

03/2019

# SOCIAL AGENDA

n°54

## Inside

14-23

**MARIANNE THYSSEN**

*Interview with the European  
Commissioner*



It's all about  
**skills**



Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion come under the remit of European Commissioner Marianne Thyssen.

The website of Commissioner Thyssen: [ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/thyssen\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/thyssen_en)

The home page of the Commission’s Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion: [ec.europa.eu/social](http://ec.europa.eu/social)

The website of the European Social Fund: [ec.europa.eu/esf](http://ec.europa.eu/esf)

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# Welcome to n°54



**Joost Korte**  
Director General of the European  
Commission's Employment, Social  
Affairs and Inclusion  
Directorate General

*Between 23 and 26 May 2019, EU citizens will elect the next European Parliament.*

*Ahead of the vote, a series of European Commission proposals are going through the final stages of the EU decision-making process.*

*They reinforce social rights in a very concrete way, addressing issues such as work-life balance, working conditions, access to social security for all, free movement of people within the EU and the accessibility of products and services to people with disabilities.*

*In many ways, these proposals are like a breath of fresh air for Social Europe. They introduce paid paternity and carers' leave at European level. They use single market instruments to give disabled people equal access across the EU to a whole series of services and products, which will carry the famous EC mark.*

*They also provide information on employment conditions and new rights for workers who are in new and less stable forms of employment.*

*Since 2014, when Marianne Thyssen and the college of European Commissioners headed by Jean-Claude Juncker took office, employment, social affairs and inclusion have been at the heart of the EU political agenda. The up and coming European elections are a crucial opportunity to steer the EU in the right direction.*

*The more EU citizens cast their vote, the better their voice will be heard. The EU institutions and the wider community of actors - the social partners and civil society, as well as the other beneficiaries of EU funds - can do a lot to ensure a large voter turnout.*

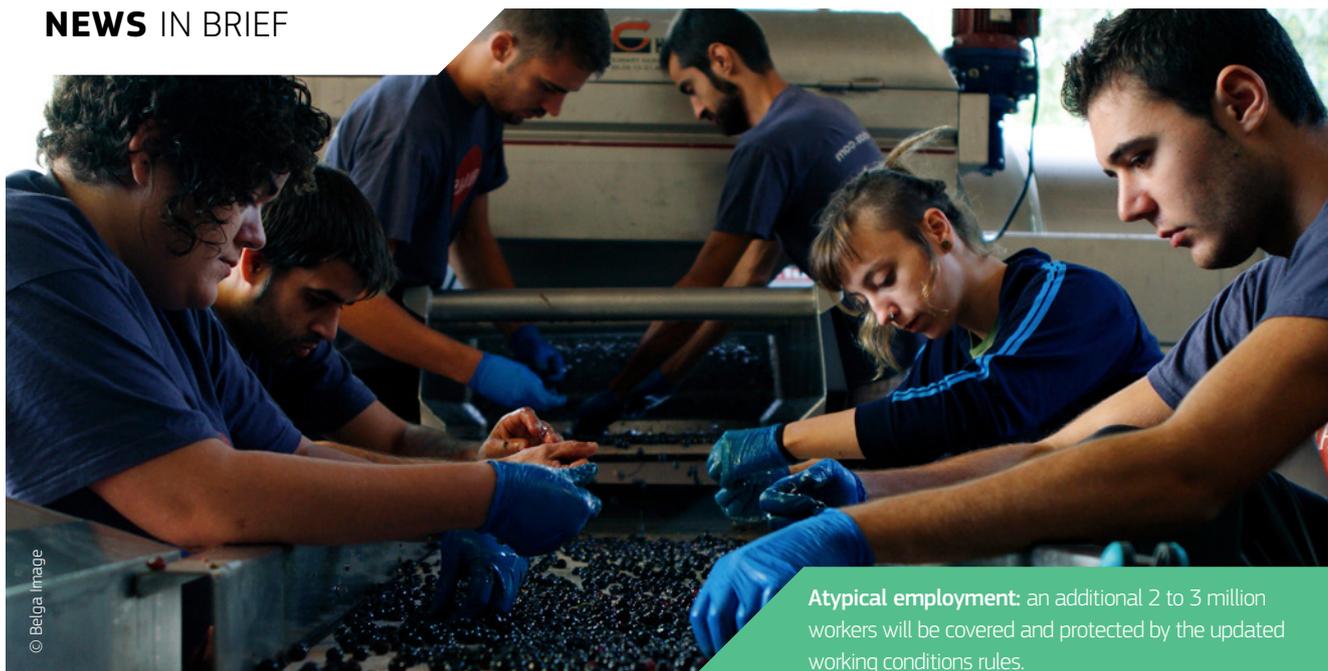
## Make your voice heard!

*Young people in particular need to make their voice heard. The last five years have seen the EU Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative gather momentum and display their full potential.*

*Today, there are almost 2.5 million less unemployed young people than was the case at the end of 2014. The number of young people neither in employment, education or training is also going down.*

*So I call on you: On 23-26 May, do vote and make your voice heard loud and clear!*

## NEWS IN BRIEF



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**Atypical employment:** an additional 2 to 3 million workers will be covered and protected by the updated working conditions rules.

## Transparent and predictable working conditions: Towards new rules

7 FEBRUARY 2019

The European Commission, the European Parliament and the EU Council of Ministers reached a provisional agreement on the Commission's proposal to create more transparent and predictable working conditions, in particular for workers in non-standard forms of employment. EU rules adopted in 1991 foresee that employees should get information in writing about their working conditions. However, in recent years, 1 in 4 employment contracts concerned atypical forms of employment. Today workers who have contracts of less than 8 hours per week (32 per month) or shorter than one month or casual workers can be excluded from the rules and are therefore not covered. The new directive will make sure that only people working less than 12 hours a month can be excluded. Thanks to this measure, an additional 2 to 3 million workers, such as workers on zero-hour contracts and domestic workers, will be covered and protected by the updated rules.

## Protection against cancer at work: Almost there

29 JANUARY 2019

The European Parliament, the EU Council of Ministers and the European Commission reached a provisional agreement on the Commission's third proposal to broaden the list of recognised cancer-causing chemicals in the workplace. It will improve working conditions for over 1 million EU workers and prevent over 22 000 cases of work-related illness. For instance, it will ensure better protection of workers in the nickel-cadmium battery manufacture, zinc and copper smelting, laboratories, electronics, funeral and embalming, construction, healthcare, plastics and recycling sectors. The agreement will be submitted to the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee for approval. It will then be subject to a final vote by the plenary session of the European Parliament.



**Better protection:** Third broadening of the list of recognised cancer-causing chemicals, against which protection is required.

## Work-life balance for parents and carers: Making headway

24 JANUARY 2019

The European Parliament and the EU Council of Ministers reached a provisional agreement on the European Commission's proposal for a new Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers. The Directive will open up opportunities for working women and men to share caring responsibilities, for children and relatives, on an equal basis. It sets a European minimum standard of 10 days of paternity leave for fathers following the birth of their child, to be compensated at the level of sick pay. It strengthens the existing right to 4 months of parental leave, by making 2 months non-transferable between parents and introducing compensation for these 2 months at a level to be determined by the Member States. It will also contain European provisions for carer's leave by attributing 5 days per worker per year, as a new European entitlement for workers. The new rules also strengthen the right for all parents and carers to request flexible working arrangements. This provisional agreement now has to be formally adopted by both the European Parliament and the Council.



**Paid paternity leave:** Ten days at least of paternity leave for fathers following the birth of their child, to be compensated at the level of sick pay.

## People with disabilities: Breda is Access City 2019

4 DECEMBER 2018

The 2019 Access City Award went to the city of Breda, Netherlands, for continuously making improvements to make life easier for people with disabilities. In Breda, public places such as parks and stores are accessible to everyone. Digital technologies ensure that all citizens can get around using public transport. Évreux, France and Gdynia, Poland, are the second and third place winners. The jury praised Évreux for its particular focus on invisible disabilities and Gdynia for its initiatives to include people with intellectual disabilities. Finally, Kaposvár, Hungary and Vigo, Spain, both received a special mention. Kaposvár was recognised for its continued improvements and Vigo for its innovative architecture in a challenging topography.



**Making life easier:** In Breda, parks and stores are accessible to people with disabilities.

## Marianne Thyssen: 2018 Woman in Power

30 NOVEMBER 2018

The European Commissioner in charge of employment, social affairs, skills and labour mobility (see page 14 onwards) won the 'Woman in Power' category for showing extraordinary political leadership in Europe, at the 2018 Women of Europe Awards organised by the European Movement International and the European Women's Lobby. She received the award for the work she has done in the social field, and dedicated her victory to "the many strong, driven and determined women I meet, making a difference all over Europe". Marianne Thyssen added: "It's a token of appreciation. But it also gives me a boost to continue working hard for a strong and fair European Union until the very last day of my mandate. I would like to dedicate this award to the many women who implement the European Pillar of Social Rights on a daily basis. Perhaps less visibly than we do, but in a very tangible way."



**Political leadership:** Commissioner Thyssen won the prize for the "Woman in power" category at the 2018 Women of Europe Awards.

## MEDIA

# New season for “Real Economy” TV show

A Euronews programme that often takes a social angle to make macroeconomics easier to grasp

“Wage inequality, Europe’s ticking time bomb”, “Workers’ rights transformed - ensuring social protection”, “The future of work”... Every two weeks, the pan-European news network Euronews broadcasts in 14 languages a macro-economic show called “Real Economy”, which regularly features employment and social affairs issues.

Unique in its kind, Real Economy was created in 2013 by Maithreyi Seetharaman, a journalist who had previously worked in the United States, India, Australia and Europe, for outlets such as CNBC and Bloomberg. Until August 2018, she was Real Economics’ executive editor and anchor. She produced over 70 episodes, 16 of which addressed employment and social issues, over five seasons of the show.

