

COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

ASSOCIATED COMMITTEE:
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND MONETARY AFFAIRS

INVITED COMMITTEES:
COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND EDUCATION
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

HEARING OF NICOLAS SCHMIT

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE

(Jobs)

TUESDAY, 1 OCTOBER 2019

BRUSSELS

1-002-0000

IN THE CHAIR: LUCIA ĎURIŠ NICHOLSONOVÁ*Chair of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs**(The hearing opened at 9.05)*

1-003-0000

Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová, *Chair EMPL*. – Hello everybody, good morning.

It's just about time we get started, so that we are not late, so that we have the time we all need for our questions and for the answers.

So first of all, let me welcome you all here. We all know why we are here. We are here today because of the hearing of Commissioner-designate Mr Schmit, who is our dear colleague and we might have a great cooperation, but we still need to confirm the start of the cooperation with Mr Schmit here today at the hearing.

First, I should like to recall that in line with the guidelines for the approval of the Commission, Annex VII to the Rules of Procedure, Parliament evaluates the Commissioners-designate on the basis of their general competence, European commitment and personal independence. It shall assess knowledge of their prospective portfolio and their communication skills.

I would also like to recall before the hearing that the Commissioner-designate replied to a written questionnaire. You all should have it.

I would briefly like to explain the structure of today's debate. The Commissioner-designate is invited to make an opening statement of no longer than 15 minutes. He will also have up to five minutes at the end of the meeting for a closing statement.

After the introduction there will be time for 25 questions from all of you.

The debate will be held in accordance with the ping pong principle, with slots of five minutes, which means one minute for the question and two minutes for the answer. One minute for a follow-up question by the same Member and one minute for the answer.

Due to the large number of questions and strict time restrictions, the respect of the speaking time will be ensured very strictly, please note that.

The EMPL Committee is the main committee responsible for this hearing. The ECON Committee is associated and the CULT and FEMM Committees are invited to the hearing. We all welcome our colleagues from these committees.

The first round of questions goes to the political group coordinators and the second round of questions is based on the overall distribution of questions among the political groups, including also representatives from the non-attached Members.

Now I would like to draw your attention to the fact that interpretation will be provided in 23 languages. All speakers can use their own language and I can only invite them to do so. However, speakers are hereby reminded that what they say will need to be interpreted and that they should therefore not speak too quickly for our interpreters.

And finally, I would like to inform you that the debate will be streamed live on the parliamentary website and that it will be possible to access a video recording of the hearing on the same website.

Now, let me just get to a brief introduction of, not about Mr Schmit but more his portfolio – I think it's very, very ambitious, all the plan that we heard from Ms Ursula von der Leyen.

What I would like to stress out is the European pillar of social rights, the implementation and then of course the child guarantee, which I do hope that will protect the most vulnerable of our citizens, the children, especially from the ethnic minorities and socially excluded communities. And as a Slovak, please allow me to express my strong hope that the European Labour Authority will quickly become operational at its seat in Bratislava, because we strongly need it to implement the coordination of the social system.

And now, please Mr Schmit, the floor is yours. You have your 15 minutes.

1-004-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *commissaire désigné*. – Madame la Présidente, Mesdames et Messieurs les députés, c'est un très grand honneur pour moi de me retrouver aujourd'hui pour cette audition devant vous. Je ne conçois la mission qui me sera confiée – si le Parlement la confirme – qu'au travers d'un travail commun avec vous.

Mon parcours politique et professionnel témoigne de mon engagement en faveur du projet européen. J'ai eu le privilège de participer à un certain nombre d'étapes importantes de sa construction. Cette œuvre collective a permis à l'Europe de renaître de ses cendres et d'assurer aux générations successives de connaître la paix, la liberté et la prospérité. Cette Europe est d'abord fondée sur des valeurs, des droits fondamentaux qu'il s'agit de défendre et de mettre en œuvre dans notre action de tous les jours.

