 42%, which is a third higher than Japan and the USA. A key challenge for employers, he said, is dealing with cyclical labour market shortages and structural skills mismatches. He cited the Belgian example where there are currently 140,000 vacancies and 365,000 unemployed jobseekers. Similar figures are found in France and Germany. Forward-looking and targeted education, training and measures are needed to tap into this potential labour resource, he suggested.

Public and private employment services need to be modernised and work together more, especially to tackle the high levels of young people who have fallen by the wayside. Employers want dynamic and inclusive labour markets to be built so those people have access to jobs, and social security (protection) systems should encourage people to work, he stressed.

## The economy of wellbeing

Pasi Korhonen, Director of EU and International Affairs, Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, reflected on future policy directions given so many major challenges like digitalisation and new forms of work. Here, he highlighted resilience and the ability to adapt fast to prevailing conditions as critical in the months and years to come, with the EU all pulling in the same direction to remain a global force.

Placing people at the centre of policy-making aimed at broader economic and social goals is vital, he posited. But greater understanding of how wellbeing policies and structures support productivity, economic growth, employment and stable societies is needed in the post-2020 era which goes beyond sustainable growth in pursuit of an "economy of wellbeing".

"Human wellbeing is of course a value in itself and a starting point of all policies," he cited from the EU Treaty, and investing in wellbeing policies has clear positive economic spinoffs. He offered a range of figures to support this. But this new vision demands more balance

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"Human wellbeing is  
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Pasi Korhonen  
Director of EU and International  
Affairs, Ministry of Social  
Affairs and Health, Finland.



and for sectoral and policy silos to be broken down to benefit fully from the potential synergies emanating from this. The European Semester developed under the current Commission is the key tool for this, he said, but there is still a lot more that can be done to achieve even greater things.

The economy of wellbeing doesn't require new competences, nor necessarily new structures in the EU, but rather improved use of existing ones, he said. "We need policy courage to move ahead and the EU has a mandate for this."

### A good question

Mary Collins of the European Women's Lobby delved further into the 'economy of wellbeing' concept and how it might fit into a wider European strategy on social protection and social security in the coming decade, to put in place a level playing field across Europe that would respond to the Pillar principles.

"That's a good question," said Mr Korhonen. "We want to raise these issues during the incoming Finnish Presidency and hope it will be integrated in the policy

thinking in the next European Parliament, Commission and EU Presidencies."

### One-line future

Sean Klein, ACIG's moderator in chief closed out the session with a single question to all panellists calling for a one-line response: "Looking forward ten years, what in your minds is the main priority area for social policy to achieve the goals that we have been talking about all day?"

"For me it is easy. It would be the elimination of inequalities at various levels – within and between Member States." – Katarina Ivanković Knežević.

"For us it is really to have the social agenda at the top of the policy-making agenda; to involve civil society in the decision-making process." – Kélig Puyet.

"This is easy to echo. Exactly ... what we need to raise these issues at the same level as the Internal Market." – Pasi Korhonen.

"Creating jobs for people and investing in education and training." – Mario van Mierlo.



**"We won't change the world by meeting each other like this; we need to talk to people outside these walls, and for this, civil society plays very important role."**

**Joost Korte**  
Director-General European Commission



## ◆ THE WRAP

# Good reasons to be upbeat, but not complacent

**Based on the critical momentum now reached thanks to the Pillar and unwavering energy coming off delegates at the 2019 ACIG, Joost Korte was upbeat but not complacent about the future of Social Europe under a new Commission mandate and in the midst of great change in the region and beyond.**



As head of the Commission's Directorate-General responsible for all of the EU's employment, social affairs and inclusion policies and actions, Mr Korte offered a heartfelt thanks to organised civil society for what it has been doing over the past five years and for its important contribution to the Pillar, European Semester and ambitious Juncker Commission mandate.

Since the Pillar was declared in Gothenburg less than two years ago, 27 legislative proposals have been tabled, of which 24 have been adopted; two are linked to the Multiannual Financial Framework so can only be concluded later in the year, which means only one has yet to come through.

"Many people now start to wonder ... Haven't we done enough? What can still be done?" he asked. Much has been done, he repeated, but there is no room for complacency. "Because of what is happening outside in the world we need the right policies to deal with that."

