The implementation of the EPRS has so far been uneven: **important disparities between member states remain** when it comes to the inclusiveness of their social security systems.

Beyond declarations, civil society must be reinforced throughout the implementation process to enable participation and civil dialogue. Furthermore, the **Pillar would need budgetary space and investment in both national and EU level**, including its embedding as a guiding principle in the MFF. In particular, the Workers’ Group calls for a redesign of the European Semester where social objectives have equal footing so that social and economic policy can advance together.

**Passerelle Clause**

Christian Bäumler

Technology advances fast, changes are constant and legislation faces problems to keep up. As mobility grows and technology offers new forms of avoiding traditional frameworks for workers, social policy is one of the fields that suffer particularly from a lag between reality and legislation.

However, the **EU must ensure that workers and citizens are protected regardless of where they are in Europe**, and that working conditions improve and converge. For this reason, the Workers’ Group calls for the move from unanimity to Qualified Majority Voting in the EU Council using the passerelle clause. This more efficient method should be applied to ensure that a necessary level of social and worker protection is guaranteed at the EU level.
Summary of the Costs and Benefits of Investments in Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

Adam Rogalewski

Each year there are over 3.2 million non-fatal accidents in the EU, and nearly 4000 people die in work-related accidents. Many more deaths from work-related illnesses and non-covered cases (such as people dying on the way to work) would have to be added to this number. While there has been a decrease in recent years, the cost in human terms is still enormous, and so is it in economic costs: up to 3.3% of the EU GDP is spent dealing with work-related injuries. For all this, investment in health and security at work is not only a need stemming from human rights and the Treaty of Fundamental Rights, but also an economic necessity. For the Workers’ Group, it is fundamental to ensure that OSH is dealt with evenly across the European Union. In this way, workers are protected regardless of where they are from or in which country they work.

The role of trade union and social dialogue
The EESC stresses the important role played by the social partners and civil society organisations in developing and implementing sustainable OSH policies. Investments in OSH will only deliver benefits if there is sound social dialogue and extensive collective bargaining coverage. It is important to promote the role of workplace health and safety committees and workers’ representatives.

Studies of the benefits of investment
Many studies as well as the experience of the social partners and civil society organisations have shown that investments in OSH contribute not only to enhanced wellbeing for workers and entrepreneurs but also to high returns, particularly in terms of cost reduction, greater productivity and sustainability of social security systems.
The Commission Reflection Paper, published in January of this year as part of the debate on the Future of Europe, sets several future scenarios of development and climate change. However, if the EU wants to be a global sustainability leader, as expressed in the paper, it is not enough to create a low-carbon, resource efficient and more social Europe. A sustainable Europe will likewise need to take into account the environmental and social impact beyond its borders due to its imports. The Workers’ Group, while recognising the work done, demands more decisive action not only against climate change, but also towards a socially sustainable fair transition where no one is left behind.

Implementation of the Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration based on EU values
José Antonio Moreno Díaz

While migration remains a constant subject of debate in Europe, political consensus remains hard to achieve between Member States. Nevertheless, in December 2018 the Global compact agreement was adopted in Marrakesh, Morocco. It includes 23 objectives for orderly, safe, and regular migration, to prevent the suffering and loss of life surrounding mass migration processes. However, not all member states have ratified the Compact.

Therefore, the Workers’ Group calls for all member states to ratify the Compact and for the EU to deliver a common migration policy that both respects European values and human rights, and stops the constant undermining of solidarity among member states due to uneven migratory pressures.
In Civil Aviation, the employment model used to have good working conditions and strong protection for workers in general, but this is no longer the case. Increasingly, short-term contracts and bogus self-employed workers appear. This happens in an aggressively competitive market where airlines attempt to save by outsourcing and hiring temporary personnel through agencies. This situation adds to the already existing challenges for the aircrews: cross-border mobility and a wide variety of national regulatory frameworks depending on the operational base or country of hiring.

To tackle this, the Workers’ Group calls for the prevalence of direct employment without intermediaries that undermine working conditions and safety. The European Labour Authority must ensure that the Posting of Workers Directive is timely implemented, and the EU must include social clauses in aviation arrangements.