This year, season 6 tackles the free movement of workers and social security coordination, the future of work and health and safety (reducing carcinogenic and mutagenic substances at the work place) among other issues.

### Economics versus business

“I am a political economist by training”, Maithreyi explains. “I was a bit tired of covering equity and bond markets and decided to take a year off from being an anchor at CNBC, where I used to host the Squawk Box Europe show. Euronews asked me if I wanted to do something different. And after a couple of discussions with Gardenia Trezzini, the network’s editor in chief of magazines, we came up with the idea of doing a macroeconomic show: making macroeconomics simple for everyday people, without making it stupid!”.

Maithreyi insists on the distinction between economic and business news. “When you talk economics to someone in a coffee shop, or to someone who runs a small business, the assumption usually is that they will think: ‘I don’t invest or it’s not something I am investing in!’. So if people think it doesn’t impact their wallet, why would they be interested?”.

“I sometimes find that people on the networks talk to each other with jargon and at an academic, elite level and the information never

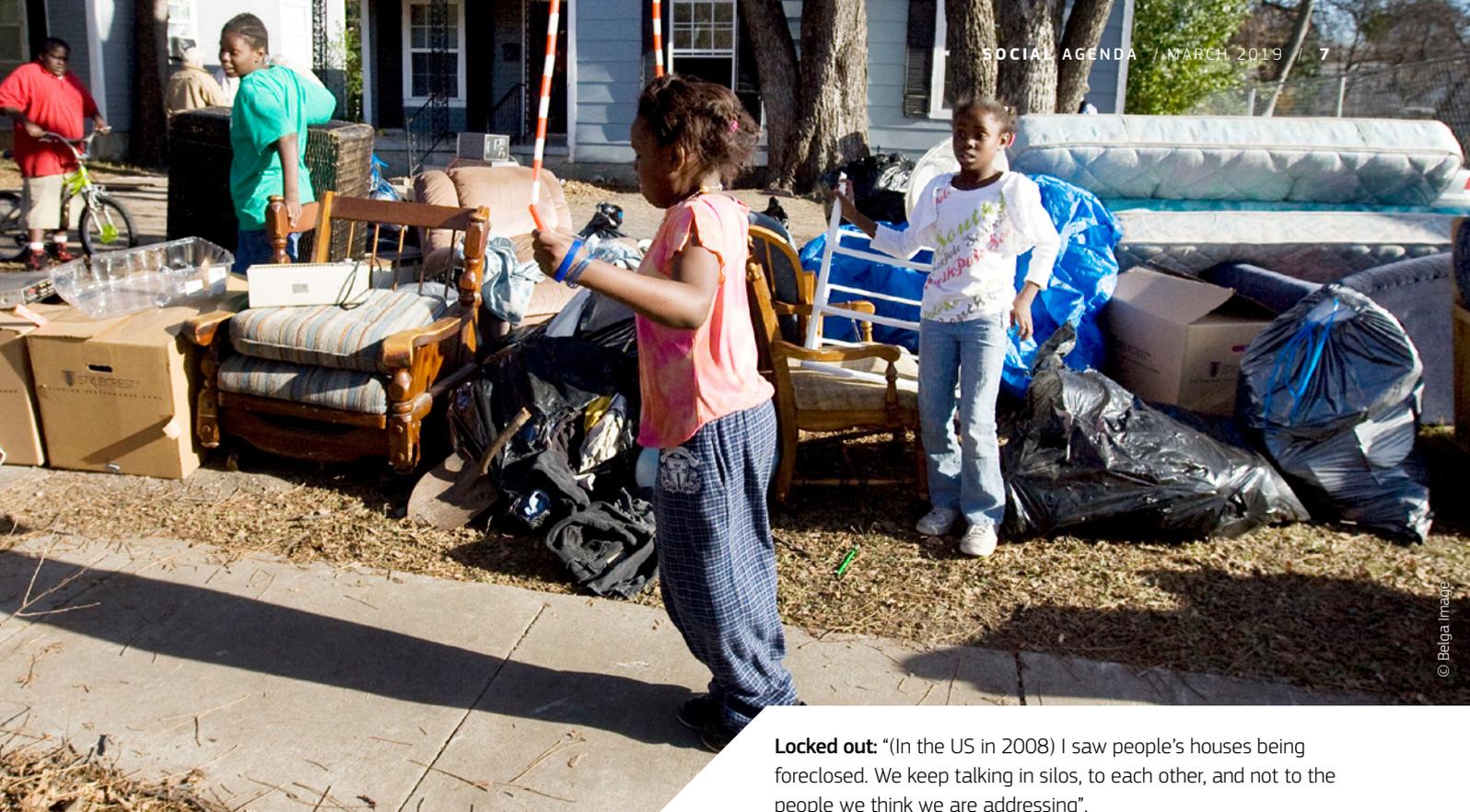


**Maithreyi Seetharaman:** “If I am talking about inflation, I will make it a social topic because it is easier to explain that way”.

trickles down in a way that people can understand. The simplest way to do that, is to make it concrete for the people watching”.

“Over the last two years, you can see populism rise. If we are not talking to the people who are going to vote, then we are failing. It is crucial to show people that every decision made by them or by their political leadership actually does matter and has an impact on their life”.

“I saw people’s houses being foreclosed and people losing their jobs in the United States, during the 2008 crisis. This brought home to me that we keep talking in silos: We’re talking to each other and not talking to the people we think we are. We aren’t showing them that the crisis could happen again. And it *is* happening again!”.



© Belga Image

**Locked out:** “(In the US in 2008) I saw people’s houses being foreclosed. We keep talking in silos, to each other, and not to the people we think we are addressing”.

### What people care about

For Maithreyi, economics leads to employment and social affairs: “Social affairs is what people care about. Esoteric topics may sound great to academics but they do not translate to the ground. Economic and social affairs are so interconnected! They should never be even looked at as two separate topics because, at the end of the day, one impacts the other”.

“The minute you start talking about unemployment or vulnerable people or women’s issues, people get interested: It’s relatable for them. I remember when we did a fantastic episode about paternity and maternity leave. A lot of people asked: ‘Oh why are you doing it in Real Economy?’. But people were watching and it went down fantastically well, because we talked about a real issue, at the grassroots level, and one of concern to pretty much everyone, everywhere in the world!”.

“It is easier to explain the economic element of a social topic than the other way around. For example, if I am talking about inflation, I will make it a social topic, because it is easier to explain that way: This is your wallet, this is how it impacts you!”

“Social issues is what gets you elected or not. Yet there is an ingrained habit of pushing back social affairs coverage in favour of other issues that are deemed more critical, on the grounds that ‘we will get around to social affairs at some point before the elections’. It always confounds me!”.

Up to mid-2018, Real Economy was subsidised by three Directorate Generals of the European Commission: DG ECFIN (Economic and Financial Affairs), DG REGIO (Regional Development) and DG EMPL (Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion).

“A lot of the shows on Euronews involve only one DG but for Real Economy, we have always had three partners (down to two from 2019 onwards, DG EMPL and DG ECFIN). It should never lose this because the two areas are so interconnected”.

### More information:

<https://www.euronews.com/programs/realeconomy>

## Crash course in social affairs

There is a jewel called “Crash course” within each 8-minute episode of the Real Economy show.

“Crash Course has been the bane of my life”, says former Real Economy executive editor and anchor Maithreyi Seetharaman. “It is one minute long but I used to spend more time on it than on the rest of the episode! Trying to make an economics term simple and fun, while fitting within that time limit, was a challenge. It is actually only a few seconds long in terms of actual words and then you stretch it out a little bit with music and the other languages, to bring it up to one minute (52 seconds for the English version)”.

Euronews reaches out to 278 million of homes in Europe, Middle East, Africa, North and South America via cable, satellite, PTV and terrestrial means. Its digital brand has a monthly audience of 69.9 million people.

## PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

# Accessibility

## directive coming up

Many services and products due to become more accessible across borders to persons with disabilities

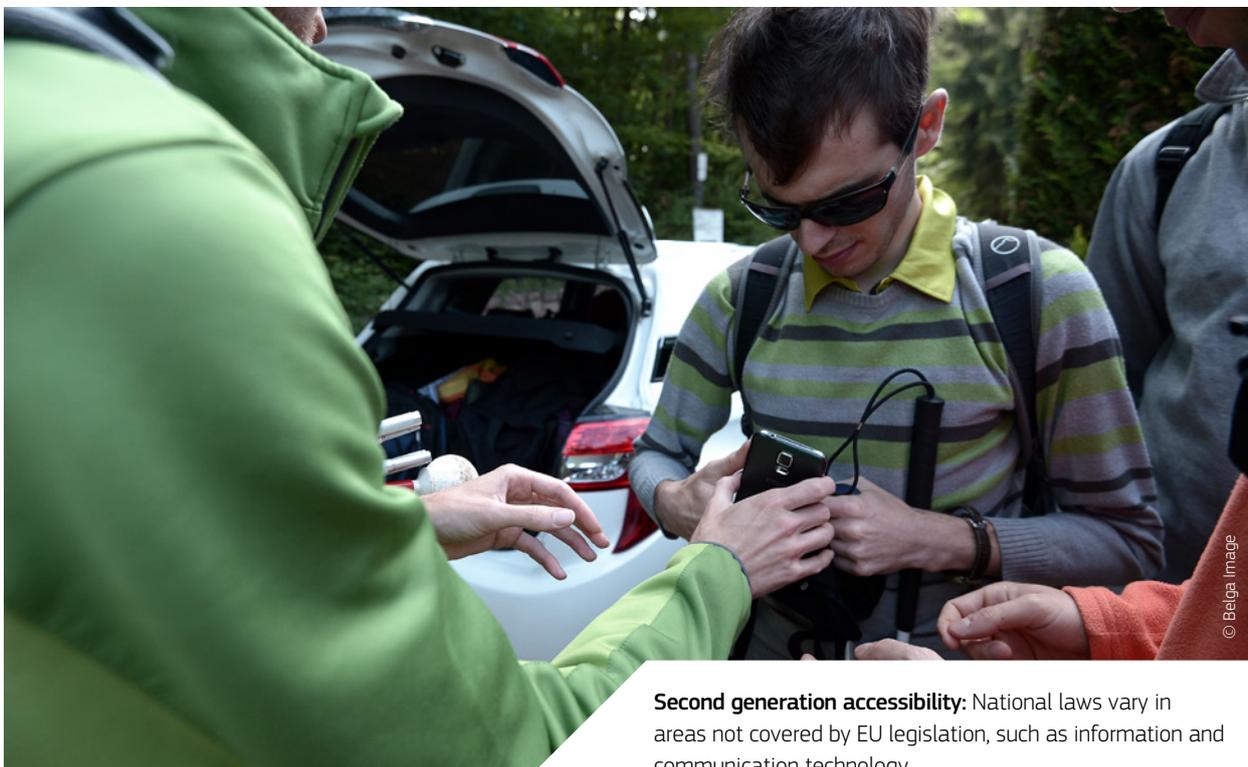
In 2011, the EU became a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which addresses disability as a human rights issue: civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The convention covers a wide range of policy areas: From justice to transport, employment to information technology, etc.

