

Speaking points by Commissioner Thyssen on the 2016 Employment and Social Developments in Europe review (ESDE Report)

Speech by Commissioner Thyssen in charge of Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility

Ladies and gentlemen,

From my first day in office, my priority has been investing in Europe's people; because the European Union is and should be first and foremost about improving our people's lives and future.

Today I am here to present to you this year's review on Employment and Social Developments in Europe.

Let me start with some positive messages about the strong recovery on the labour markets.

We have reached the highest employment rate ever recorded in the European Union, 71.1 percent.

Today, there are over 234 million women and men at work, which is the highest number of employed people ever registered.

Unemployment has decreased steadily. It is now at its lowest level since the peak of the crisis.

And since 2013, 10 million new jobs have been created. 80% of these new jobs are full time, 20% are part time. And 70% of the jobs are on permanent contracts, 30% on temporary contracts.

Moreover, disposable household income reached the level of 2008 by 2015 and its growth continued to strengthen in 2016.

And also crucial, average living standards in the EU have improved steadily over recent decades, from one generation to the next.

But how do we make sure this trend continues? How do we make sure that our children, and future generations, will not be worse off than their parents?

This is why in this year's review we looked more closely at generational inequalities.

What evidence do we find to believe that the current young and future generations might be worse off?

And even more important, what policy initiatives are needed to address these inequalities?

The report highlights three challenges that will have a high impact on future generations:

Firstly, the **crisis** hit younger workers harder than the older ones. Unemployment is still higher for young people than for the older generations.

Secondly, technological evolutions have opened up unprecedented opportunities. At the same time they are changing the way we work. Atypical forms of work have increased and working careers now have less stability.

Moreover, while in-work poverty rates vary considerably across Member States, in-work poverty in the EU-28 increased as a result of the crisis (from 8.3% in 2010 to 9.5% in 2015). This was in particular the case for temporary and part-time jobs which constitute a big share of job-opportunities for the young.

Thirdly, we looked at demographic change. The EU's **working-age population** is expected to decline by 0.3% every year until 2060, while the number of over-64 year olds will increase by 1.6 %. This means that in 2060, for every retired person there will only be two people of working age, compared to four today. The consequences are clear:

Fewer people will pay into our pension systems.

And they will need to pay higher contributions to pension schemes than their parents, while their pension levels will be lower, in comparison to wages. This means that there will be a **double burden** on future generations.

The difficulties young people face, affect their income and make them increasingly vulnerable on the labour market. Young people working in non-standard employment are less protected by the welfare state systems due to lower benefit coverage.

Due to these developments, younger people also tend to postpone important life decisions, such as living independently, buying a house and starting a family.

These are developments we need to take very seriously because they have serious negative impacts for individuals' lives but also beyond it. They may be undermining social cohesion, growth perspectives and sustainability.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The results of today's report give us relevant evidence, information and guidance to underpin and develop future political action.

First of all, I already mentioned the need for pension reforms.

And secondly, one of the most promising paths of action is to **invest in people's employability**.

30% of the EU working-age population is inactive: 90 million people in the whole EU. **We cannot afford ourselves to leave our human resources untapped.** We need to help people into work throughout all generations, and continue to foster quality job creation and investment in parallel.

Finally, we can only be effective if we act jointly, each at the level of their competence: Member States, regional and local governments and of course, social partners.

From our side, the Commission supports and helps Member States to invest in human capital and in active labour market policies through the **European Semester** and the **European Social Fund**, the **Youth Guarantee**, the **Youth Employment Initiative**, and more recently the **Youth Package: With Erasmus Pro** and the **European Solidarity Corps** we want to create new and more **opportunities for our young people.**

The **New Skills Agenda**, which is being rolled out at a good pace and supports the development of citizens' skills to ensure their employability in the changing world of work. And our flagship initiative, the **European Pillar of Social Rights**. Its 20 principles and rights serve as a compass towards fair and well-functioning labour markets and social protection systems, against the background of the challenges I mentioned earlier.

Our follow-up initiatives on **Written Statement and Access to Social Protection** – on which we launched a social partners' consultation – aim to ensure clear working conditions and access to social protection also for those in non-standard types of employment and self-employment.

And of course, our initiative on **Work-Life Balance**, which aims at supporting parents and carers who will enjoy a better balance between their private and professional lives and increasing women's participation in the labour market.