IN DETAIL:
Wide variety of employment conditions

• contracts of indefinite duration,
• short-term contracts,
• outsourcing, rental of aircraft with third country crew
• interim,
• independent or false self-employed
• undeclared work.

All of this is of rare legal complexity and makes it difficult to distinguish between legal and illegal situations. Furthermore, it is highly disturbing to read in the European Commission’s report that in terms of pilot training, a considerable proportion of pilots holding an airline transport pilot license do not meet the basic requirements for being part of the airline.
Opinions

Digitalisation, AI, and Equity
How to strengthen the EU in the global race of future skills and education, while ensuring social inclusion

Giulia Barbucci

What kind of skills and competences are most valid in the AI era? How could these skills be better acquired? What kind of policies are needed at national and EU level? Digitalisation and AI can potentially provide many advantages, reducing people’s isolation, helping people with disabilities and many others; but the opportunities are not open to everyone.

Furthermore, there is a general lack of understanding in European societies at large on the possibilities of AI. For all this, the Workers’ Group calls for a broad investment in education and training with a commitment to the Golden Rule allowing for funding from Member States to be freed from the balanced-budget rules, as well as measures to ensure that humans remain in command, always keeping the social partners involved in the process.

#To fully develop the potential of digitalisation and AI, we must invest in training and ensure social inclusion. Social Investments, like education, must be excluded from the balanced-budget rules
Energy and Climate Policy
New Institutional Framework by 2025
Dumitru Fornea

The Commission communication deals with the reform of the Euratom treaty, taxation in energy, democratic accountability and Qualified Majority Voting. As acknowledged in the Commission’s original text, the poorest citizens are often forced to consume fossil-fuel intensive sources, and therefore any taxation on energy has to avoid increasing their burden. While the Workers’ Group supports the Commission’s initiatives, it claims that social partners and civil society must participate in EU legislation on energy taxation to ensure its social sustainability.

Guidance on the free flow of non-personal data
Laure Batut

While the GDPR has been at the centre of an ongoing debate on privacy of personal data, non-personal data is also of fundamental importance to businesses, and it falls under the FFD Regulation (Free Flow of Data Regulation). However, interaction between the two kinds of data in datasets is common. In order to clarify this situation, new guidelines have been proposed by the Commission. The Workers’ Group demands a review of the proposal in different fields to avoid legal grey areas. This includes a guarantee that personal data will not be stored as non-personal, as well as an evaluation of the state of play in the EU member states.
Better regulation, according to the European Commission, has improved quality, impact assessment, and consultation procedures surrounding EU legislation, while reducing potential regulatory burdens. However, the Workers’ Group does not necessarily consider regulation as a burden: it does not hamper innovation and it ensures that citizens are protected. For this purpose, the Workers’ Group calls for stopping the outsourcing of Impact Assessments. Additionally, the Commission shall continue to apply the Precautionary Principle, revise the innovation principle (which has no legal basis) and include the SDGs in the Better Regulation Tool Box. Better regulation is no substitute for political decisions and must not lead to deregulation or reduce protection levels.

IN DETAIL
European regulation is an essential factor of integration. Well proportioned, it is a guarantee of important legal protection and security for all European actors and citizens.

Regulatory improvement cannot substitute political decisions and can in no way lead to deregulation or have the effect of reducing the level of protection.

“Better Regulation” must be a means of ensuring that the sustainability of actions carried out in the context of EU policies is taken into account.

A “sustainability check” should be explicitly included in the Better Regulation toolbox.

The European impact assessment ecosystem must continue to evolve in order to strengthen its quality and to encourage the active participation of organized civil society.

Consultations launched by the Commission should better involve civil society organizations by implementing a form of collaborative partnership.
The first plenary session after the summer break began with a speech by Klára Dobrev, one of the newly elected vice-presidents of the European Parliament. The Hungarian MEP made clear that she expected the Commission to work towards an EU unemployment reinsurance scheme, the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and on fair minimum wages. Ms Dobrev also highlighted the need for a good cooperation between EESC and EP in drafting social and economic policies.