One of the Convention's articles contains the obligations for State Parties on accessibility. Its aim is to ensure access to persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others. Since 2011, therefore, EU countries have adopted some additional laws on accessibility.

### National variations

In areas already covered by EU legislation, such as transport, the focus is on assistance to people with disabilities rather than on accessibility as such but at least EU laws have been transposed into national legislation in a coherent way. While in those areas that are not covered by EU legislation with regard to accessibility - such as computers, private websites or ticketing machines - national laws vary.

For example, almost all EU countries have obligations for public websites, while fewer include also private websites. Moreover, obligations differ on issues like addressing the needs of people with intellectual disabilities or those of deaf people.



**Second generation accessibility:** National laws vary in areas not covered by EU legislation, such as information and communication technology.



## Specific products and services

The European Accessibility Act, due to be adopted by the EU in March, applies to the following products that will be placed on the EU internal market after a date that was still to be specified, as we were going to press: consumer general purpose computer hardware systems and operating systems, and self-service terminals (Automated Teller Machines, ticketing machines, check-in machines, interactive self-service terminals providing information, consumer terminal equipment with interactive computing capability used for electronic communication services, consumer terminal equipment with interactive computing capability used for accessing audio-visual media services, and e-readers).

It also applies to the following services provided to consumers: electronic communications services, services providing access to audio-visual media services and the following elements of air, bus, rail and waterborne passenger transport services (websites, mobile device-based services including applications, electronic tickets and electronic ticketing services, delivery of transport service information including real-time travel information, and interactive self-service terminals), for urban, suburban and regional transport elements related to self service terminals, consumer banking services, ecommerce and e-books.

**Equal participation in the labour market:** With its strong emphasis on digital technologies, the European Accessibility Act is a key item of EU social legislation.

As a result, national laws can create barriers within the EU single market. They may make it easier for people with disabilities in one EU country to access products and services - but not on an equal footing with persons with disabilities in other Member States.

This is why, in December 2015, the European Commission put forward a proposal for an EU Directive called "European Accessibility Act", on accessibility requirements for certain products and services (see box). At the time of printing, the proposal was due to be adopted by the European Parliament in March.

### Internal market

The European Accessibility Act addresses accessibility from an internal market and functional angle, with a view to eliminating and preventing cross-border barriers.

This will make it easier for people with disabilities to enjoy the benefits of the single market. It will also enable businesses developing accessible products and services to grow faster and create jobs. This is already the case in the United States

## PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

of America that, in the area of accessibility legislation, were well ahead of the EU up till now.

In addition to making it practical and concrete, this economic approach should ensure that the European Accessibility Act is properly implemented, thanks to all the monitoring tools and mechanisms at the European Commission's disposal for ensuring the smooth running of the EU single market.

### CE marking

In particular, the economic operators of this sector will have to comply with the famous CE marking. Henceforth, this marking will also indicate that a product bearing it complies with the requirements of the European Accessibility Act, if it falls within the scope of the Directive, and that the manufacturer takes full responsibility for it. The national authorities will have to check the validity of this marking and citizens will be able to go to court on that basis in case problems arise.

Although accessibility is only one of 32 aspects related to persons with disabilities covered by the UN Convention, it is a horizontal one: It permeates right across all the other rights, such as education, employment, information, mobility etc.

Accessibility is therefore key in implementing the UN convention. It contributes decisively to transforming its declaratory rights into operational requirements, for the benefit of citizens at large (e.g. including old age people) and manufacturers.

Significantly, the European Accessibility Act touches upon approximately 30 other EU laws, on issues such as transport, telecommunications, public procurement, financial services, audio-visual media, ecommerce ... It is therefore a major cross-cutting piece of EU legislation.

### Digital focus

With its strong emphasis on digital technologies (see box), the European Accessibility Act is also a key piece of employment and social legislation, as it contributes decisively to the equal participation of persons with disabilities in the labour market.

Not so long ago, there were still quite a few jobs that did not require using a computer. Nowadays, however, every workplace has a strong Information and Communication Technology (ICT) component.

Also, the Internet has considerably expanded. Fortunately, the World Wide Web consortium - W3C, an international community that develops open standards to ensure the long-term growth of the Internet - started working on accessibility from very early on. This helped to bring the general issue of accessibility for people with disabilities to the forefront.

**More information:** <https://europa.eu/!rv78bY>



**Stretching out to pay for a car park ticket:** The European Accessibility Act applies to products such as ticketing machines, Automated Teller Machines, check-in machines etc.

## Strong focus on digital technologies

The European Accessibility Act will improve the introduction of accessibility features in key digital products and services. For example, for the operation of TV sets, remote controls might have tactile clues in the key pads and the text in the electronic programming guide might be available in a format that can be read aloud.

Smartphones with advanced telephony services - combining voice, text and video where available - facilitate communication not only for deaf and hard hearing persons but also for all other people in noisy environments or in meetings, where it is not possible to speak on the phone.

The European Accessibility Act will also contribute to the achievement of an e-inclusive society, by ensuring the accessibility of websites managed by providers of important services to citizens.

2014-2019



**Taking ownership:** the President of the European Parliament, A.Tajani (left) and Estonia's Prime Minister J.Ratas, the then President of the EU Council of Ministers, join European Commission President J.-C. Juncker (center) to proclaim the European pillar of social rights during the European social summit in Gothenburg, on November 17, 2017.

# Social policy at heart

Since the beginning of its mandate, the present European Commission has placed employment and social policy at the heart of EU policy making

"I would like the EU to equip itself with a social triple-A rating", Jean-Claude Juncker said in his first address to the European Parliament as President-elect of the European Commission, on 22 October 2014. "That's just as important as an economic and financial triple-A".

In April 2017, the European Commission adopted a framework to enable the EU and its Member States to do just that: the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Annexed to it was a new social scoreboard, with more indicators to assess Member States' social policy performance than was previously the case - for instance as part of the yearly European Semester process of economic, social and fiscal governance.

In November 2017, the European Parliament and the EU Council of Ministers took ownership of the European Pillar of Social Rights: Together with the Commission, they signed a solemn declaration proclaiming the Pillar. They did so during the first

## Renewed social and civil dialogues

In March 2015, the European Commission launched a "New Start for Social Dialogue" to strengthen the role of social partners at all levels, including in the annual "European Semester" economic governance process.

In June 2016, the EU employer organisations, trade unions, the EU Council of Ministers and the Commission signed an agreement reaffirming the fundamental role of European social dialogue in the EU policy-making process.

The Commission also strengthened the dialogue with civil society organisations, making it more focused and operational.

summit of EU Heads of State and governments entirely devoted to employment and social affairs to have taken place since 1997.

Adapted to 21st century challenges, the European Pillar of Social Rights goes beyond employment and social affairs *stricto sensu*: It also encapsulates issues like education, lifelong-learning, work-life balance, social housing, and even areas of purely national competence such as wages.

### Social Investment

One of the hallmarks of the Juncker Commission is its emphasis on investment. This includes “social investment” or “investing in people”.

True, the Youth Guarantee (whereby Member States commit themselves to providing young people with a good quality offer for a job, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of young people becoming unemployed or leaving formal education) and its financial arm, the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), were adopted under the previous Commission, in 2013.

However, in February 2015, the new Commission gave them a boost: It pre-financed €1 billion from the YEI to help EU countries start implementing the Youth Guarantee. And in October 2017, extra funding was secured for the YEI until 2020: It was topped up by €1.2 billion, matched by a further €1.2 billion from the European Social Fund.

### Upskilling pathways

In 2015, the European Commission recommended a pathway for integrating the long-term unemployed into the labour market: A framework to provide tailor-made individual assistance to all jobseekers who have been out of work for more than twelve months, to prevent unemployment from turning into long-term unemployment.

And in 2016, it launched the New Skills Agenda for Europe and its ten actions. This includes a Recommendation on Upskilling

Pathways, which calls on EU countries to develop a series of targeted interventions to improve and consolidate support for low skilled/low qualified adults.

For instance, it foresees that each beneficiary would receive a skills’ assessment, a learning offer designed on that basis and opportunities to have informally acquired skills validated and recognised.

Still in 2016, the Commission launched the annual European Vocational Skills Weeks. It seeks to improve the image of this strand of vocational education and lifelong learning. It also gives all the actors concerned the opportunity to display their achievements and to network across borders.

### Freedom to move around

The Juncker Commission undertook to strengthen cross-border mobility within the EU by establishing clear and fair rules, facilitating cooperation between Member States and fighting cases of abuse.

Several key proposals were put forward in the spirit of the European Pillar of Social Rights and were still going through the EU decision-making process as we were going to press (see box page 13).