He summed up the work ahead in terms of ACIG's general themes:

**The intersection of the SDGs and Pillar;** recognising that most of the big challenges are global (migration digitisation, etc.) and that Europe is not an island, so a global strategy for inclusive growth is the long-term solution.

**The future world of work** which is changing fast and needs skills to match; something that the Skills Agenda addresses but can go further in getting businesses and education centres to cooperate more, empowering people to be more resilient, and finding solutions to precarious jobs. "In fact, the Treaty is out of date in today's labour market!"

**Integrated and more flexible social services;** it is unreasonable to ask citizens to upskill and reskill if the social institutions are behind the times, he suggested. "They need to be in line with today's needs and work better together," he said.

**The European Disability Strategy,** which expires next year, is underscored by a key principle of Europe's social model, that 'no one is left behind', and clearly includes people with disabilities.

**Making the European Semester more social** is a topic that reverberated throughout ACIG this year, he suggested, and while the figures suggest good progress has been made, the level of frustration and social unrest being seen across many Member States raises questions about how it is being perceived or felt.

**The world of money** and the next seven-year MFF; which has earmarked €101 billion for the European Social Fund Plus, with 25% for social inclusion. Europe can be confident that such a long-term budget and plan connected legally to the Semester priorities represents real progress and a great opportunity for civil society to perform its work.

**How to communicate Social Europe better,** and the importance of civil society in getting the message out at local level where real discussion and work is being done. We need to tackle falsehoods and misunderstandings among the public and policy-makers, he said. This is another good reason for everyone to come together at events like ACIG. "We won't change the world by meeting each other like this; we need to talk to people outside these walls, and for this, civil society plays very important role," he concluded. "So, thank you for your presence, and see you again next year."

## SIDE EVENTS

**ACIG's side events have been an opportunity for civil society organisations to showcase their work to the participants of the Convention. Participants have learned about the essential role played by civil society organisations in addressing poverty and social exclusion in the EU. The activities created an open platform for nurturing cooperation and innovative ideas to be taken up in other parts of Europe.**

# 1

### **Lightning talks on access to financial services for all**

Organised by **COFACE - Families Europe; Finance Watch; AGE.**

Millions of families across the EU face large amounts of debt and millions more don't have access to a basic bank account. Others cannot access basic loans such as mortgages to be able to buy a home where they can thrive as a family.

In this session, three experts from COFACE, Finance Watch and AGE platform gave lightning talks on this issue. Each spent 10 minutes explaining why it is important to promote access to financial services and suggested recommendations for actions needed to make financial security a reality for all.



# 2

### **Employment and social benefits: Combatting in-work poverty for persons with disabilities**

Organised by the **European Disability Forum; Inclusion Europe; European Anti-Poverty Network; European Union of the Deaf**

In the context of implementing and assessing the Europe 2020 Strategy, the EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and the Pillar, this side event explored the risk of poverty and social exclusion for persons with disabilities when entering employment. As employment with low wages can create poverty, persons with disabilities are often pushed out of work and into the "benefit trap" where they rely on benefits to survive rather than take the low wages offered.

This event took a constructive approach to the issue by working alongside participants to collectively present policy recommendations for the EU and Member States on how to improve the employment situation of persons with disabilities. The event also explored the threat to freedom of movement posed by a lack of coordination in social security systems across the EU for economically active people with disabilities. It also determined policy recommendations to address this issue.

# 3

### **Independent national defenders for a stronger social Europe post 2020: Using the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Social Charter to advance the Sustainable Development Goals**

Organised by the **European Network of Human Rights Institutions; European Network of Equality Bodies; Council of Europe, Department of European Social Charter**

This event explored innovative practices and tools developed by national equality bodies (NEBs) and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) to address poverty in the EU from a human rights and equality angle.

Based on the longstanding cooperation between NEBs, NHRIs and the Council of Europe's European Social Charter Department, this side event investigated the added value of the synergies between the European Social Charter, the Pillar and the SDGs as three important building blocks to foster inclusive growth in EU post 2020 and to reduce poverty.

Through an interactive roundtable discussion, it showcased the work of NEBs and NHRIs advocating for a human rights-based approach to poverty reduction that emphasises the principle of equality and that no one is left behind.