Workers’ Group President Oliver Röpke emphasised the shared goals of the two institutions: Both aimed at a green and social Europe that respects the rule of law. While member states and social partners also needed to deliver, EU legislation played a crucial role in achieving political goals, such as a European minimum wage.

János Weltner asked for a common engagement of EP and EESC in the domain of health, as this aspect was not yet part of the European Pillar of Social Rights. "It is not possible to treat social care, health care and economic development separately", Weltner said.

"One of the future EP's tasks should be to get to work on the Social Pillar", said Jacques Lemercier. "It is up to you and to the president that discussions take place!". He also underlined the importance of a strong, binding EU legislation for social policy.

Judy McKnight concluded by mentioning that Brexit was a crucial challenge for EU decision makers. She asked the EP president to give the UK "breathing space" to make sure that a no deal Brexit would not happen and that a good outcome for citizens would be guaranteed.
As a second guest of the session, the European Ombudsman Emily O’Reilly took the floor. Looking back at her previous work, she highlighted that fighting maladministration and increasing transparency were key to fight Euroscepticism. As an independent investigator, she solved individual cases, but also addressed fundamental questions of EU policy making, such as limiting the influence of lobbyists and making the Eurogroup and the Council’s processes more explicit.

Oliver Röpke followed up on Ms O’Reilly’s keynote: He expressed his recognition for the Ombudsman’s work, which he named inevitable in times of Euroscepticism. He also made clear that the members of the EESC shared O’Reilly’s commitment towards transparency: As “the opposite of an uncoordinated lobby jungle”, the EESC reconciled interests in a balanced, democratic way, he said.

Franca Salis-Madinier referred to the exemplary function of the EESC as a European institution. “The EESC has developed its own code of conduct and shown how to use it and has therefore reacted to the fact that cases of abuse can happen in any workplace”, she said.

Christian Bäumler pointed out the democratic aspect of Ms O’Reilly’s work: People wanted to know what the EU does, and how responsibilities were split between the EU institutions and member states. He also underlined the EESC’s role as a learning institution in the field of transparency, and upheld the new code of conduct as an important step towards transparency.
The debate focused on economic and social policies at the EU level, the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), the European semester. Valdis Dombrovskis, Executive Vice President-Designate of the European Commission, launched the discussion. He underlined that the social partners had gained a significant role in the European Semester: The semester now followed a more holistic approach with a clear link between investment and reform priorities. He also hoped to cooperate with the EESC for further implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Three other guest speakers contributed to the discussion: Tuomas Saarenheimo from the Finnish Ministry of Finance, Christian Ebeke, from the IMF Europe Office, and Louka T. Katseli, former Greek Minister for the Economy. While Mr Saarenheimo and Mr Ebeke underlined the importance of deepening the capital market union and the EMU, Ms Katseli particularly focused on a roadmap for sustainable economic development.

Anne Demelene identified a need for more flexibility for investments in the EU to be closer to the social reality on the ground. This also included countries with deficits in their current account.

Javier Doz Orrit acknowledged the achievements of the previous Commission in the field of economic governance. However, he criticised a lack of decisiveness in the European Council, which showed a discrepancy between “discourse and political direction” when it came to economic governance. This needed to change to effectively combat tax havens and money laundering.

Petru Sorin Dandea pointed at persisting weaknesses of the European semester. Dandea criticised the fact that the Commission did not have effective instruments to act when member states refuse to implement specific recommendations. This was especially true for social dialogue and collective bargaining.

Judith Vorbach highlighted that, on the one hand, the Social Pillar should focus on increasing purchasing power and consumer demand. On the other hand, solid budgetary policy was not solely about a cautious expenditure, but also about a cautious revenue policy: Fighting tax evasion and corruption was a key priority in that regard.
The new European Commission

#EUstrivesformore  #vdLcommission
The new European Parliament after the Elections

Seats by Party

- GUE/NGL 41
- S&D 153
- Greens/EFA 74
- Renew Europe 108
- EPP 182
- ECR 62
- ID 73
- NI 54
Members of the European Parliament at the Workers’ Group Meeting

Dennis Radtke
CDU - EPP - Germany

Kira Marie Peter-Hansen
SF - Greens/EFA - Denmark