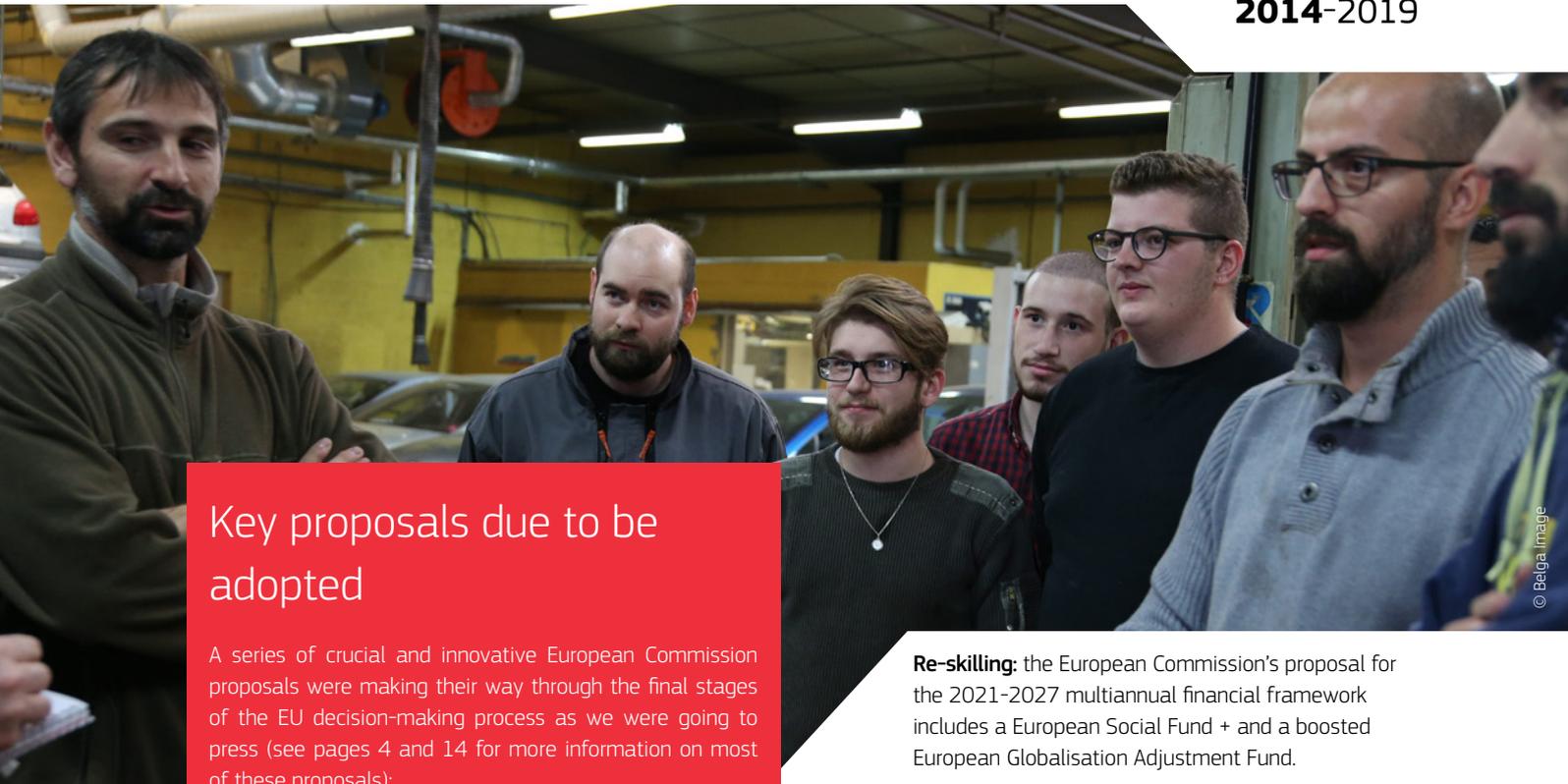
A proposal to revise the law on the posting of workers was adopted in 2018 by the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. It now ensures “equal pay for equal work at the same place”, while improving administrative cooperation between EU countries in this area.

A guidance document was adopted to help implementing various aspects of the Working Time Directive, in line with a growing body of case law. It touches upon the nature and conditions related to rest periods, on-call and standby periods and the implementation of paid annual leave.



**Tailor-made assistance:** In 2015, the European Commission recommended a personalised pathway for integrating all jobseekers who have been out of work for more than twelve months.

2014-2019



## Key proposals due to be adopted

A series of crucial and innovative European Commission proposals were making their way through the final stages of the EU decision-making process as we were going to press (see pages 4 and 14 for more information on most of these proposals):

- **Disabled people:** Cross-border accessibility to products and services (see also pages 8 and 26);
- **Work-life balance:** Improving the work-life balance of working parents and carers, increasing possibilities for men to take up parental leave and supporting women's participation in the labour market;
- **Working conditions:** Making work contracts more transparent and predictable, so as to ensure decent working conditions including for atypical forms of work, such as on-demand or part-time work;
- **Social protection for all:** Ensuring access to social protection coverage and employment services for everyone, including people in non-standard forms of employment and the self-employed;
- **Cross-border social security coordination:** Modernising the rules of the cross-EU coordination of social security systems;
- **Cross-border mobility:** Establishing a European Labour Authority to facilitate Member States' implementation of EU free movement of people legislation and people's access to information on their rights;
- **Cancer-causing chemicals:** Broadening the list of recognised cancer-causing chemicals to better protect workers.

**Re-skilling:** the European Commission's proposal for the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework includes a European Social Fund + and a boosted European Globalisation Adjustment Fund.

### A social budget

In addition to the European Pillar of Social Rights, the "Social Triple A" vision of the Juncker Commission prevails in the European Commission's proposal for the long-term EU budget 2021-2027 (MFF, multiannual financial framework).

It includes a reinforced and streamlined European Social Fund + (ESF+) that would represent a significantly higher share of the overall EU cohesion budget than is presently the case.

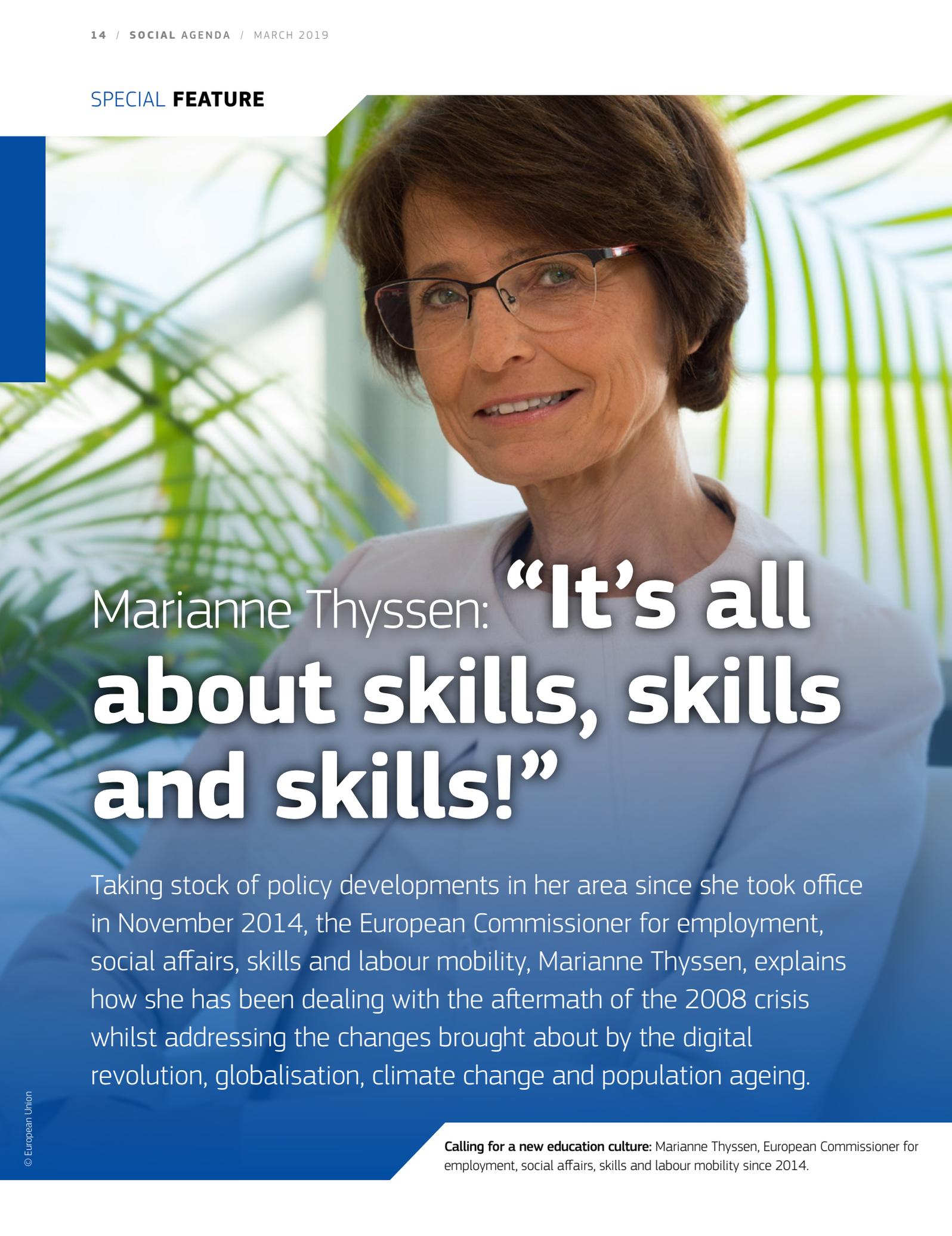
Together with the ESF+, the Commission also proposed a revised European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for 2021-2027, which could intervene more effectively and comprehensively to support workers who have lost their jobs.

This would confirm the role that the European Pillar of Social Rights has taken on, since its inception: that of being a compass for steering economic and social investment, in keeping with the priorities commonly agreed at EU level.