## 4

**Out-of-box housing solutions for the locked out: How can the EU foster innovation to address homelessness and housing exclusion?**

Organised by **FEANTSA; The foundation Abbé Pierre; Housing Europe**

On average, poorer households in EU countries spend 42% of their income on housing costs, and homelessness continues to rise. This side-event was based on the "Housing Solutions Platform" initiative - a partnership of the Fondation Abbé Pierre, Housing Europe & FEANTSA. It will bring together cross-sectoral actors to discuss innovative housing solutions and cooperation between the actors dedicated to solving the housing crisis in Europe. This side event was designed to promote innovative housing solutions, foster the debate on the need for creativity to house people locked-out of the housing market and to showcase solutions from across housing systems.

## 5

**How can investment in the social services workforce deliver inclusive growth? Innovative approaches in recruitment, retention and training**

Organised by the **Federation of European Social Employers; European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD); European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)**

Social care systems are in urgent need of reform, due to social trends such as an ageing population, more women entering the labour force, and a move towards deinstitutionalisation and person-centred care.

In this side event, a panel discussion presented the state of play for the social service workforce. It explored person-centred approaches, integrated care and technology, new models of equipment and the issue of staff shortages. The discussions also shared best innovative practices of training, recruitment and retention. The panel was comprised of different stakeholders including employers, workers and service user representatives.



## SPEED DATING

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**As in previous editions, speed-dating format fostered information-sharing, the exchange of best practice, insights into new initiatives and the chance to build relationships and networks across Europe.**

### How it worked

In this session, the participants discussed in brief sessions, by moving from table to table, the goals, funding and outcomes of the projects presented. The showcased projects were selected according to their relevance to the theme of inclusive growth, as well as their proven impact, sustainability and transferability to other European countries or sectors.

The following seven speed dating events were organised:

#### » **The impact of having care-experienced young people involved in training care professionals**

Presented by **SOS Children's Villages International** and **SOS Children's Villages national associations**.

For young people growing up in the institutional care system, there is often not enough support providing a smooth transition into adulthood. Together with CELCIS, SOS Children's Villages has developed 'Prepare for Leaving Care Practice Guidance' – a training methodology and manual designed to improve support for care-leavers. Its development was based on evidence collected at the start of the project through desk-research and peer-to-peer interviews between young people with alternative care experience. The project aims to develop and deliver training for care professionals and elaborate policy guidelines so that child protection systems adequately support young people leaving alternative care. Young people were placed at its heart, providing input throughout all the project activities and drawing on their personal experience and the challenges they faced when aging out of care.

The key findings of the training assessment show that the training is having positive outcomes on the support offered to care leavers, including: the relationship between professionals and care leavers, the ability to listen and communicate with young people, and greater awareness and response to the emotions and feelings of individual care leavers. Planning and monitoring has improved as well as cooperation with others (inter-sectoral approach). In some countries, the legal framework could be impacted, too.

The activities in this project are easily transferable. SOS Children's Villages is currently transferring them to 5 more EU Member States, with the support of a grant from the European Commission.

#### » **Perichoresis-Refuaid/Help Refugees: A holistic integration project**

Presented by the **Perichoresis** and **Eurodiaconia**

Perichoresis was established in October 2016 by the Greek Evangelical Church of Katerini and is running a long-term integration project funded by RefuAid and Help Refugees.

The ground-breaking integration program takes a holistic community-based approach, currently helping over 60 people in 10 houses. It currently supports 2 local and 8 refugee families with recognised resident permits, by providing suitable and secure housing in the city centre, access to medical care, psycho-social support, legal support, educational support, career development, language opportunities (English and Greek), cultural information, financial planning help, social events and more.

Every family receives individual care, which acknowledges their unique experience, needs and plans for the future. By overcoming challenges together, the programme has witnessed participants offered opportunities to learn, to belong and to contribute. Almost half of the adult participants have been in employment, both temporary and permanent, working in a range of industries from agriculture to interpretation and machinery.

The project could easily be adopted by any humanitarian organisation in Europe and could be implemented in both large and small cities. Perichoresis is more than willing to share any information concerning the implementation of the integration project.



» **Childonomics – Measuring the long-term social and economic value of investing in children**

Presented by the **Eurochild** and **Oak Foundation**.

