

A Strong Social Europe for Just Transition

In January 2020, the European Commission published a Communication on a strong social Europe for just transitions, which outlines the social priorities to prepare for the transformation expected to take place as a result of the shift towards a greener and more digital economy.

The focus is on ensuring equal opportunities and creation of quality jobs with fair working conditions, sustainable social protection systems and inclusion.

➤ **Equal opportunities for all**

Economic transformation means that many new job opportunities will emerge while many others shall become obsolete. Education will be the key tool to ensure that our human capital is able to adapt over the span of a career, which may necessitate more frequent job changes and flexible working patterns.

The EU lacks behind in producing enough people with the skills required by a modern and digital economy, particularly in the area of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). National education training systems will require to adapt to provide high quality education from an early age and to continuously keep developing skills over the years.

National governments will require to work more closely with social partners, teachers and trainers on modern forecasting techniques and graduate tracking programmes. Many companies today already have great difficulty to recruit the skills and experience required for vacancies being created. In this regard, the European Commission will soon be publishing an **updated Skills Agenda, with a proposal on Vocational Education and Training (VET)**. Also, a cooperation framework including EU member states will form a **European Education Area** and will become a reality by 2025 to strengthen the focus on youth education. A more ambitious **Erasmus+** will continue to be a European tool to support and strengthen mobility in education and training. The **Digital Europe Programme** will support advanced digital skills development and reinforce the digital capabilities of education providers. The Commission will also reinforce the **Youth Guarantee** to support young people with developing skills and gaining work experience.

➤ **Fair Working conditions**

The European Commission is looking at introducing a proposal on **fair minimum wages** in the EU, which do not aim to set the level of minimum wage pay, but the framework in which

minimum wages are discussed at national level. While acknowledging the benefits brought about by the collaborative economy, particularly by serving as an entry point to several workers who then continue developing their career pathway, the Commission is however concerned with the quality of employment in this sector, which at times can be precarious. It will therefore setup a **Platform Work Summit** to discuss priority issues and come up with policy solutions in future. The Commission intends to also look at the impact of digitalization and new technologies on the welfare of workers by reviewing the occupational safety and health strategy. It also believes that **social dialogue** is at the heart of finding labour market solutions and will look to reinforce this process.

➤ **Social protection and inclusion**

The Commission believes in solidarity and is looking at introducing a common European fund in the form of a **European Unemployment Benefit Reinsurance Scheme** to support the unemployed when certain member states face pressure on public finances during external shocks. It will also follow the implementation of the Recommendation on **access to social protection** to ensure that the self-employed and persons in non-standard employment are well covered at times of unemployment, illness, invalidity and accidents at work.

There will be a strong push for **active ageing policies** to ensure that skills and experience stay in the labour market for as long as possible. This will also contribute to the sustainability of pension systems.

➤ **The Maltese perspective**

The objectives of this strategy are valid and address the future challenges derived from the transformation towards a green and digital economy. For this reason, it is important to push these measures forward in line with economic policies that create the right conditions to create jobs and growth. This will require EU policy making that is supported by strong evidence in the form of impact assessments, and while setting broader EU frameworks, allow for decisions to be made at the closest level to businesses and citizens in order to address local economic realities.

For questions or more detailed information please contact EU Affairs Manager Daniel Debono and Senior Advisor Mark Seychell from the Malta Business Bureau's Brussels Representative Office on infobrussels@mbb.org.mt