I hope that today's Employment and Social Developments Report will inspire Member States and social partners to take action, which is in the interest of us all. It shows the relevance of what is in the European Pillar of Social Rights. This is why I hope that the Pillar will be proclaimed jointly by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission before the end of the year to support further action at national level.

Leaving our young people behind is putting at risk our own future: our growth, our welfare, our social model. We owe it to the younger generations to do everything we can to give them at least the same, if not more, chances to advance and prosper in life.

Thank you.

Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of Momondo by Priceline

Priceline operates online travel agents and travel comparison metasearch sites, under several brand names including booking.com, priceline.com, agoda.com, KAYAK Rentalcars.com and Opentable. Momondo Group is primarily active in the operation of metasearch sites, under the brands Cheapflights and Momondo. The Commission assessed the impact of the proposed transaction on markets for the operation of metasearch sites in the European Economic Area (EEA). Metasearch sites, on the one hand allow travellers to search for and compare travel products. On the other, they offer advertising services to online travel agents and travel service providers, such as airlines, hotel operators, and car rental companies. The Commission also examined a number of vertical relationships arising from the merging companies' activities in the operation of metasearch sites and their activities in operating online travel agents downstream.

The Commission's investigation found that:

- The companies' metasearch activities are largely geographically complementary in the EEA, as Priceline has limited activities in the Nordic countries, where Momondo has a strong market position. Conversely, in countries like Germany and Austria, Priceline's brands have a stronger market position and Momondo is weaker. Therefore, the strengthening of the merged entity's market position in EEA markets will be limited.
- The merged entity will be competing with several other global meta search operators, such as Skyscanner, Trivago, TripAdvisor, Google (through Google Hotels and Google flights), as well as by operators of smaller, regional or national, meta search sites.

The Commission therefore concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns on any of the markets examined.

Companies and products

Priceline Group of the US supplies services in 224 countries and territories in Europe, North America, South America, the Asia-Pacific region, Middle East and Africa.

Momondo Group of the UK provides services in the online travel sector in 35 international markets with a focus on the Nordic region.

Merger control rules and procedures

The transaction was notified to the Commission on 12 June 2017.

The Commission has the duty to assess mergers and acquisitions involving companies with a turnover above certain thresholds (see Article 1 of the [Merger Regulation](#)) and to prevent concentrations that would significantly

impede effective competition in the EEA or any substantial part of it.

The vast majority of notified mergers do not pose competition problems and are cleared after a routine review. From the moment a transaction is notified, the Commission generally has a total of 25 working days to decide whether to grant approval (Phase I) or to start an in-depth investigation (Phase II).

A non-confidential version of today's decision will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.8416](#).

[Fusionskontrolle: Kommission gibt grünes Licht für Übernahme von Momondo durch Priceline](#)

Roaming charges ended in the European Union on 15 June 2017. Europeans travelling within EU countries will 'Roam Like at Home' and pay domestic prices for roaming calls, SMS and data. ...

On 23 June 2016 citizens of the United Kingdom (UK) voted to leave the European Union (EU). On 29 March 2017 the UK formally notified the European Council of its intention to leave the EU by...

Over the past 20 years, the European Union has put in place some of the highest common asylum standards in the world. And in the past two years, European migration policy has advanced in leaps and...

'Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.' Robert Schuman 9 May 1950 On 25 March 2017, ...

In response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and deliberate destabilisation of a neighbouring sovereign country, the EU has imposed restrictive measures against the Russian Federation. Overview...

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker delivered his annual State of the Union speech at the European Parliament on 14 September 2016, just two days ahead of the informal meeting of 27...

Enlargement is the process whereby countries join the EU. Since it was founded in 1957, the EU has grown from 6 member countries to 28. Any European country that respects the principles of liberty,...

[Digital Single Market conference on the free movement of data](#)

Closing speech by Vice-President Andrus Ansip in charge of the Digital Single Market

Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

We have heard a lot today about the importance of data and of getting it to flow without restraints.

Different situations in the public and private sectors, bottlenecks holding up data flows. Some expectations and possible ways forward.

While we do not yet have all the answers, I would like to thank everyone for today's valuable and varied contributions.