Nous sommes déterminés, comme nous y invite le préambule du traité, à promouvoir le progrès économique et social des peuples. C'est le sens de l'économie sociale de marché hautement compétitive consacrée par l'article 3 et à laquelle la présidente élue a fait clairement référence. La force du modèle européen est de concilier l'économie et le social et d'y associer désormais pleinement la dimension environnementale. Je fais mienne cette déclaration de Jacques Delors de 2016 quand il dit: «si l'élaboration des politiques européennes compromet la cohésion et sacrifie des normes sociales, ce projet européen n'a aucune chance de recueillir le soutien des citoyens européens». Et nous avons aujourd'hui plus que jamais besoin de gagner ce soutien et la confiance des citoyens.

Le renforcement de la dimension sociale qui concrétise une Europe qui protège et est au service de ses citoyens en est un élément essentiel. Je m'engage solennellement devant vous à m'atteler à cette tâche dans l'écoute, la concertation et le dialogue.

Permettez-moi de passer maintenant à l'anglais.

If confirmed as a Commissioner, I will pursue two main goals: firstly to boost employment, to promote a well-skilled workforce, responsive to the digital and climate transition ahead of us. Secondly, together with jobs, I will put at the centre of my priorities social rights for all and social inclusion. I will pursue high standards on the European labour market, as we need to achieve upward convergence in our living and working conditions. I will promote a European labour market that guarantees access and good opportunities for everybody and in particular for persons with disabilities, migrants, Roma communities and the most deprived.

I will do my utmost to fight poverty, to break the poverty cycle affecting children and to improve the support to youth. I will work to promote a fairer Europe. In a sustainable economy, social rights have a central place. Together with Executive-Vice-President-designate Valdis Dombrovskis, I will ensure the mainstreaming and strengthening of the social dimension, based on the European Pillar of Social Rights. I will work closely and regularly with the European Parliament, the Member States, social partners and all stakeholders to pursue a fairer, more social and inclusive Europe.

The European Pillar of Social Rights is a joint political commitment of the three institutions. In close cooperation with Parliament, I will develop an action plan to implement the Pillar both at Union level and in each Member State, building on the achievements made under the Commission of President Juncker and on the political guidelines of President-elect Von der Leyen.

241 million people are currently in employment in the EU – a record high. The unemployment rate in the EU continues to decline, although not in all Member States and not in all regions. Not everybody benefits from this positive development. We must ensure that work pays and that it provides a decent living. I will put forward a legal instrument to ensure that every worker in our Union has a fair minimum wage. It is not about setting one single EU wage level, and I will pay particular attention to social models of different Member States.

Jointly, we need to act on equality of opportunity. We need to ensure that men and women feel confident about their future, the future of their families and the future of their children. To address these challenges, I will reinforce the Youth Guarantee and will lead the work to develop a European child guarantee.

Gender balance and gender equality are central to my vision on jobs and social rights. I will work closely, with the new Commissioner for Equality, to close the gender pay and pension gap, propose binding pay-transparency measures and fully implement the Work-Life Balance Directive for the benefit of both women and men.

Many of our citizens are preoccupied by deepening inequalities. Adequate social protection and pension systems, an inclusive labour market with fair wages and supporting active aging, career transitions and investing in social services will be important to fight poverty and to ensure social inclusion. Here, the social economy can play an important role, particularly in local communities, by generating social return.

One of the areas I personally care much about it is health and safety at work. It is not acceptable that in 2019 people in Europe are still at risk at their workplace. I will promote the adoption of further measures against carcinogens in the workplace. The changing world of work requires new reflections on occupational health and safety.

‘Commissioner for Jobs’ also means Commissioner for free movement of workers. This is not only a fundamental part of the internal market, but it is also considered by EU citizens as one of the EU’s most important achievements. However, recent years have shown us that labour mobility also bears a number of challenges, be it social dumping or brain drain. But we should indeed resist any attempt to limit the opportunity for EU citizens to move freely within the EU. We should rather tackle the underlying issues. Here, the newly-created European Labour Authority can play an important role, ensuring cooperation between national authorities, namely carrying out joint inspections. From the discussion in this Committee last week, I know that the practical set-up of the European Labour Authority is an important issue for many of you. I assure you that it will be rapidly put into place and provided with the adequate means to fulfil its tasks.