### More information:

**Interview with European Commissioner Marianne Thyssen (page 14 onwards of this issue), *Social Agenda* n°39-53:** <https://europa.eu/!nD96Tq> and factsheet on social priorities (<https://europa.eu/!Qh38BT>).

SPECIAL FEATURE

A portrait of Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for employment, social affairs, skills and labour mobility. She is a middle-aged woman with short brown hair, wearing glasses and a light blue blazer. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred indoor setting with green plants and a window with blinds.

Marianne Thyssen: **“It’s all about skills, skills and skills!”**

Taking stock of policy developments in her area since she took office in November 2014, the European Commissioner for employment, social affairs, skills and labour mobility, Marianne Thyssen, explains how she has been dealing with the aftermath of the 2008 crisis whilst addressing the changes brought about by the digital revolution, globalisation, climate change and population ageing.

**Calling for a new education culture:** Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for employment, social affairs, skills and labour mobility since 2014.



**Record number:** 240 million people are now employed in the EU, where 12 million jobs have been created since 2014, including 2.5 million for young people.

The key is “skills, skills skills!” says Marianne Thyssen, who launched the Skills Agenda for Europe in 2016: Acquiring skills, re-skilling and up-skilling throughout life.

But she warns that people will only opt for such a new educational culture if they feel that their fears are being taken into account and if they are confident that the EU, its Member States, the regions, the local authorities and social partners act proactively together in the face of the unprecedented speed of change.

With the European Pillar of Social Rights that was adopted and proclaimed in 2017, Marianne Thyssen is confident that all levels of governance, from European to local, now have the right framework of principles and values within which to cooperate.

Using the Pillar as a compass, decision-makers are now in a position to adapt the EU social and economic model to the twenty-first century challenges, in a way that preserves what the EU stands for and therefore protects people.

**The EU should aim to qualify for a “social triple A”, Jean-Claude Juncker stated at the beginning of his mandate as European Commission President. Five years later, is the EU on track in this respect?**

We have come a long way but you should never be too happy in politics. You can celebrate positive developments and still be aware that it is never good enough, because things keep on changing and you have to keep on adapting. Since 2017, growth is back, not just on average but in every single EU Member State. More than 240 million people are employed, a record since our monthly statistical information was launched at the beginning of this century. Unemployment has gone down, on average, to 6.6 % of the EU working-age population, and to 14-15 % of young people: We have almost 2,5 million fewer unemployed young people and fewer “NEETs” (young people neither in employment, education or training). Of course, unemployment is still too high but

12 million jobs have been created since 2014. And the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion has been falling each year since 2012. By 2016, it had fallen almost to its 2008 level.

**So are you nevertheless happy with those results?**

Yes, but within reason. Take employment: It has never been so high but we must look at the quality of many of those jobs. If we look at the earnings of households, we see that they are not totally following the rise in GDP (Gross Domestic Product) or productivity. We cannot be happy so long as we do not see everybody benefiting from the recovery. The gender pay gap is still there and we know that a gender pay gap of, say, 15 %, leads to a pension gap in the future of probably twice as much! We are not totally out of the financial and economic crisis, as we are still addressing its social consequences. And yet we also have to prepare our people and institutions for what is coming up: digitalisation, the fourth industrial revolution, our ageing society, climate change and its challenges that are coming in, faster and faster.

**Has the balance between economic and social policy been restored?**

Economic growth and social progress go together: If people do not benefit from growth, this growth will not be sustainable in the long-run. If people are not motivated because they see that the benefits are not for them or that there are no benefits at all, then they will not invest in themselves. It is all about skills, skills, and skills! It is not for nothing that we have put skills on top of our European Pillar of Social Rights! It's the essence of our social market economy. It's not just because it is in the EU Treaty that we are promoting it but because we really believe that this is the only way things work.

**Was the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, in November 2017, a sign that social affairs are back on top?**

Absolutely. At the initiative of the European Commission President and together with the Swedish Prime Minister, we

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**From pay gap to pension gulf:** A gender pay gap of say 15 % leads to a pension gap in the future of probably twice as much.

had the first social summit in twenty years, which is already remarkable. And then the Social Pillar which the Commission had developed was proclaimed by the three European political institutions (EU Council of Ministers, European Parliament and European Commission), which is even more remarkable! This means that it is not just a compass for us: It is also accepted as a compass by the Member States, Members of the European Parliament and the social partners. This is just what we need because we know that the development of social policy is not totally in the hands of the Commission. We use whatever legal and financial instruments we have but the Member States must do their part. So must the regional and local authorities, as well as the social partners. The adoption of the Pillar is just a starting point but I am very optimistic there. We have to preach by example, which is why the Commission immediately started implementing the principles enshrined in the Pillar with the tools and competences at our disposal. We launched a series of legislative proposals and integrated the Pillar into the workings of the European Semester cycle of EU economic governance, as well as into our proposal for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework. I was delighted to see references to the Pillar in the documents of the first meeting of the Council of Employment and Social Affairs ministers after the Pillar was proclaimed: It means that national governments have taken ownership of the Pillar and that we are on the right track. At all levels of government, those who have the power to make rules and to agree on collective agreements have to adapt to change. But we must do so within a framework which upholds our values and protects people, making sure that everybody has the same opportunities to be

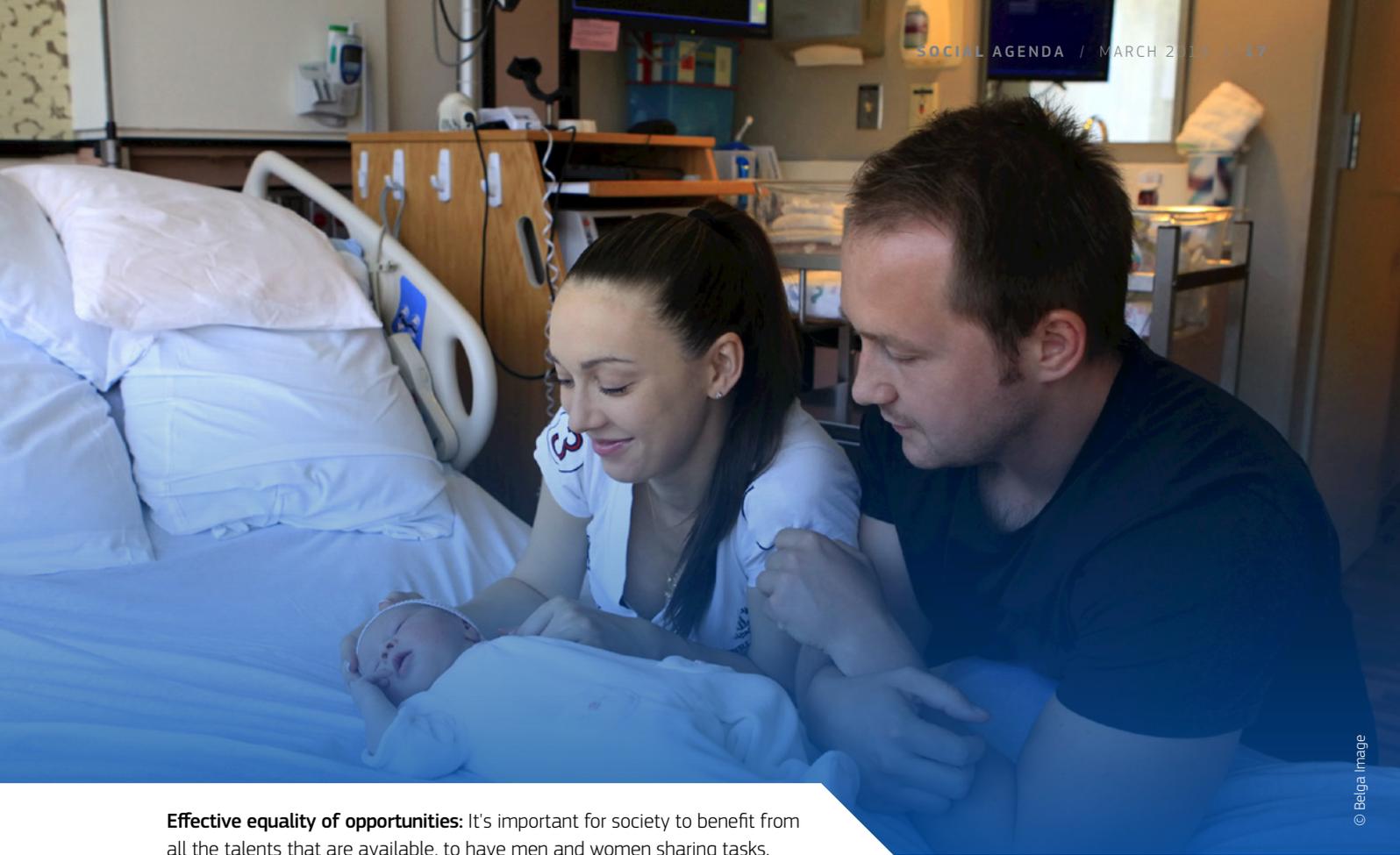
skilled and to reskill, have access to the labour market, enjoy good working conditions and modern social protection and social services.

### The Pillar promotes a very broad definition of social affairs...

Yes, it takes on a holistic approach. We wanted a compass for the future that does not change “who does what” but requires all levels of governance to cooperate. The European Commission has some competences where the European level is the best one to get things done but many things have to be carried out at national and regional level too, sometimes very locally. When people don't have acceptable housing and access to good health services, they are blocked: They don't learn; they don't have a good job... So you need it all, if you want people that are capable of being flexible and of learning throughout life. We need people that are resilient, that have good opportunities from childhood onwards and have this learning culture.

### You are trying to shift mentalities, for example through the Work Life Balance proposal.

We are not going to interfere with family policy or in families' lives. How men and women and other couples distribute work among themselves, that's up to them. But what we do want is to ensure equality of opportunities for men and women, like we have always done in Europe and where we were always pioneers. What we see in the labour market is that the employment rate of women is far below that of men.



