



# Conference on the Future of Europe

## SUMMARY RECORD

**Working Group on A stronger economy, social justice and jobs,  
Chaired by Iratxe García Pérez, European Parliament  
17 December 2021, 11:00-13:00**

### 1. Introductory remarks of the Chair

The Chair opened the meeting by recalling the purpose of the Working Group, namely to give input to prepare the debates and the proposals of the Conference Plenary, within the frame of the Joint Declaration and the Rules of Procedures of the Conference on the Future of Europe. It does so by discussing recommendations from the national and European Citizens' Panels as well as the contributions on the Multilingual Digital Platform related to the Working Group's topics. The Chair also informed the members of the working group that she wanted future meetings of the working group to be web-streamed and asked if anyone would object. No objections were raised.

A few Working Group members who had submitted comments to the draft Summary Record of the October 2021 meeting enquired as to the status of their comments. They were informed that their comments were taken into account and would be in the final version of the summary record to be translated and uploaded on the platform.

One member raised the balance of speaking time between men and women in the working group and proposed working with pre-established speakers' lists to address this.

A couple of members raised that the interim report on the Multilingual Digital Platform did not reflect some highly endorsed and commented on proposals.

### 2. Discussion

The discussion was organised around two different items, reflecting the broad spectrum of issues covered by the Working Group, namely: Social justice and jobs, and A stronger economy for the future.

#### 2.1. Social Justice and Jobs

The Chair introduced the point by highlighting some of the main ideas reflected on the Multilingual Digital Platform, including turning the Action Plan on implementing the European Pillar for Social Rights into something more binding, fighting inequalities and poverty, amongst others through a strengthened child guarantee, a reinforced youth guarantee, and a stronger minimum wages directive as well as with the idea of an unconditional basic income, which was gaining ground. Other ideas included support fair and sustainable competition in the Internal Market through innovation, quality jobs, decent wages, adequate working conditions, safe working environments, equal treatment, fair mobility incl. better coordination of social security systems, promoting social dialogue and better regulation; promoting affordable housing; facilitating the inclusion of people with disabilities; launching an effective LGBTIQ Equality Strategy; and improving gender equality. The Chair stressed that the working group should focus on future oriented proposals, rather than proposals and initiatives that are already in place or in the pipeline.

In his intervention, the spokesperson explained that since the third session of the European Citizens' Panel had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 situation, the work of the Panel had not been completed. At this stage, the Panel had over 300 "orientations" which would be refined and narrowed down to a smaller number of recommendations in the third session of the Panel. As an example, he gave the harmonisation of workers' rights, which he acknowledged would be difficult to achieve on a short run, but could be more agreeable as part of a longer incremental process linked to a precise timetable. Other examples given included establishing



## Conference on the Future of Europe

a common healthcare and social policy, allowing both parents to take equal time off work to take care of their children, and promoting work in smaller cities and villages.

Some speakers spoke of the need to strengthen Europe's social aspects. More generally, some suggested measures to ensure the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, as well as including a Social Progress Protocol in the Treaties. More specifically, some called for making progress on the economic and social convergence in Europe, not only between different Member States, but also between regions and between cities and rural and remote areas. In the field of work, there was a call for fair and decent wages, including minimum wages, adapting legislation on teleworking and flexible working, addressing platform workers and unpaid internships, ensuring fair labour mobility in the EU and avoiding social dumping; strengthening collective bargaining was also mentioned in this context. In terms of gender equality, speakers stressed the need for mainstreaming gender equality, but also making progress on more concrete issues such as the gender pay gap, quotas in senior positions, the development of a gender equality measurement index, as well as ensuring parental leave is an equal right to both parents. Some speakers stressed the need to tackle poverty, amongst others by ensuring that Member States have effective unemployment insurance and pension systems.

Other speakers however stressed that businesses and enterprises are essential for creating the jobs and wealth that is needed for the social Europe that many desire. These speakers further added that having strong businesses and ensuring an entrepreneurial spirit for the EU by investing in future growth capacity, and increasing EU competitiveness is key.

These speakers noted that there is already a strong social dimension in EU legislation, and that the latter did not need to be reinvented but effectively implemented. At the same time, they noted that companies are often struggling with the layers of legislation they have to deal with, impacting their ability to innovate and compete, possibly even damaging the single market. To avoid excessive bureaucracy, these speakers called for tools such as SME tests, ex-post evaluations, the one in one out principle to be well implemented and proposed a "competitiveness check" for all new initiatives. A few speakers stressed the importance of subsidiarity - taking action where it is more effective, stressing that EU action is most appropriate in some areas, but that in other areas, action at national, regional or local level may be more effective.

Education was raised by a number of speakers as a key for the future of the European economy. Concrete ideas included better tailoring curricula, harmonising grading systems and teaching plans, but also ensuring that students are able to come together to exchange experiences.

Taxation was also raised by a few speakers, asking to avoid harmful tax competition, while ensuring that multinational companies pay taxes where profits are made.

The digital transformation was mentioned by a couple of speakers as an opportunity, but also in the context of ensuring that no one is left behind.