The Union is challenged in a globalised world by big transformations: economic, technological, environmental and demographic. People need to be accompanied in the upcoming transitions, enabling them to keep their skills updated as the economy evolves. This requires investment as well as a career and skills policy with improved tools to accompany all career transitions at all ages. I will explore the idea of individual learning accounts for people of working age.

Our labour markets will be changing due to automation, digitalisation and artificial intelligence. We have to engage decisively to mitigate the risks, shape the transitions and seize the opportunities. It is crucial to ensure trust in the digital future. Therefore, we need to address the labour conditions of platform workers and actively address new forms of precariousness.

We all remember the financial crisis and the effects it had on citizens and businesses. We need to be ready to meet future downturns and ensure that the Union is prepared to react in a socially-responsible manner to future shocks. The resilience of the Economic and Monetary Union depends on stabilisation functions. A future European unemployment benefit re-insurance scheme requires a careful design to ensure rapid responses to shocks while preserving adequate unemployment protection.

Social and environmental sustainability are two faces of the same coin. Decent work, quality education, reduced poverty and inequality need to be at the centre of a European Semester that is refocussed on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our international actions need to support a decent work agenda for all. I will work with my colleagues to ensure that international labour standards are put at the core of our trade agreements and in our multilateral work. Investment in people needs to be recognised as an investment in a better future. The European Social Fund+ is the Union's prime instrument. It is a tool to support the implementation of the principles of the Pillar by providing resources.

The transition towards a carbon neutral economy will not be social by default. We have to ensure nobody, no region, no country is left behind. To achieve this objective, the ESF+, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, InvestEU and a new 'just transition' fund need to be robust enough.

A strong social Europe need social legislation which is up to date, properly implemented and enforced. It requires social to remain at the core of economic policy coordination under the European Semester, a more efficient and simpler use of European funds, and permanent and constructive dialogue with social partners and civil society. Social dialogue should be promoted at all levels, as the Union's social dialogue can only work when built on strong, autonomous national social partners. Likewise, collective bargaining should also be supported, as it constitutes an important feature of our social market economy.

As Commissioner I will fully engage in a dialogue, both with the European Parliament and the Council, but also with national parliaments and national social partners. This way, we can develop balanced, effective and proportionate initiatives which are in full respect of subsidiarity.

More than ever, facts need to drive our discussion. My work will be based on thorough analysis and impact assessment of our initiatives, drawing on the inspiration also beyond the European Union, from our partners in the G7 and the G20 and working with international organisations like the ILO and the OECD.

Liebe Frau Vorsitzende, sehr geehrte Kollegen! Die designierte Präsidentin hat uns eine klare Botschaft mit auf den Weg gegeben: Eine Union, die mehr erreichen will!

Ich bin heute Morgen mit einem ehrgeizigen Programm zu Ihnen gekommen. Diese Liste ist aber nicht vollständig. Wir müssen uns in einer sich schnell und ständig verändernden Welt orientieren. Ich werde Ihre Sichtweisen, Ideen, Fragen und Einwände hören und versichere Ihnen, dass ich in den nächsten fünf Jahren sehr eng mit diesem Haus kooperieren werde. Wir müssen zusammenarbeiten, um das Vertrauen der Bürger, Arbeitnehmer, Familien und Unternehmen in die Europäische Union wieder zu stärken.

Europa ist der beste Ort der Welt, um zu leben und zu arbeiten. Mein Ziel ist es, dazu beizutragen, dass das auch so bleibt. Zusammen haben wir die Kraft, unsere Zukunft zu gestalten. Danke für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit.

1-007-0000

Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová, *Chair EMPL*. – Thank you very much for the introduction of all of your ambitious plans and also for the timing. Before I give the floor to coordinators for the first round of questions, let me please announce that it's Ms Anne Sander's birthday today, so congratulations.

(Applause)

And now we'll get to the first round of questions. It will be held by coordinators, and you know about the five-minute slots and about the procedures. So first, we will get started with Mr Radtke from EPP.