**Effective equality of opportunities:** It's important for society to benefit from all the talents that are available, to have men and women sharing tasks.

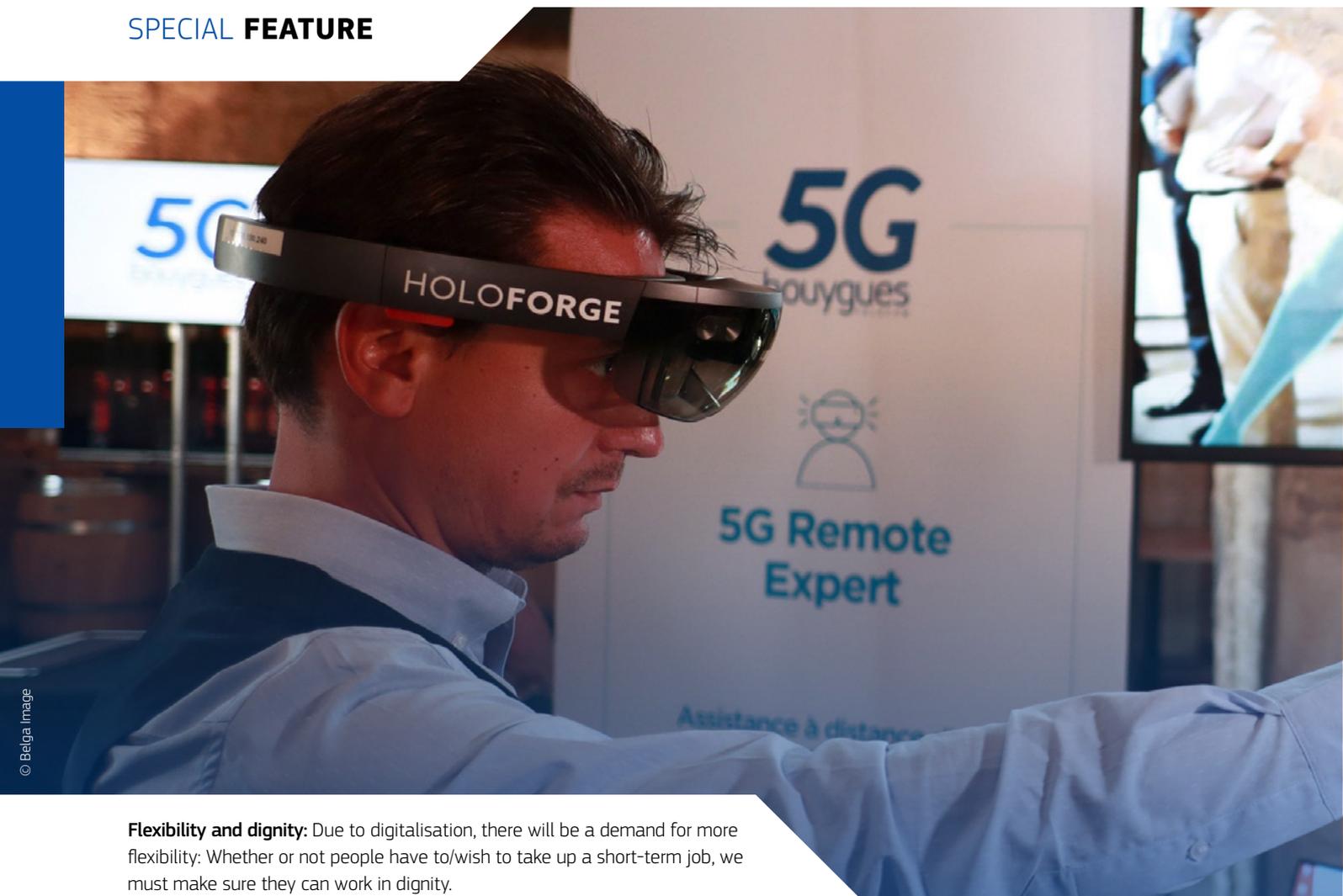
You don't see it at the start of a career. When they come out of school or of an education system, women even have better results than men and they are in the majority. Then they start working. They build a family and from the moment they have children, you see their career path becoming more horizontal or going down a little bit. There are interruptions, short leaves, long leaves and then sometimes they leave the labour market altogether. Yet we need all the talents we can and we have shortages of skills! We have so many talented ladies, young and older ones, in whom society has invested and who want to be active on the labour market. But because they are most of the time in charge of care-taking tasks, they can't develop their full potential on the labour market. On the other side, we know that there are more men than before who want to carry out care-taking tasks. The children are also their children. And we see that there is an imbalance. We analysed the problem and we were informed that the cause of the lower participation on the labour market for women is care-taking tasks. Why don't men take them up, even when they have the right to do so (we already have a parental leave directive in Europe)? Because it is often not paid and they usually happen to be the first earners, because of the traditional state of play. This is why they don't take up their leave. What we want to do is give really equal opportunities to men and women by our proposal both for care and on the labour market. If the opportunities are really equal, then it's up to the households to see how they make these choices. It's important for society to benefit from all the talents that are available, to have men and women sharing tasks. Women want to be more successful with their potential on

the labour market or in their career and men want to be more successful in their quest to be more available for care-taking tasks. So it's a win-win situation!

**You have also been addressing the new forms of employment, through access to social protection for all workers and a new directive on transparent and predictable working conditions...**

We have a double challenge there. We need more convergence among Member States. So either we agree on downward convergence and let things go automatically or we want upwards convergence, in which case we need to make an effort. That is why we are active on that front too. But we also have to prepare ourselves and people for the new world of work: digitalisation, globalisation, demographic ageing... We have to adapt and we see that, due to digitalisation, already now and certainly in the future, we will have jobs that we cannot even imagine at this stage. There will be a demand for more flexibility. There will be many short-term jobs, for a couple of hours a week, and so on... If people have to do these kind of jobs, even if they wish to, because it also gives them flexibility, then we must make sure that they enjoy good working conditions and that they can work in dignity. This is why we say first and foremost that, for people who work in precarious situations (for instance, on-call contracts), that they should know in which slots they can be requested to work, how long beforehand they must receive notice of this and make themselves available, and also enjoy certain material rights that must be offered to them. We have seen the way the Written Statement Directive was implemented

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**Flexibility and dignity:** Due to digitalisation, there will be a demand for more flexibility: Whether or not people have to/wish to take up a short-term job, we must make sure they can work in dignity.

by Member States: They excluded people from its scope, most of the time those who need it most! This will change now that we have reached an agreement with Council and Parliament on transparent and predictable working conditions.

#### **The same applies to social protection for all?**

Yes. If you have many short contracts and different employment statuses – being unemployed, an employee, working for a firm, moving to another firm and then becoming a freelance – we must make sure that all these new kinds of jobs and the people that are doing those jobs, also have access to social security, in theory but also in practice! So we had to negotiate this with Member States. That is why we have proposed a Recommendation on this which was unanimously agreed by all Member States and which we will continue to follow up in the future: We want all the Member States to look at what they can do to ensure social security for these people too, because we will have more and more of them. If we don't act now, we will see that, indeed, we have nicely organised social protection system but for less and less people! This is not the kind of society we want.

#### **The adoption of the Skills Agenda for Europe in 2016 was one of the highlights of your mandate. You also launched a yearly European Vocational Skills Week...**

The skills issue is strategic. People will not be afraid of the digital era if they are skilled. You need digitally skilled people to have companies that can flourish, pay good salaries and ensure real growth. It will not be simply about having the right skills, nor is it just about a particular digital profession: It is in fact a mindset: It's about the way you learn. We have to make sure that people can be re-skilled and up-skilled and that we can create a culture of learning. I remember that when I finished my studies, I thought to myself: 'Now it's done and over with!'. Whereas, in fact, we keep on learning every day! We have to, and let's be happy that we can do so! But this is a new culture. That is what the Skills Agenda is all about. It was not easy because education and vocational education and training (VET) takes place at grass root level in the Member States, through schools and educational institutions and with the social partners. We had to make the Skills Agenda for Europe happen on the ground.



### **You are promoting a new perception of VET...**

We must pay more respect to VET. There aren't enough people there. Most people start in another education strand and fall back on VET as a plan B. This is not the right spirit! Those who have talents and want to go there, must go straight to VET. They must know that they will receive quality educational training there, that it is not a dead end: If they change their mind and want to go to higher education, it is possible. We have to offer opportunities for good quality VET, not only at secondary level but also at tertiary level and in adult education, because it is also about re-skilling and up-skilling. The way you learn is also very important. We need to get together to have education institutions and enterprises that offer traineeships and apprenticeships.

### **Partnership is what you have been calling for throughout your mandate.... Five years ago you were hoping that this Commission will stay in the history books as the one that re-launched social dialogue...**

We did so in 2015. It has improved a lot since then and I hear that the social partners are not at all unhappy! I come from a

social partner organisation, before I went into politics, so I know how social dialogue works. I know that social partners have a good knowledge of what is going on, on the ground, and can therefore help us shape our policies and implement them better. For instance, when we want to know which skills are needed: Of course we can use big data to find out but we also have to talk to education institutions and social partners and entrepreneurs to see what are the needs in their region and sector.

