

PRESIDENCY SUMMARY: STRATEGIC VISION FOR SOCIAL AND EMPLOYMENT POLICIES IN THE FUTURE EU

The high-level ministerial working dinner organised by the Finnish Presidency on 9 December 2019 with key stakeholders resulted in a clear message for the Commission – there is a need for a new long-term EU-level strategy on employment, sustainable growth and wellbeing. A holistic strategy with people at its core is needed to give direction to future EU policies. Such a strategy would help to ensure a coherent approach to different policy areas and to improve interaction and cooperation between different sectors, highlighting European added value. It would also help ensure that all policies, including economic policies, work for the wellbeing of the people.

Upward social convergence should be a key element in the European strategic vision for the future. That vision should also take into account the UN sustainable development goals, although they need to be adapted to the EU context. Opinions differ as to the need for concrete goals linked to the strategy, but many see the benefit of clear targets, which could help us to better understand the investment needs in relation to social and employment policies. In the immediate future, the European Pillar of Social Rights will continue to guide work when it comes to the social dimension in the EU.

One of the main challenges for the future is the transition to a climate-neutral economy. Green Deal, the overarching initiative announced by the Commission, gives some direction to EU policies, but the prominence of the social dimension in this regard should be taken into account. A delicate balance is necessary between a just transition from the perspective of individuals and the adaptability of the businesses most impacted by climate change. Overcoming the danger of working in silos requires guidance from an overarching strategic vision.

In the context of addressing specific themes, the need for up-to-date skills was mentioned as one of the absolute prerequisites if the EU is to be able to adapt to future challenges and continue to compete globally while maintaining the European social market economy. Continuous life-long learning should be high on the agenda in the future strategy. Furthermore, gender equality, quality of jobs, well-functioning labour markets and social dialogue are key elements in the changing world of work. Equally, the fight against inequality should remain high on the agenda in order to ensure that the future vision for a socially and environmentally sustainable Europe and world becomes a reality.