1-008-0000

Dennis Radtke (PPE). – Frau Vorsitzende, lieber Kollege Schmit, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Die soziale Marktwirtschaft ist das Ordnungsprinzip der Europäischen Union – das ist eine Erkenntnis, die für viele leider immer noch überraschend ist, obwohl es in den Verträgen der EU niedergeschrieben ist. Vielleicht sollten einfach viel mehr Leute in unsere Arbeitsgrundlage reinschauen. Aber zur Wahrheit gehört: Soziale Marktwirtschaft ist nur dann soziale Marktwirtschaft, wenn die Sozialpartnerschaft funktioniert.

Wir erleben in vielen Mitgliedstaaten, dass Sozialpartnerschaft nicht mehr funktioniert; wir erleben auf der anderen Seite immer noch in vielen Mitgliedstaaten, dass Sozialpartnerschaft etwas ist, was den Regierungen völlig fremd ist, und wir haben auch hier in der Vergangenheit, in den letzten Jahren, auf der europäischen Ebene erlebt, dass der soziale Dialog an vielen Stellen eingeschlafen ist, was dazu geführt hat, dass wir unter anderem als Europäisches Parlament quasi dazu genötigt waren, in der letzten Legislaturperiode etwas wie die Richtlinie über transparente und verlässliche Arbeitsbedingungen auf den Weg zu bringen, weil sich die Sozialpartner auf keine Weiterentwicklung der Nachweisrichtlinie verständigen konnten.

Daher meine ganz konkrete Frage: Wie wollen Sie, wie will die Europäische Kommission in den nächsten fünf Jahren die Frage der Sozialpartnerschaft weiter stärken? Und wie wollen Sie die soziale Marktwirtschaft in der Europäischen Union wieder mit Leben erfüllen?

1-009-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Designiertes Mitglied der Kommission*. – Ich teile Ihre Analyse. Ich glaube, dass das europäische Sozialmodell natürlich ein Modell ist, das auf Sozialpartnerschaft und sozialer Marktwirtschaft basiert. Und ohne soziale Partnerschaft, ohne starke Sozialpartner kann diese soziale Marktwirtschaft natürlich nicht so funktionieren, wie sie das eigentlich über Jahre in verschiedenen Ländern getan hat – mit großem Erfolg übrigens; mit großem Erfolg und eigentlich mit dem Ziel, Prosperität für jeden – „Wohlstand für alle“ hieß das einmal in einem großen Land, von dem Erfinder der sozialen Marktwirtschaft übrigens geprägt – zu schaffen.

Die großen Umwälzungen haben mit sich gebracht, dass in allen Ländern sowohl die Gewerkschaften als auch die Unternehmerverbände ganz oft geschwächt wurden. Und es ist natürlich sehr wichtig, dass wir in diesen ökonomischen Umwälzungen dafür sorgen, dass die Sozialpartner auf beiden Seiten wieder gestärkt werden.

Die Europäische Union, die Kommission, hat Mittel dies zu tun. Wir haben bei diesem *institution building* also eine Reihe von Möglichkeiten – auch finanzielle Möglichkeiten –, und die müssen

gezielt eingesetzt werden, besonders in den Ländern, in denen Sozialpartnerschaft eigentlich ein relatives Fremdwort ist. Und deshalb müssen wir diese Mittel konzentriert einsetzen.

Ich zähle und setze voll auf Sozialdialog, und den Sozialpartnern muss bewusst werden, dass sie eigentlich ein großes Interesse haben, diesen Sozialdialog mitzugestalten, dass es für jeden wichtig ist, diesen Sozialdialog zum Erfolg zu führen, denn der Erfolg des Einen, ist ja oft auch der Erfolg des Anderen.

Europa ist ein unglaubliches Unternehmen für den positiven Kompromiss, den konstruktiven Kompromiss. Und eigentlich lebt Sozialpartnerschaft von Kompromissen. Und dieser Kompromiss bringt uns weiter, hilft unserer Wirtschaft und bringt die Gesellschaft zusammen.

