

THE FUTURE OF THE EU SOCIAL POLICY AFTER THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

Symposium, 6th June 2019

European Economic and Social Committee – Trèves Building, Brussels.

SUMMARY OF THE EVENT

The Symposium «The Future of the EU Social Policy after the European Elections» organised by the CRIDES and the Institute for European Studies (IEE) UCLouvain, in collaboration with the Institute for European Studies (IEE) Université Saint-Louis-Bruxelles was an ideal opportunity to meet both academics and social partners.

European elections were pivotal in the debate about the incoming challenges in both employment and social policy from an international point of view. Speakers from different countries converged on the Symposium to discuss how the European Commission could be engaged in dealing with inequality in the new labour market and boosting quality of the employment.

The chairman, Professor Edoardo Traversa, focused his introduction on the Commission activities developed over the last five years and describing its achievements, e.g. the new Directives on EU Work-life Balance and the Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions as a direct follow-up to the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The first speaker, Professor Philippe Pochet presented a speech entitled: *«In search of Social Europe»*. The speech focused on employment and its role in the Commission's agenda. Three main questions were addressed: (i) the social dialogue; (ii) the deregulation of the labour market and (iii) challenges for the future. In conclusion, the speaker stressed the risks around inequality between workers and the importance of labour guarantees.

The second speaker, Professor Filip Dorssemont presented a speech entitled: *«The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, what has it delivered in advancing Social Europe?»*. The speaker tried to assess how the Charter of Fundamental Rights can be used as a tool to reinforce workers' rights. The main research question was whether the Charter could be used to rebalance the economic situation in the European Union by increasing social rights in order to promote labour standards.

The third speaker, Professor Alberto Pizzoferrato presented a speech entitled: *«EU labour law perspectives on the Gig Economy»*. The focus of the presentation was the role of digitalisation and what the European Union has done to address this problem. The speaker discussed the following main topics: (i) possible benefits for platform workers; (ii) self-employed workers' access to social rights; (iii) "false" self-employed workers; (iv) social protection for independent gig workers.

The fourth speaker, Professor Simon Deakin presented a speech entitled: *«Social Europe in times of Brexit»*, in other words what does this mean for European social policies. According to the speaker, the main issue is the lack of free access to the European internal market without an agreement for labour law and social policies. However, Brexit does not automatically imply that the UK Government will reduce employment law protections.

The Social partners addressed the main topics of the Symposium from different perspectives. On the one hand, Mrs Rebekah Smith discussed the importance of improving dynamism in the labour market and flexicurity through the updating of workers skills. On the other hand, Mrs Isabelle Schömann considered that European Social policy has to be developed over four dimensions: (i) equality; (ii) fairness; (iii) inclusiveness and (iv) sustainability.

Conclusions were leaded by Professor Enrico Traversa who summarised and discussed the main ideas highlighted during the Symposium.