

# Future of Work: High-level conference discusses how the EU can face challenges and grasp opportunities

At the Conference hosted by President Jean-Claude **Juncker**, Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis** and Commissioner **Thyssen**, around 500 participants, among them Ministers, representatives from EU institutions and agencies, national governments, social partners, civil society and academia explored how to best harness changes in the world of work for the benefit of workers, businesses, society and the economy alike. The transformations that are taking place at a fast pace have prompted the European Union to take action to ensure that Europe's employment and social policies remain fit for the world of today and tomorrow. With the Proclamation of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), the EU established 20 principles and rights essential for fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems in the 21st century. Today, work is ongoing to ensure its implementation at EU and Member State level.

Vice President Valdis **Dombrovskis** said: *"Rapid technological development and the digital transformation have the potential to increase economic growth. But it must be inclusive growth – and the key to that is to keep Europe on the path of upward convergence. It is by winning the 'race to the top' that we can enhance economic and social cohesion across the EU."*

European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen** underlined: *"In a changing world of work, we cannot just expect people to get ready for and adapt to change. We, as policy makers, must also adapt our social institutions, our rulebooks and education systems to support people, so that people can be confident about their future, and the future of their children, also in the new world of work."*

## **Key messages**

The following ten takeaways emerged from the discussions:

1. **The world is changing:** the European Union, like all other parts of the world, is being transformed, and often challenged, by mega-trends such as digitalisation, globalisation, migration, climate change, demographic change, notably ageing.
2. **The future of work is NOW:** changes on the labour market are happening now and they are irreversible – for example, automation and new business models, like the platform economy, which are enabled by digital technology.
3. **The EU provides a reference point and support to face these challenges:** the European Pillar of Social Rights is the compass to inspire – in line with existing competences – new legislation or policy initiatives at EU level, to steer reforms at national level through the European Semester, and to channel funding efficiently to address the most urgent social priorities.

4. **We need to define what we want the future world of work to look like, and on how to get there:** we want the European social model to be preserved and reinforced, but this requires being capable of responding to the new challenges of a globalised world and to reap the benefits of technological innovation. To make this a reality, we need to set out a roadmap with concrete actions.
5. **We need an inclusive digital economy:** People facing job loss or transitions need comprehensive support, based on up-skilling and re-skilling, access to employment services, income support, and social services throughout their professional career. The impact of digital transformation on EU labour markets has been explored by a [dedicated High-Level Group](#), which presented proposals in the run-up to the conference around three main themes: a skilled workforce, new labour relations and a new social contract.
6. **We need adequate investment:** it will be critical to make the best use of the EU's long-term budget 2021-2027, including the European Social Fund Plus to fund future skills policies and measures to support labour market transitions.
7. **We need better active labour market policies:** provided by high-quality public administrations that deliver effectively the services our citizens and societies need. This requires better involvement of and working together between employment services, skills providers, social services and business.
8. **Nobody must be left behind:** economic benefits should reach all Europeans, also those living in a disadvantaged district of a big metropolis or a remote rural area. The success of any policy should be judged in light of its impact on the most vulnerable and cohesion of our social fabric.
9. **Strengthening a global level playing field is crucial:** the EU is well placed to intensify cooperation with other organisations and partners, including the International Labour Organisation, to promote decent work and to ensure progress in the implementation of international commitments.
10. **The future is our joint responsibility:** all levels of governance (global, EU, national, regional/local) have to work together with social partners and civil society to deliver what EU citizens and workers expect.

## Background

On 9 April 2019, the European Commission hosted a high-level conference on the Future of Work. In the spirit of the [Social Summit in Gothenburg in November 2017](#), where the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the Commission proclaimed the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), today's Conference aimed to deepen the reflection on the future world of work, and how to face the challenges and grasp the opportunities it may bring.

During the conference, six breakout sessions focused on different aspects of the future of work: a) Fair transformation: Bringing opportunities of digitalisation to all, b) Upward convergence: Employment, social and

territorial cohesion, c) Global responsibility: The EU and the international scene, d) Empower people: Life-cycle transitions, education and skills challenges, e) Protect and invest: Modernising welfare systems, making them sustainable and inclusive, f) Manage change: Governance and Partnerships.

One day before the event, the High-Level Group on the impact of digital transformation on the EU labour markets published their [concluding report](#). The main recommendations include personal learning accounts, labour market intermediaries to reduce structural skills gaps and social protection accessible independent of the employment status. Chair Martin Goos presented the findings of the group to the participants.

This high-level European conference took place ahead of the Centenary event of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Geneva in June, where the discussion on the future of work will be pursued in a global perspective.

### **For More Information**

[Link to the conference webpage with detailed programme and video streaming](#)

[Factsheet: Key employment figures](#)

[Factsheet: Social Priorities under the Juncker Commission](#)

More factsheets on several Commission initiatives in the social field can be found [here](#).

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