

White paper on the future of Europe

The global financial and economic crisis that started in 2008 in the United States shook Europe to its core. Thanks to determined action, the EU economy is now back on a more stable footing with unemployment falling to its lowest level since the “great recession” hit. However, the recovery is still unevenly distributed across society and regions. Addressing the legacy of the crisis, from long-term unemployment to high levels of public and private debt in many parts of Europe, remains an urgent priority.

The challenge is particularly acute for the younger generation. For the first time since the Second World War, there is a real risk that the generation of today’s young adults ends up less well-off than their parents. Europe cannot afford to lose the most educated age group it has ever had and let generational inequality condemn its future.

These developments have fuelled doubts about the EU’s social market economy and its ability to deliver on its promise to leave no one behind and to ensure that every generation is better off than the previous one. This has been particularly felt within the euro area, highlighting the need to complete the Economic and Monetary Union and strengthen the convergence of economic and social performances. Making Europe’s economy more inclusive, competitive, resilient and future-proof will be no less demanding in the years ahead.

Europe is ageing fast and life expectancy is reaching unprecedented levels. With a median age of 45, Europe will be the “oldest” region in the world by 2030. New family structures, a changing population, urbanisation and more diverse working lives are affecting the way social cohesion is built. In the space of a generation, the average European worker has gone from having a job for life to having more than ten in a career. There are more women in work than ever before but achieving real gender equality will mean breaking down persisting barriers. At a time when Europe’s working age population is shrinking, it needs to mobilise the full potential of its talents.

Europe already has the world’s most advanced systems of welfare State that can provide solutions to societal challenges around the world. Its scientific community is at the vanguard of global research to tackle health challenges, such as for the treatment of Alzheimer’s disease. Social protection systems will nevertheless need to be significantly modernised to remain affordable and to keep pace with new demographic and work-life realities.

This is doubly important as Europe gets to grips with a profound digitisation of society which is already blurring the lines between workers and self-employed, goods and services, or consumers and producers. Many of today’s jobs did not exist a decade ago. Many more will emerge in the years ahead. It is likely that most children entering primary school today will end up working in new job types that do not yet exist. The challenges of increased use of technology and automation will affect all jobs and industries. Making the most of the new opportunities whilst mitigating any negative impact will require a massive investment in skills and a major rethink of education and

lifelong learning systems. It will also call for the roll-out of new social rights to accompany the changing world of work.

At the same time, Europe is committed to an ambitious decarbonisation of its economy and to cutting harmful emissions. And we will have to continue adapting to growing climate and environmental pressures. Our industry, cities and households will need to change the way they operate and are powered. We are already a leader in “smart cities”, in the efficient use of natural resources and in the global fight against climate change. Our firms hold 40% of the world’s patents for renewable energy technologies. One of our major challenges will be to bring innovative solutions to market, at home and abroad.

Europe is a remarkably free and stable place for its citizens in a world still full of discord and division. Of the 25 countries listed as the most peaceful in the world, 15 are from the EU. However, the chilling effect of recent terrorist attacks has shaken our societies. The increasingly blurred lines between internal and external threats are changing the way people think about personal safety and borders. Paradoxically, this comes at a time when moving around the world for work and leisure is easier and more common than ever before.

EXAMEN:

PALABRAS:

A	adapting	N	job
B	automation	O	long-term
C	blurred	P	major
D	citizens	Q	mobilise
E	committed	R	most
F	distributed	S	particularly
G	diverse	T	resources
H	down	U	treatment
I	education	V	unprecedented
J	felt	X	welfare
K	fuelled	Y	well-off
L	global	Z	workers
M	inclusive		

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