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Publication of the European Commission Work Programme 2021 (CWP)

On Monday 19 October, the European Commission has presented its Work Programme 2021, “A Union of Vitality in a World of Fragility”. You can find it [here](#), and its annexes [here](#). The Newsflash will this week have a specific focus on the initiatives highlighted in the Commission Work Programme, which will be at the heart of our activities next year.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS BOARD

Priorities for the Social Affairs Board and its Task Forces in the CWP 2021

The Commission has set out in its Work Programme for 2021 a number of social policy objectives to be pursued before the end of 2021 in order to prevent the health and economic crisis from turning into a social crisis. The so-called “Fair Economy Package” contains 4 measures. First, the Commission will propose an action plan for the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, a non-legislative instrument that will contribute to socio-economic recovery and resilience in the medium and long-term. Secondly, as already announced in President von der Leyen’s Political Guidelines, a Council Recommendation for the creation of a European Child Guarantee (non-legislative) will be presented. Third, drawing lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and the changing world of work, the Commission will also introduce a new EU strategic framework on health and safety at work (non-legislative). Finally, an Action plan for the social economy (non-legislative) will be put forward in the last trimester of 2021. In addition, the Commission stated that a legislative proposal will be presented “to ensure decent, transparent and predictable working conditions” as well as “adequate social protection” to people providing services through platforms (or “Platform workers”). Finally, the Commission believes that a path towards economic recovery and green and digital transitions will require Europeans to acquire new skills. For this reason, as part of the follow-up to the European Education Area and the updated skills agenda, the Commission will put forward an initiative on individual learning accounts to enable individuals “to undertake training and manage their career” (legislative and non-legislative).

European Commission issues first emission of EU SURE social bonds

The European Commission issued a €17 billion inaugural social bond under the EU SURE instrument to

help protect jobs and keep people in work. The issuing consisted of two bonds, with €10 billion due for repayment in October 2030 and €7 billion due for repayment in 2040. There was very strong investor interest in this highly rated instrument, and the bonds were more than 13 times oversubscribed, resulting in favourable pricing terms for both bonds.

PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

Priorities for the Public Services Board and its Task Forces in the CWP 2021

A Europe fit for the digital age

With the Next Generation EU, the European Commission aims to recover from the COVID-19 crisis. Amongst its priorities, a focus will be put on sustainable investment and reforms, including a minimum 20% of the total to be invested in digital. The European Commission also intends to take action with legislation covering the safety, liability, fundamental rights and data aspects of artificial intelligence and a Data Act. It will also continue its ongoing review of competition rules to ensure they are fit for the changing market environment, including the accelerating digitalisation of the economy, whilst update its industrial strategy for Europe to take into account the recent developments. Global trade and its integrated value chains will remain a fundamental growth engine and a key driving force for a truly global recovery. The Commission is working on a review of the EU's trade policy and aims to adopt a new instrument to deter and counteract coercive actions by third countries.

Promoting our European way of life

The European health data space will be launched by the end of next year to harness data for better healthcare, better research, and better policy making to the benefit of patients. The Commission will also draw lessons in other areas, notably when it comes to the Schengen area and upholding free movement of people. For this, the Commission will work to preserve and improve a functioning Schengen area based on a new strategy for the future of Schengen.

A new push for European democracy

The Commission will look at how cohesion policy can power the recovery and the twin transitions, address widening regional disparities and help address emerging social and economic issues. It will put forward an assessment of the situation in regions, whilst developing a long-term vision for rural areas to harness the potential of these regions. The upcoming Communication on Better Regulation will focus on burden reduction, notably in implementing the 'one-in, one-out' approach and optimising the relevance of the 'Fit-for-Future' platform to support the Commission in identifying simplification and burden reduction potential. Finally, the Commission will step up efforts to improve the effective application, implementation and enforcement of EU law, especially in view of improving the functioning of the single market, the protection of key supply chains, as well as to uphold citizen's rights and to deliver the European Green Deal.

European Parliament written question to the European Commission on SGIs

On 19 July 2020, MEPs Gualmini and Fritzon asked a [written question to the European Commission](#). Highlighting the role of SGIs in the COVID-19 crisis and on the EU socio-economic model (and in achieving the goals of the Pillar of Social Rights and of the EU Green Deal), MEPs Gualmini and Fritzon asked whether the Commission, on the basis of Article 14 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, would include in future initiatives clear and explicit references to SGIs to support adequate investments and ensure a consistent approach to these services both by the EU and the Member States. [In its response](#), and whilst acknowledging their importance, the European Commission recalled the framework for SG(E)I (consisting of the communication 'A Quality Framework for Services of General Interest in Europe', the SGEI package on State Aid, and the modernised European public procurement rules), and the freedom of Member States to organise SGEIs whilst ensuring a consistent approach with EU rules and principles. The Commission also insisted that it will continue to assess specific aspects of the present framework for SG(E)I and support Member States in the application of available instruments under the framework. The current practice to refer to the quality framework, if appropriate, will be maintained.

