



Commission launches the reflection on the social dimension of Europe by 2025

Brussels, 26 April 2017

Following the launch of the discussion on the future of Europe via the Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe presented on 1 March, today the Commission zooms in on the social dimension of Europe by 2025.

Today's reflection paper on Europe's social dimension will mark the start of a reflection process with citizens, social partners, the European institutions and governments, that seeks to identify responses to the challenges our societies and citizens face in the coming years. Today's paper is also an effort to clarify the contribution of the EU level in addressing these challenges.

Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, said: *"This reflection paper sets the ground for a debate about what kind of social dimension for Europe we want, and what actions can be taken at the European level to respond to the challenges that we face today. To build a consensus around ideas presented in the reflection paper, we count on active participation of national parliaments, social partners and citizens."*

More concretely, the reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe, drafted under the leadership of Vice-President **Dombrovskis** and Commissioner **Thyssen**, raises broad, societal questions on the way we live and how societies are organised, but also on how to sustain our standards of living, create more and better jobs, equip people with the right skills and create more unity within our society, in light of tomorrow's society and world of work.

It does so by setting out three possible options, for the future, which echo arguments often made in the public debate:

- **Limiting the social dimension to free movement:** Under this option, the Union would keep rules to promote cross-border movements of people in place, such as rules on social security rights of mobile citizens, on posting of workers, on cross-border health care and the recognition of diplomas. However, there would no longer be EU minimum standards on, for instance, health and safety for workers, working and rest time, or maternity and paternity leave. Europe would no longer foster opportunities for Member States to exchange best practices in the fields of education, health, culture and sports, and social and regional reconversion programmes in the Member States that are co-funded by EU money would have to be discontinued or funded nationally.
- **Those who want to do more in the social field do more:** different groups of countries could decide to do more together in the social field. These could be the countries sharing the euro as a single currency, in order to preserve the strength and stability of the euro area and to avoid abrupt adjustments in the living standards of its citizens, or any other possible configuration of participating countries that could focus on other issues.
- **The EU27 deepen the social dimension of Europe together:** while the centre of gravity for action in the social field should and would remain with national and local authorities, the EU would explore ways to further support Member State action, making full use of all instruments in its toolbox. Legislation would not only set minimum standards but, in selected areas, could fully harmonise citizens' rights across the EU, with the aim of focusing on social convergence in social outcomes.

As the Europe of 27 looks to shape its future, the discussion on the social dimension of our Union is timely and essential. In the spirit of the White Paper on the future of Europe, the reflection paper opens up the debate by offering different ideas, proposals and options for a social dimension of Europe by 2025. The ideas presented in the different options can be combined, and are neither prescriptive nor restrictive. Their purpose is to enrich and inform the debate, so that action can unfold.

At the same time, the Commission is committed to continuing to deliver on social Europe in line with its [Political Guidelines](#) and the [Commission Work Programme](#). Today's launch of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) and its accompanying initiatives is a flagship initiative in this mandate to progress towards future-proof, fairer and better functioning labour markets and welfare systems, and to support

a renewed convergence towards better working and living conditions.

Background

Delivering on a more social and fair Europe is a key priority for this Commission. In spite of recent improvements in economic and social conditions across Europe, divergences between countries and regions persist. The economic crisis has left deep marks in people's lives and in our societies, but we still share the same social aspirations.

This was also confirmed by the [Rome Declaration, adopted by EU leaders on 25 March 2017](#), which outlined the importance of a strong social Europe, based on sustainable growth, which promotes economic and social progress as well as cohesion and convergence, upholding the integrity of the internal market and taking into account the diversity of national systems and the key role of social partners, for the EU27 going forward.

In their diversity, the EU27 countries have the possibility to respond to common challenges individually and together, in the knowledge that the responsibility for preparing for the future is largely in their hands. The presentation of the avenues in the reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe gives a perspective of what might be achieved at the European level and what the limitations could be, depending on the degree of ambition that is pursued and the extent to which some – or all – Member States are prepared to work together. It also seeks to set the stage for a debate which should essentially clarify two open questions: What challenges should our countries tackle together? What added value can EU level instruments provide?

Together with the Commission, the Swedish government is preparing a Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017, which will be a further opportunity to take the discussion forward.

The reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe follows up on the [White Paper on the Future of Europe](#) presented on 1 March, which set out the main challenges and opportunities for Europe in the coming decade. The White Paper marked the beginning of a process for the EU27 to decide on the future of their Union. To encourage this debate, the European Commission, together with the European Parliament and interested Member States, will host a series of 'Future of Europe Debates' across Europe's cities and regions.

The paper on the social dimension of Europe will be followed by a series of reflection papers on:

- harnessing globalisation;
- deepening the Economic and Monetary Union, on the basis of the [Five Presidents' Report of June 2015](#);
- the future of Europe's defence ; and
- the future of EU finances.

For more information

[Reflection paper on the social dimension of the future of Europe](#)

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Attachments

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