Childonomics is a research project aimed at developing a tool to determine the long-term social and economic return of investing in children in national and sub-national contexts. With this tool, Eurochild aspires to prove that implementing children's rights is not only a human rights obligation but also makes economic sense.

Childonomics aims to show that investment in high quality, universal and free public services, made accessible to all children and families, is the most important way governments can help families to provide a nurturing environment for children, and ensure children get the necessary and timely professional support to learn and grow to their full potential.

Childonomics can be considered as a: philosophy, which takes a system-wide perspective; tool to compare and contrast policies and services, and better understand what outcomes they deliver for children, families, the community and society; tool for capacity building and research.

The Childonomics methodology presents information in such a way to support users in forming judgements on the services being analysed, and to highlight gaps in knowledge and the need for investment in monitoring systems and further research. Eurochild is working on the possibility to pilot the methodology in other national contexts.

» **Abilities On the moVE (ABOVE)**

Presented by the **Conseil départemental du Val-de-Marne** and **European Network of Social Authorities (ENSA)**.

The "Above" project, funded by the Erasmus + programme, addresses the issue of overcoming social and employment barriers for persons with disabilities. The project focuses on the person, social services (professionals, service providers) and carers. This inclusive approach requires innovative practices and vocational training methods.

It identifies and evaluates the needs of persons with disabilities and of the professionals in vocational training to better enable the integration of persons with disabilities into employment. The sharing of best practices leads to the formation of strategies and recommendations for service providers and funding authorities.

The project aims to share knowledge and outputs with policy makers, social service providers, enterprises, the educational sector and carers at the European, national and local level. Thanks to the coordination of the Conseil départemental du Val-de-Marne in France, the learnings have already been designed and used by the following partners: Université Paris Est Créteil, France; Bubamara Udruuga osoba s invaliditetom Vinkovci, Croatia; Veneto Lavoro, Italy; Municipality of DIMOS AGION ANARGIRON-KAMATEROU Greece; ENSA-European network of Social Authorities.

» **Social Engagement Framework for Addressing the Chronic Disease Challenge (SEFAC)**

Presented by **Erasmus University Medical Centre, Rotterdam** and **European Local Inclusion** and **Social Action network (ELISAN)**.

Funded by the European Commission's 3rd Health Programme, SEFAC takes a community approach to promoting health and reducing the burden of chronic health problems. The programme is designed to empower people to take control of their own health. Taking a grassroots approach to health, it uses community volunteers and stakeholders to help promote good habits and good health in their areas.

Four regional pilot projects in Rijeka, Treviso, Rotterdam, and Cornwall have been set up. 1000 citizens participate in community meetings and disease prevention workshops and management. The workshops address training the mind and body for health and wellbeing, healthy habits and a healthy mindset. Mindfulness and compassion-based interventions are used to help citizens develop a positive attitude to health. By offering people community-centred services, SEFAC helps people to build self-confidence, identify their goals and reach their dreams.

The project outcomes have been used to develop a "Social engagement toolkit", which includes a trainer programme with best practices and training material. There is also an SEFAC app to help improve behavioural lifestyle changes. SEFAC was modeled using the Social engagement toolkit developed by AGE UK Cornwall and NHS England.

» **Preventing Childhood Disorders through Integrated Early Intervention Services**

Presented by **Theotokos Foundation** and **European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR)**

Community screening program in local childcare centres for the early identification of children at risk of developmental delay (2 – 4-year-olds). Identified children are referred for further diagnosis to access the appropriate external services or to attend the early intervention programme. Mildly at-risk children's parents attend information sessions.

The on-site programme targets young children (2 – 5-year-olds) with developmental disorders who receive daily intensive intervention from an interdisciplinary team. The main goal is inclusion in kindergarten. Once the child meets the criteria, the integration process begins with a support assistant facilitating the gradual transition and inclusion of the child.

Throughout the programme, parent education and support are provided individually and/or in group sessions to empower parents in facilitating their child's development and participation in life.

Early intervention for preschool children reduces the need for special education and treatment during the school-age period. The empowerment of parents

through education and active engagement in therapy sessions increases the success of interventions. The use of integration assistance during the kindergarten inclusion phase increases the likelihood of successful inclusion.

Benchmarking meetings have been conducted with other early intervention centres in Greece. The Theotokos Foundation trains students from various fields (speech therapy, occupational therapy, psychology etc.) and is a popular programme for observation visits (university students, local councils). Screening practices are easily transferrable and have been proposed for an Erasmus+ programme this year.