### **You also re-launched the dialogue with civil society. You had a lot of contact with civil society organisations over a major piece of legislation: the European Accessibility Act, which is being adopted...**

Yes, in particular with the European organisation of disabled people (see page 26). The European Accessibility Act is indeed a very important piece of legislation. It shows that we can do a lot at European level even in areas where we do not have strong Treaty competences: We can support the Member States. In this case, we had a United Nations convention on the rights for persons with disabilities. It was the first UN convention to be

## SPECIAL FEATURE



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**Set to benefit from the single market:** Employment, social and single market policy are often seen as opposites but they go hand in hand: This is how we dealt with accessibility.

signed by the EU as such, in addition to the Member States! To implement the convention, we have a set of obligations. So rather than wait until every EU country has developed its own set of regulations on accessibility of products and services, fragmenting the single market in the process, we said: let's go for a new approach and decide to implement this part of the UN convention together. This is good for business because companies are encouraged to develop all kinds of products and services by having immediate access to the whole of the internal market. It is good for the customers of the entire EU, the people that need those products and services. If you believe in the internal market, like I do, it means that they have more choice and cheaper products and services. So people with disabilities will have tools and instruments available that will give them access to services and products that they did not have before, like ATMs, e-books etc. This means that they will become more independent in their lives, which is what people want: make their own choices and not depend for everything on other people.

#### **Is this a new approach, social policy using Single Market instruments?**

Yes, I was a member of the European Parliament's Internal

Market Committee for a couple of years, so I know how the internal market works and how to combine social and economic affairs. I think it is an innovative way of being social. Single market policy, employment policy and social policy are too often seen as contrary to one another. Whereas in fact, economic growth and social policy go hand in hand. This is how we dealt with accessibility. We no longer work in silos. It is in the Treaty: When you develop the single market, you must look at the social impact. We have horizontal social clauses in the Treaty too, and we take them very seriously.

**Your mandate spans the British referendum on staying in the EU or leaving it, and the ensuing Brexit negotiations. The mobility and free circulation of people across the EU, and the cross-border coordination of social security that goes with it, became a particularly sensitive topic. You had to wait a bit before launching the revision of the posting of workers Directive...**

Indeed and at the time, I was not happy at all! We knew this was going to be hard work and that we needed time. But in the end, we only had to wait a couple of months. I hope that the review of the social security regulation, which we

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**Training leading to qualifications:** We have to offer opportunities for good quality vocational education and training, including at tertiary level and in adult education, because it is also about re-skilling and up-skilling.

are still negotiating [editor's note: As we were going to press], will come about. On one hand, one could say that the delay was a pity. On the other hand, it has also shaken up people. We do want labour mobility and, for this, we need clear, fair and enforceable rules. They must be clear because everybody must know: can I move or not? Presently, we have 17 million people who are mobile across the EU for work reasons: twice as many as in 2010! More and more people are therefore using this facility. Free movement is also the right that EU citizens cherish most. Social security coordination rules have been adapted a couple of times, over time. It used to be subject to unanimity but now it only requires qualified majority. This provides new opportunities.

#### And for the posting of workers?

There the law dated back to the 1990s, well before the enlargement of the EU from 12 to 28 Member States! In the meantime, the world of work has changed. It was high time to carry out a review of the Directive. Immediately, we saw that a review would not be enough. It had to be revised altogether. So this is what we did and I am very happy with the result: the same pay for the same work at the same place! Of course, it's a little bit more complex than that, but it's there.

#### In 2018, you launched a proposal for a European Labour Authority (ELA) and you reached an agreement on it in 2019...

Because we saw that, to help enforcing EU labour mobility legislation, you need an institution. It is all about ensuring good and spontaneous cooperation between the Member States' authorities, as they exchange information to control free movement. They need an institution, an agency or an authority to facilitate joint or coordinated inspections: A place where liaison officers from the different EU countries work together on a day to day basis, in connection with their country of origin. It will be easier for them to exchange information, cooperate and also inform those who need it: The mobile workers or the candidate mobile workers but also businesses. And when there are interpretation differences or "disputes" between national authorities, we will have a mediation instrument permanently at hand. We are convinced that ELA will be the finishing touch that we need, to ensure a well-functioning European labour market where people can be assured that they won't lose their social security when they cross borders, that there is no social abuse and that, when there is a problem between the authorities, we work together in a positive spirit to solve it.

## SPECIAL FEATURE

**The British referendum and the debate around the posting of workers showed that free circulation of people across the EU today is mixed up with other issues such as the free circulation of services and the refugee crisis. What would be your main message, with the European Parliament elections coming up?**

Free movement within the EU is about “mobile people” and not “migrants”. It is about making sure that people can count on the fact that everything is well organised and enforced, that the rules apply to everybody and that there are no abuses. This creates a level playing field for the entrepreneurs. This is a good thing for the labour market and for every EU country because when people

come from abroad to work, it means that there are job vacancies that are not filled due to a shortage of skills. Cross-border labour mobility can be part of the solution. On the issue of migrants, I am very clear on this. We have asylum seekers, people who are moving around because they need protection. If they come to Europe, we have to offer them a shelter. The European Commission has worked very hard to make this happen. I hope that the Member States will agree on rules, so that we can organise this in Europe. We have to have quick procedures for candidate asylum seekers, to see whether they fulfil the conditions or not. And we need to have good, acceptable systems to send certain people back, in safe circumstances. For those who migrate for economic



**Free movement:** The EU right that citizens cherish most. Presently, we have 17 million people who are mobile across the EU for work reasons: twice as many as in 2010!

## SPECIAL FEATURE

reasons and whose competences we need, things must be better organised. The debate on all these issues is mixed up with fear of the future. With globalisation and the digital revolution, things have never changed so fast. People say: 'What is going on here? Will I have the skills for the future? Can I keep my job? Will I have a job in the future? What about my children? Will they have a decent income? Can they get on with their lives? Will they have the possibility to build up their families in good conditions etc.'. These are normal questions. But what we say is: 'Look, we know that there are changes going on but we are watching and accompanying them. We are adapting our institutions, social security, labour law, social services and so on'. We must help

people, understand their fear and tell them what we are doing with it. And what *they* have to do is make sure they have the right skills. If we do all this together, there is a bright future still in store for us. We must answer people's questions because we are facing a complex situation and populists are better than anybody else at giving simple answers, in two sentences, to complex problems. We must demonstrate that these simple solutions are not sustainable. We should also show people how important it is to have a cohesive society, because the populists are trying to divide society between the good ones and the bad ones. This would lead to a split society and that is dangerous.



**Overcoming fear:** Asylum seekers, economic migrants, mobile EU workers ... The debate on all these issues is mixed up with fear of the future.

## ACCESSIBLE CITIES

# Anna, Sanja, Hugo - what accessibility really means

Citizens with or without disabilities explain why accessibility matters to them

For eight years now, the European Commission and the European Disability Forum have been rewarding cities that have improved accessibility to citizens with disabilities to the built environment and public spaces, to transportation, information and communication, as well as to public facilities and services.

On 4 December 2018, the 2019 EU Access City Award ceremony was a bit special: It took place less than a month after the European Parliament and the EU Council of Ministers had come to a provisional agreement on a legislative breakthrough - the Commission's proposal for a European Accessibility Act, the final adoption of which is due in March. It will make many everyday products and services more accessible to persons with disabilities (see page 8).

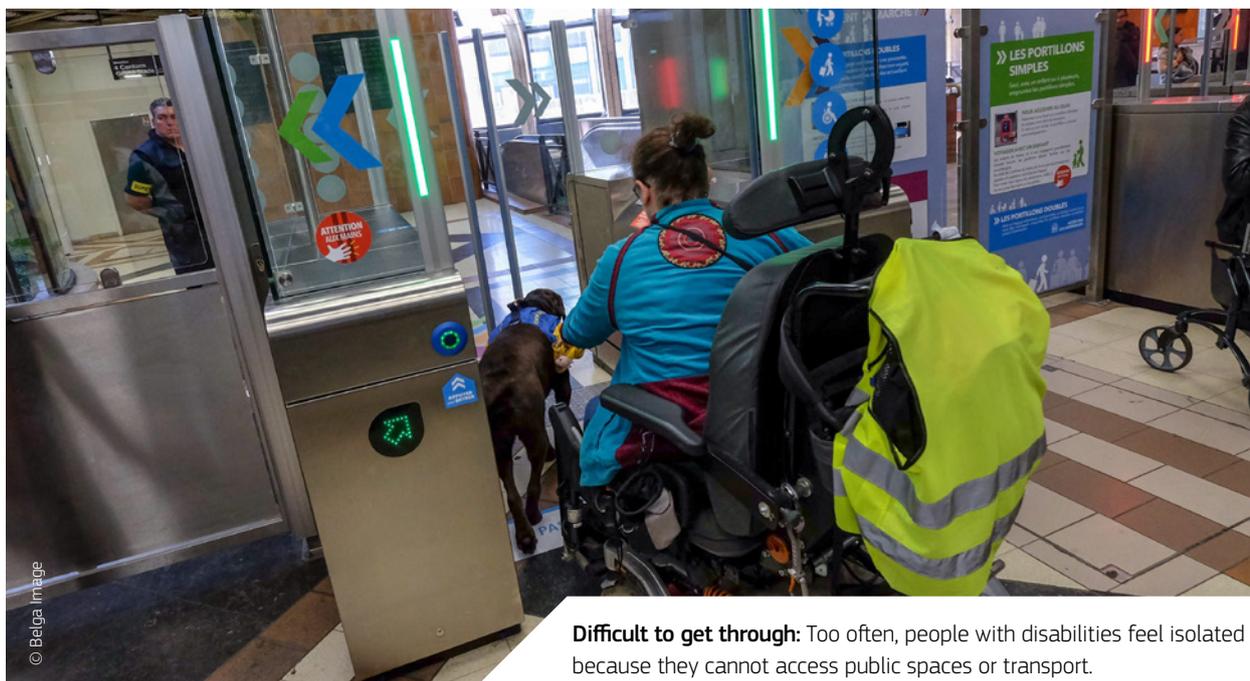
And the winner this time was the city of Breda (Netherlands), with Evreux (France) and Gdynia (Poland) taking the second and third place, out of a total of 52 applications.

## Feeling isolated

"Too often, people with disabilities feel isolated because they cannot access public spaces or transport", European Commissioner Marianne Thyssen (see page 14) stated when awarding the prize.