### 2.2. A stronger economy for the future

The Chair opened this item on the agenda by highlighting some of the main ideas reflected on the Multilingual Digital Platform, including the suggestion to develop a new growth model for Europe, reviewing the EU's economic governance to reflect the priorities of the EU: the green deal, social rights and the sustainable development goals, to strengthen Europe's resilience to future crises, and to make the European economy more human-centred, by looking more at human progress and protecting natural resources.

In his intervention, the spokesperson explained that much of the thinking of his fellow panellist had been on how the economy could become greener and more environmentally friendly. This could be achieved through using resources more efficiently, e.g. through recycling, having less environmentally damaging products, reducing waste and better educating citizens.

The ensuing discussion continued the debate about the balance between social protection and economic competitiveness. Some speakers highlighted the need for investments, both public and social, and argued for reforming the EU's economic governance, also in order to reflect the digital and green transitions. These



## Conference on the Future of Europe

speakers also highlighted the need to ensure that the transitions are just and that no one is left behind. Others saw competitiveness as a prerequisite for our cherished European Social Model as well as to succeed in the green and digital transitions. and were worried that Europe's competitiveness was falling behind and thus called for a competitiveness check. They also highlighted that a sound fiscal system, more investments in R&I, boosting growth, and ensuring legal predictability are equally important. They were also concerned by some of the proposals made, as they could discourage citizens from working.

Another issue raised by a number of speakers was the need to fight tax evasion and avoidance and ensuring that all companies pay their fair share of taxes.

The issue of equal access to the internet was also raised.

### 3. Concluding remarks of the Chair

The Chair concluded that since this meeting devoted more time to the item on Social justice and jobs, the next meeting would first look at the item on A stronger economy for the future.

In response to the request of a few members to have more meetings of the working group, even if fully virtual, the Chair indicated that she saw no difficulties with this.

### ANNEX. List of members of the Working Group on A stronger economy, social justice and jobs

Chair: Iratxe GARCIA PEREZ (European Parliament)

Spokesperson: Eoin STAFFORD

Title	First name	Last name	Component
Mr	Vincenzo	AMENDOLA	Council
Ms	Clotilde	ARMAND	Local/Regional representative
Ms	Manon	AUBRY	European Parliament
Ms	Regina	BASTOS	National citizens panels/events
Ms	Nicola	BEER	European Parliament
Mr	Markus	BEYRER	Social Partners
Ms	Gabriele	BISCHOFF	European Parliament
Ms	Maret Michaela	BRUNNERT	European citizens panels
Mr	Christian	BUCHMANN	National Parliaments
Mr	Jan	CHLUP	National citizens panels/events
Ms	Leah	CORSMIT	National citizens panels/events
Ms	Rosianne	CUTAJAR	National Parliaments
Ms	Helena	DALLI	European Commission
Ms	Elisa	GAMBARDELLA	Civil Society
Ms	Iratxe	GARCÍA PÉREZ	European Parliament
Mr	Wilm	GEURTS	Council
Mr	Roman	HAIDER	European Parliament
Ms	Eveliina	HEINÄLUOMA	National Parliaments
Mr	Michiel	HOOGEVEEN	European Parliament
Ms	Meira	HOT	National Parliaments
Ms	Camila Isabelle Chalotte	JENSEN	European citizens panels



## Conference on the **Future** of **Europe**

Mr	Siim	KALLAS	National Parliaments
Mr	Joémy	LINDAU	European citizens panels
Mr	Stefano	MALLIA	European Economic and Social Committee
Ms	Vladimíra	MARCINKOVÁ	National Parliaments
Ms	Mairead	MCGUINNESS	European Commission
Ms	Andreja	METELKO-ZGOMBIC	Council
Ms	Roberta	METSOLA	European Parliament
Mr	Radu-Mihai	MIHAIL	National Parliaments
Ms	Lucía	MUÑOZ	National Parliaments
Mr	Siegfried	MUREŞAN	European Parliament
Mr	Niklas Hendrik	NIENASS	European Parliament
Ms	Marina	NIKOLAOU	National Parliaments
Ms	Aoife	O'LEARY	European citizens panels
Mr	Władysław	ORTYL	Committee or the Regions
Mr	Kacper	PAROL	European citizens panels
Ms	Sirpa	PIETIKÄINEN	European Parliament
Mr	Neale	RICHMOND	National Parliaments
Mr	Vibe	RØMER WESTH	Council
Mr	Oliver	ROPKE	European Economic and Social Committee
Mr	Christophe	ROUILLON	Committee or the Regions
Mr	Vladimír	ŠORF	European citizens panels
Mr	Eoin	STAFFORD	European citizens panels
Mr	Andres	SUTT	Council
Ms	Katja	TRILLER VRTOVEC	Council
Ms	Els	VAN HOOFF	National Parliaments
Ms	Monika	VANA	European Parliament
Mr	Luca	VISENTINI	Social Partners
Ms	Ružica	VUKOVAC	National Parliaments