► **INNO-WISEs: Be WISE nowadays: invest in technologies!**

Presented by **Fondazione Politecnico di Milano among other organisations all over Europe and European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE)**

The project will promote sustainable and integrated territorial approaches to tackling the weaknesses of the WISE (Work Integration Social Enterprises) sector in Central Europe. It will focus on technological and managerial skills, which are largely lacking in the sector

particularly in Central Europe, compared to other EU countries (e.g. France, UK, etc). The INNO-WISEs project will tackle these weaknesses by improving the capacity of WISEs to offer qualified jobs to disadvantaged groups, therefore contributing to greater social cohesion.

It will implement an integrated approach, tackling all development needs of the sector from technology gaps to skills shortages, and produce specific outputs for the WISE sector, including a knowledge management framework, a flexible ICT platform, training programmes etc. The project is expected to significantly change the entrepreneurial mind-set, skills and attitude of the sector by building and promoting a stronger culture of entrepreneurship and greater social innovation capacities. INNO-WISEs is a ground-breaking project for the social economy sector, helping enterprises use technologies and skills currently out of their reach and will represent a turning point for their development.

The project has been conceived in a way that ensures that outputs can be replicated in other Central European areas and partners. The outputs developed during the project will be transferred to additional target audiences, particularly WISEs and public authorities, in Central European regions outside the project partnership through targeted communication activities (e.g. publications, seminars etc.).



# THE OPENING SPEECH OF MARIANNE THYSSEN

**EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills & Labour Mobility**



Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends.

It is good to see you again.

Three years ago we started a journey together. In 2016 we organised this conference for the very first time.

Because we wanted to send a signal. A signal that we need to reconnect our policies with our people.

The best way of doing that is through civil dialogue. Because the strength of democracy is pluralism. Our democracies are only strong if all voices are heard. If the needs and hopes of all people are taken into account.

And you are that voice.

When I look through my notes for this same conference three years ago, I have to smile.

I told you then about our ambitions and plans. Plans that you helped to shape with your input and constructive criticism.

And – together with you – we realised almost every single one of these plans. This is also your achievement.

We said we'd bring social to the heart of Europe. And we did bring social to the heart of Europe.

We did this by focussing on fairness, jobs, and growth. And now 240 million Europeans are at work – more than

ever before. Unemployment is at 6.4 per cent. The lowest number since the start of this century.

And in 2017, there were 4.4 million fewer people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU, compared to pre-crisis levels in 2008.

While we are still far from our Europe 2020 goal, this is real change for the better for ten million people, since the peak in 2012.

We brought social back to Europe by relaunching civil dialogue and rebooting social dialogue. By making labour mobility fairer. By fighting cancer-causing chemicals in the workplace.

Our most important achievement was launching – with your help – the European Pillar of Social Rights.

A Pillar that consists of 20 rights and principles, dealing with three main issues: equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair labour conditions, and social protection and inclusion.

The rights of the Pillar directly concern the everyday life and the future prospects of many of the people, civil society represents. Children. Pensioners. People experiencing poverty, including the homeless. People with disabilities.

The whole of Europe committed to the Pillar. The Commission. The European Parliament and the Member

States promised to turn rights into realities and principles into policies.

And let me tell you something. It really works. Member States are keeping their promises. Two weeks ago I was in Lithuania, where the Minister of Social Affairs told me they had set up a working group, to see how they could implement the Pillar in their country.

This is of course a wonderful example! And I am confident that – thanks to your advocacy and support – many will follow.

We said we would put social at the heart of our governance.

And we did this, by fully integrating the Pillar into the European Semester, our annual cycle of economic policy coordination.

We developed the social scoreboard, which allows us to follow social developments at a glance.

And now we can see that the Semester is a true tool for change. When we started, we said that all Member States should have minimum income schemes. Today, this is a reality.

We now must make sure these schemes are adequate and reach all people in need.

We have made the Pillar present in every stage of the Semester. In our Country Reports. And in our Country Specific Recommendations.

That means you have a direct impact on all stages of the Semester process. Your input and data – be it on homelessness, deinstitutionalisation, poverty – helps us to improve and strengthen our analysis.