"In Breda, public spaces such as parks and stores are accessible to everyone. Digital technologies ensure that all citizens can get around using public transport. And Breda's investments pay off. Tourism is thriving thanks to the city's commitment to inclusion. The European Accessibility Act will complement Breda's efforts by setting European accessibility standards for key products and services".

The Access City Award was presented at the European Day of Persons with Disabilities conference, an annual event which was attended by around 400 participants coming to Brussels from all over Europe.



**Difficult to get through:** Too often, people with disabilities feel isolated because they cannot access public spaces or transport.



**Knowledge and heart:** Accessibility (here via a Braille notepad) means access to knowledge and an accessible city means a city with a heart.

### Severely sight impaired

In a video published on the European Commission's website, Anna Woźniak-Szymańska, from Warsaw, sets out what accessibility means to her and explains how the city of Warsaw has improved in order to eliminate the difficulties she faces.

"As I am severely sight impaired, my biggest problem is getting around", says Anna. "Warsaw is a big, bustling city. This means I encounter different types of obstacles: I have problems identifying the numbers of buses and trams, finding the doors and getting onto the buses and trams, so I have to concentrate".

"Warsaw has become a friendlier city in recent years", adds Anna. "There is more and more tactile paving, which helps blind people using a cane. It also helps visually impaired people who can feel the tactile paving underfoot. More and more trams and buses have marked entrances. Every town and city should be accessible because accessibility enables us to lead normal lives as citizens of every town and city".

### Deaf and blind

In another Commission video, Sanja Tarczay, from Zagreb, explains that she is a deaf-blind person. "As such, I face mobility problems every day. Not only because I am deaf-blind but because of the environment, that creates a number of difficulties. The accessibility of education institutions means a great deal to me. I am really very proud, considering how it was before, how the city of Zagreb has now changed".

"For example look at the Faculty of Philosophy, how many different adjustments have been made", stresses Sanja. "Starting from basic physical adjustments: For example they have ramps, they have lifts, but they also cater for students who are visually impaired. They have a suitable room where students can customise their texts using Braille. This faculty also provides transportation to the university for students with disabilities. An accessible city is not only important for people who have disabilities, it is also important for all citizens. If you have accessibility, that means you have access

to knowledge. Living in an accessible city means living in a city with a heart".

### Accessing by bike

Just how important accessibility happens to be for all citizens is illustrated by yet another video, featuring Hugo Martinez, from Lugo, Spain. Hugo, who has no disabilities, likes to use his bike. "There are few areas with bike lanes and they are not sign posted", he explains. "It is not easy to access a city, because there aren't many signs that help me find my way".

"Fortunately, my city has changed because, through the Riolas association, we have put pictograms in many stores and in other places such as the Provincial Museum and now I have easier access to many places in my city".

"Accessibility means a lot to me because it allows me to move more safely and be able to do things on my own. But it can also be important for everyone at a certain time in our lives".

### Videos with Anna, Sanja and Hugo:

<https://europa.eu/!CB93kC>

## Culture accessibility

Cultural heritage was also an important part of the 2019 Access city Award: To mark the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, a special prize was awarded to two cities that have made an effort to improve access to cultural heritage: Viborg (Denmark) and Monteverde (Italy).

The aim of this prize was to raise awareness about what has been done so far, and what the EU plans to do for its citizens with disabilities so that cultural wealth may be enjoyed by all citizens on an equal basis.

## OTHER VOICES

# The European Accessibility Act - A step forward but still a long way to go



**Marie Denninghaus:** Further legislation and other non-legislative initiatives can build upon the European Accessibility Act.

The Accessibility Act had a lot of potential to make products and services accessible for all people in Europe, including 80 million persons with disabilities and 150 million older people. Unfortunately, this potential has not been fully used and the compromise text following the negotiations between Commission, Council, and the European Parliament now focuses mainly on digital products and services.

The *European Disability Forum* (EDF) has been closely following the development of this legislative proposal; as a matter of fact, the adoption of a strong Accessibility Act has been one of the main objectives of its “Freedom of Movement” campaign. EDF wanted the Act to be a horizontal piece of legislation that would improve accessibility of products and services that persons with disabilities use in their everyday lives: household appliances, healthcare services, transport services, television, etc. We were also hoping that it would harmonize the accessibility requirements throughout EU legislation in general.

This was partly achieved. There is a better understanding of accessibility requirements and some products and services will become more accessible. EDF is therefore happy that the Directive will finally be adopted after several years of negotiations and that at least in some areas it will improve the status quo.

But the text falls unfortunately short of some important provisions such as accessibility of transport, especially urban public transport, and buildings.

## A unique opportunity for the EU

The European Accessibility Act was a unique opportunity for Europe. It was intended as a means to implement the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD)* that the EU and all its Member States have already ratified. It was also supposed to clarify references to accessibility in existing legislation such as the Public Procurement Directive and the EU Structural Funds Regulations, which include binding provisions to procure accessible products and services, but do not provide specific accessibility requirements to do so.

While it has not fulfilled those goals completely, the EU disability movement considers this a crucial first step. Further legislation and other non-legislative initiatives can build upon the Accessibility Act to ensure that for example also the building of the bank is accessible, and not just the ATM. Or that a wheelchair user will be able to board a tram or a local bus after using the accessible ticketing machine or payment terminal.

EDF and its members will keep working and campaigning actively to improve the accessibility situation in the EU according to the motto “Nothing about us without us!”.

**Marie Denninghaus, Policy Coordinator,**  
*European Disability Forum*

# Social policy on top

Katarina Ivanković-Knežević is Director in charge of Social Affairs, in the European Commission, since September 2018



**Katarina Ivanković-Knežević:** The European Accessibility Act is about the next generation of rights; the Work-Life Balance Directive is a real breakthrough; and not having access to social protection is not an option.

## You came straight from being Social Affairs Deputy Minister in Croatia to becoming a Director in the European Commission, in Brussels!

Yes, I have worked in the Croatian Ministry of Labour and Pension System for the past 12 years, but for more than 20 years in the public administration as a whole. After having studied law I was part of the very first batch of young Croatian civil servants to undertake an EU trainers' programme. Since 2006 we worked on the establishment of structures for the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance and the European Social Fund in Croatia. I also negotiated chapters 19 (employment, social affairs and inclusion) and 20 (regional policy and EU funds) of Croatia's EU Accession treaty.

## How do you see the role of the EU in the employment and social affairs area?

For me, social policy in a really broad sense has always been a top priority: Whether I was dealing with integrating children with disabilities into the regular education system or securing personal assistance for people with disabilities, the social inclusion of those that require our assistance was always at the back of my mind. And I have always believed that the European Union has a strong role to play in social affairs.

## You have come at the right time with the pending adoption of the European Accessibility Act?

Yes, especially as it addresses the next generation of accessibility rights. The previous generations were about ensuring regular access to buildings for people with disabilities

or integrating them into the education system and the labour market. The European Accessibility Act is definitely about the next generation: issues that are often taken for granted - such as access to bank machines, websites... - and that represent everyday life obstacles for people with disabilities. Because of population ageing, it will also benefit everybody in due course! Moreover, it is a fulfilment of equal opportunities policy.

## Two other social affairs proposals, about to be adopted by the EU, also have to do with equality: the Work-Life Balance Directive and the Recommendation on access to social protection ...

Agreement on the Work-Life Balance Directive was reached at the end of January and it is a real breakthrough: For instance, it will ensure that carer responsibilities are equally shared among the partners and it will allow more fathers to stay with the mothers and their newborn child. I know how important this is, as my very first task at the beginning of my working life was to address gender equality! As for the Recommendation, indeed, a large percentage of people are involved in non-standard forms of work and are not having access to social protection or to some aspects of it. This is not an option. We want to provide the possibility for the self-employed and those employed with non-standard contracts, including platform workers, to have access to social protection: Unemployment benefits, social care, pension rights... all the rights that normally derive from a work relationship.



## Social Europe: Your stories

Asko, from Finland, received support from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund to go back to university, after the Nokia factory he worked in for twenty years shut down. This helped him find a new job.

Mateusz, from Poland, is a great example of work-life balance, taking seven months of paternity leave so he could spend time with his kids and allow his wife to continue with her career.

Jannie, from the Netherlands, needed help taking care of her 82 year-old mother who was affected by dementia.

These three stories illustrate how the principles enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights, adopted by the EU in 2017, are already transforming people's lives.

You will find them in a book of photos just published by the European Commission, entitled "Social Europe-Your stories".

Available in all EU languages, the book is an outcome of the #MySocialRights photo competition organised by the Commission in 2018, when young Europeans were asked how they perceived their social rights in Europe. They were due to reply with a photo focusing on one of the 20 Pillar principles.

Catalogue n°: KE-04-18-807-EN-C (print) and KE-04-18-807-EN-N (pdf).

Link to the publication: <https://europa.eu/!wQ69KH>

### Access to social protection: Best practices

The European Commission has proposed an initiative to extend and improve social protection for the 40 % of workers who are insufficiently covered, and make sure that all workers get the support they need during career transitions. Available in all languages, this selection of best practice examples concerning non-standard workers and the self-employed, was drawn up by national authorities and social partners to facilitate cross-border mutual learning.

Catalogue n°: KE-04-18-963-EN-N

Link to the publication:  
<https://europa.eu/!cm93dC>

### Connecting jobseekers and employers: Across borders

The European classification of occupations, skills, qualifications and competences (ESCO), developed by the European Commission, works on solutions to connect European jobseekers and employers across borders. Here is what its users have to say about it.

Catalogue n°: KE-05-18-011-EN-N

Link to the publication:  
<https://europa.eu/!Dv88rQ>

### Supporting Europe's most deprived: Case studies

The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) offers assistance to some of the most vulnerable persons in the EU (food, clothing and other essentials, accompanied by advice, counselling or other help to re-integrate into society). This publication provides a snapshot of FEAD-funded initiatives and highlights how they can potentially complement other EU-funded programmes, such as the European Social Fund.

Catalogue n°: KE-03-18-529-EN-N

Link to the publication:  
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