One thing I do know is that today's situation regarding data in Europe has to change. We plan to make that happen as part of the plan to build a Digital Single Market.

And as soon as possible. For a start, we urgently need to address data localisation rules. But this is not the only issue.

There are many other aspects of data to be looked into – for example, how we can further free up publicly funded data.

Or how we improve data analytics capacity in Europe.

It is also important how we look at legal clarity concerning autonomous systems, so as to strike a balance between the needs of users and the responsibility of operators and manufacturers.

This is about making the best value of data and facilitating imaginative new uses of data. It is about access to data, for more data to be available to more people.

The real value of data will only come out if it can be used to the full. That will lead to more development of the data economy, bringing more growth and jobs.

Take the huge potential in geographical and weather information, traffic data, general statistics, data from publicly funded research projects, and certain books from libraries.

All this data can be re-used in new products and services, in both the public and private sectors. It can stimulate new markets, businesses and jobs by adding innovation value to the data that was gathered in the first place.

For example, Scania now has a quarter of a million connected vehicles around the world. They make a vast amount of valuable information available in real time to the truck owners.

Of course, most of this is commercial data.

But there is a lot of other useful data that is collected: weather, road and traffic conditions. This data has a lot of potential for re-use and does not necessarily have any direct commercial value for the truck owners or for Scania.

Our task now is to incentivise private companies to make these types of general interest data available for public administrations or even startups to use.

Imaginative re-use of data is something we should encourage and facilitate more widely, within and between other sectors. But that will not happen if data cannot flow freely and smoothly, nationally and internationally.

Data is not only the basis of our digital future and prosperity.

It is a valuable resource in itself.

Keeping that resource unnecessarily stuck in national data centres or in a certain geographic area means that it cannot be used to its full potential.

It means that data cannot be easily traded, exchanged or re-used in new imaginative ways.

This is holding up the Digital Single Market.

It is holding up small and medium enterprises and startups from scaling up and expanding.

It is holding up our progress in fast-growth sectors like the Internet of Things and cloud computing services.

I would call this is a waste. And an expensive waste as well.

The core of the problem remains the same: national requirements on processing, storage and transfer of data.

You could also call them data protectionism, or data nationalism.

Digital borders, or a non-tariff barrier to trade.

But whatever their name, rules forcing data to be stored unnecessarily within national territory do not make sense in the Digital Single Market. There is no place for them.

Ladies and gentlemen: I know that you are familiar with much of the situation that I have just described.

Let me now explain what the European Commission is planning to do about it.

We have taken time to learn more about the scale of the problem and how best to move forward together with EU countries and all parties concerned. This approach has paid off.

We have identified two wider dimensions to address.

The first is a lack of legal certainty about applicable rules and practices when it comes to data movement, outside the situations covered by the General Data Protection Regulation.

The result? Data localisation becomes the default option. We want to avoid this.

The second is a lack of trust in cross-border storage and processing of data.

Unfortunately, the result is the same. Data localisation again becomes the preferred option, for both public and private sectors.

One way forward would be to establish free movement of data as a basic principle in EU law.

We are also working on other principles in this package such as the principle of availability of data, even when it is stored in other EU countries, when public authorities need it.

This could be for taxation or business register purposes, for example.

And we are looking into improving the situation for switching cloud service providers. The main idea is that the user should be able to transfer data fast and without re-entering it manually.

Commission experts are now working on an impact assessment, which is a necessary step before making any legal proposal. On that basis, we would prepare such a proposal, with the aim of presenting it this autumn.

As we know, it is often not easy to draw the line between where personal data ends and non-personal data begins. That is why our starting point is the EU's recent General Data Protection Regulation.

The more general debates on data are continuing. We know there are concerns about using data generated in an industrial context and about legal clarity concerning autonomous systems.

As I said at the start: we do not yet have all the answers and our work

continues.

But, if we can get rid of needless national and local barriers to data flows, as well as address the underlying uncertainties, then everyone stands to gain: companies, governments and consumers.

In the end, people, businesses and public administrations must be able to go digital with confidence.

Sorting out today's situation would send a clear political message that Europe is open for business.

That will be essential as we build a cross-border and data-focused economy.

Let's make sure that we do not miss the boat. Thank you."

Procedure for reporting of circuit breakers' parameters by NCAs to ESMA

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