SUSTAINABILITY BOARD

Priorities for the Sustainability Board and its Task Forces in the CWP 2021

The EU Green Deal

The European Commission placed the EU Green Deal at the top of its 6 main priorities, showing the need to look beyond the repair of the damage and focus on the recovery for the long term. With the Next Generation EU, the focus will be on sustainable investments and reforms with 37% of expenditure of the Recovery and Resilience Facility planned to be spent for the green transition. Additionally, the Commission will ensure that 30% of the Next Generation EU with a total of €750 bln will be raised through the support of EU Green Bonds that will be introduced early next year. To ensure long-term recovery and resilience, the Commission's future work will be supported and accompanied by the newly introduced Strategic Foresight Report. The first report showed how important resilience for recovery is and how to evaluate EU policies to make them more future-proof, helping the EU to prepare for new emerging challenges and prevent possible shortages.

The European Commission intends to push for a 55% net Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission reduction by 2030 as compared to 1990 levels, which is still negotiated by the EU institutions. A dedicated "Fit for 55 Package" will be put forward, in order to ultimately become climate neutral by 2050. This package will include proposals on a broad range of issues, such as renewables, energy efficiency, land use, energy taxation, effort sharing and the ETS. To reinforce the EU climate diplomacy, the Commission will propose a carbon border adjustment mechanism to help motivate foreign producers and EU importers to reduce their carbon emissions.

The green transition of the Commission also introduces a series of measures on smart and sustainable transport, which includes the Revision of the Regulation on the TEN-E and the Directive on intelligent transport systems. Another milestone for the Commission will be the continuous work on the Circular Economy development looking at the eco-design and sustainable products revision and more particularly

the revision of the Sludge Directive, Shipment of Waste, Packaging of Waste Directive, the revision of the Construction Products Regulation and of the regulation on Organic Pollutant in Waste. Beyond the measures of cutting emissions in the different sectors to reach climate neutrality within the set ambitions of the EU Green Deal, the Commission will work on the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and on the toxic free environment package looking at the adoption of the Zero Pollution Strategy.

A Europe fit for the digital age
Foreseen in the context of the “A Europe fit for the digital age”, the Commission is also planning to review the Energy and Environment Aid guidelines. This revision should provide a modernised and simplified framework enabling public authorities to reach the EU objectives in a cost-effective manner with minimum distortions of competition and trade in the Union.

PROJECTS & EVENTS

Social and Economic partners’ meeting on economic migration on 23 October and follow-up of the new pact on migration and asylum in 2021

CEEP and the EU Social and Economic partners met virtually this Friday 23 October 2020 to continue the process of developing a coordinated position on economic migration. In the framework of CEEP activities on migration and integration and in line with the [2016 Action Plan for the integration of third country nationals](#), this coordination meeting was an important opportunity to finalise a joint document that will be the starting point to set up a new co-operation with the European Commission DG Home in the field of economic migration. The discussion between the European Social and Economic partners on a new framework of cooperation on economic migration, focused on the need for promoting and improving the use of the current legislative framework, revising the existing set of EU directives in line with what announced in the European Commission [New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#). Furthermore, CEEP emphasized during the meeting the necessity to improve real-time labour market intelligence, so as to facilitate a better matching of Third Country Nationals with job vacancies in the EU, and to help public employers and SGI providers to reduce their skills shortages by creating a talent pool accessible by employers, since this is one of the priority actions of the [New Skills Agenda](#). According to its work programme for 2021, the European Commission will continue the work on the new pact on migration and asylum. In this context, a number of proposals measures on legal migration will be put forward, including a ‘talent and skills’ package and, as part of it, a revision of the long-term residents Directive and a review of the single permit Directive, as well as options developing an EU talent pool. In addition to launching Talent Partnerships and announcing the Talent and Skills Package, the Commission also announced the reform of the EU Blue Card Directive, to attract highly skilled talent, as well as the full implementation of the recently revised Directive on Students and Researchers, which is essential to make it easier and more attractive to come to the EU, and to promote the circulation of knowledge by moving between Member States.

Should you wish to know more about the outcomes of this meeting or about CEEP's activities in the field of migration, do not hesitate to contact CEEP Project Manager, [Carlotta Astori](#) or CEEP Project Officer [Stefan Enică](#).