The Commission is leading by example to implement the Pillar.

With new rules on work-life balance. These will help men and women to share caring responsibilities equally. To care for children, the sick, the elderly.

With new rules that protect precarious workers – also in the new economy.

With a Recommendation to give everyone access to social protection. And all member states have committed to present national plans about how they intend to carry it out.

Five years ago, we also said we would boost the skills of people. Including the basic skills of 61 million Europeans with low qualifications.

And we did what we promised, by launching our European skills agenda. All of its ten actions are now fully up and running.

We said we would make products and services more accessible.

And we have made them more accessible. The Accessibility Act brings accessible e-books and e-commerce. Everyone will benefit, from easy to use ticket and bank machines or phone apps.

And once again, you were there, at the birth of this Act.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have done, what we said we would do and more. We could have achieved none of this without your help.

Some of you will say: you haven't done enough. And I agree. When it comes to social progress and inclusion, it can never be enough.

But at the same time, we need to appreciate what has been achieved. And don't get me wrong. It's not because I want applause.

## ANNUAL CONVENTION FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH 2019

Three years ago we started  
a journey together. Today,  
I am proud of what  
we achieved!





It is to show to the sceptics that Europe works for its people. And yes, we can do more and better. But only if we work together, in Europe.

Next week we will have elections. Crucial elections that will decide the course of European policy. And the future of social Europe.

I know that some people fear, the social will disappear after our mandate ends. Some, may even hope so. But I don't think so.

There are still large inequalities in Europe. Between and within Member States.

Demographic ageing, the flexible labour market continue to put our people, businesses and social protection systems under pressure.

And we live in times of great change. Migration. Digitalisation. Climate Change.

If we really want to tackle those challenges, we need a strong social Europe.

The Pillar is our compass for today and tomorrow. It will continue guiding decision makers in the future, so that Europe can tackle the challenges of the 21st century.

We have laid the basis. But our work doesn't stop here. The challenges don't stop here. Change doesn't stop here.

The next Commission has to make sure that everything we decided under this mandate, is implemented.

And we must continue to deliver on the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Because in the face of increased global competition, Europe and its Member States have only one option; to invest in our biggest asset. Our people.

Starting from the cradle; by ensuring all our children have access to quality childcare, education and healthcare.

And throughout their lives; with lifelong learning; quality social services; adequate social protection for all; quality healthcare and long-term care; affordable housing.

A changing world also has to be an inclusive world. Just think about it:

Migration is not only about protecting borders. It is also about integration.

Digitalisation is not only about technology. But also about education and social protection.

Climate change is not only about emissions and energy. But also about sharing burdens, creating new opportunities and ensuring social fairness.

So I am sure the social is here to stay. And I'm not alone.

Just under two weeks ago I was in Sibiu, in Romania.

There, European leaders reaffirmed their belief that united we are stronger, in a changing world.

In Sibiu, European leaders committed to uphold the principle of fairness. They committed to further reduce disparities. And to always help the most vulnerable in Europe.

Today it's up to you to discuss, how to turn this commitment into reality.

That means asking strategic questions like:

How do we reach the sustainable development goals?

How do we improve our social governance?

What's next for the Disability strategy?

It means asking very concrete questions.

How do we create a culture of lifelong learning?

How do we improve our social services?

How do we finance social Europe?

How do we communicate social Europe?

I know one thing for sure: the next Commissioner for Social Affairs, will also be asking these questions.

And she or he will be very interested in your answers.

Today you can send a message to the next Commission. And I will make sure it will be delivered.

And there's one message I will certainly pass on to the next Commissioner:

Preserve this institution, the annual convention. Listen to civil society.

If you want a social Europe, you need their knowledge, expertise and passion.

Let me end on what's maybe an emotional note.

This will be my last Convention on Inclusive Growth.

At least as Commissioner – who knows what the future brings –

If people ask me: what inspired you most as Commissioner.

I say: civil society.

It's you who turn outsiders, into insiders.

You reminded me every single day: this is what all our work is about: About people.

I wish you a very successful conference. Above all I wish you a very successful, happy and social future.



## Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth 2019



The future of Social Europe post 2020

# USEFUL LINKS

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### **ACIG website**

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&langId=en&eventsId=1394&furtherEvents=yes>

### **Newsletter**

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