1-010-0000

Dennis Radtke (PPE). – Sie haben ja angekündigt, dass wir demnächst auch über den Mindestlohn auf europäischer Ebene diskutieren werden. Für mich ist der Mindestlohn immer nur eine Hilfskrücke. Die Frage „Was ist ein gerechter Lohn, was ist ein fairer Lohn?“ drückt sich am Ende immer nur in Tarifverträgen aus. Daher meine ganz konkrete Frage: Was plant die Kommission, um Tarifbindung wieder attraktiver zu machen? Denn aktuell ist Tarifbindung rückläufig.

1-011-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Designiertes Mitglied der Kommission. – Ich habe einmal einen Kollegen in der luxemburgischen Politik gehabt, der hat gesagt: „Der Mindestlohn ist eigentlich der Tarifvertrag für diejenigen, die keinen haben.“ Und deshalb ist der Mindestlohn natürlich ein wichtiger Bestandteil, weil wir eben feststellen, dass – nicht in allen Ländern der Europäischen Union, aber in vielen – diese Tarifbindung sehr stark geschwächt wurde oder in einigen Ländern auch fast schon abwesend ist.

Das hängt natürlich mit dem Sozialdialog zusammen. Wir müssen also zuerst die Sozialpartner stärken, und wir müssen ihnen auch aufzeigen, dass der Weg über den Tarifvertrag eigentlich der bessere Weg ist, denn er gibt allen Rechte, und er gibt auch diese Flexibilität, die wir ja in unserer Wirtschaft auch brauchen. Und wenn in einem Unternehmen ein guter Sozialdialog stattfindet, dann versteht der Eine den Anderen und der Andere den Einen. Das müssen wir also fertigbringen.

Wie können wir das machen? Man kann nicht nur von oben herab dekretieren, dass von morgen an jeder einen Tarifvertrag schließen kann. Wir müssen über den Sozialdialog, über die Stärkung des Sozialdialogs diese Offenheit für Tarifverträge wieder stärken, und auch das Interesse, auch das wirtschaftliche Interesse, ganz klar vorbereiten.

Wie wir das können? Wir können darüber nachdenken, ob über den Sozialdialog Wege geöffnet werden. Und ich möchte Ihnen sagen, dass ich zum Beispiel die Idee habe, den Wirtschafts- und Sozialrat damit zu beauftragen, eine Studie zu machen, wie wir in Europa diese Tarifvertragspolitik stärken und wieder promoten können. Die OECD arbeitet an dieser Frage wie auch die ILO. Wir müssen uns da auch von deren Erkenntnissen inspirieren lassen.

1-012-0000

Agnes Jongerius (S&D). – Thank you Chair and thank you Nicolas Schmit for your introduction. I think it's fair to say that the S&D family has been the driving force for the European pillar of social rights, so it would not come as a surprise that we are attaching much weight on the implementation of this pillar. You talked about an action plan, I would suggest that your job title would be changed to a Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, but my question would be, this action plan, which legislative measures and which financial support do you envision in order to make social progress and a just transition towards a sustainable society, a reality for many people? So not only principles but also reality.

1-013-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – I fully agree. When we adopted the social pillar in Gothenburg, well some of us were a bit sceptical because we thought, well that's one more declaration, what happens to it? And then we very rapidly noticed that there is an increasing potential in this pillar of social rights – under one condition, that we have the political will to implement it, to translate it into concrete actions, and that's what this Commission intends to do. But it's also an invitation by the strategic agenda adopted by the European Council, and therefore we will very rapidly, very fast, work on this action plan, which means we have to translate the principles in actions, in concrete actions. That might be legislative actions. That might be just recommendations. That might be some ideas which Member States have to translate, because we have to respect the competences of Member States and the competence of the Union, and very often these competences are shared, and so I think already in my mission letter, there are a few legislative actions which are clearly stated. The minimum wage is one. The child guarantee, I think we have to frame what we mean by a child guarantee. We have the youth guarantee, I think we have to revamp, promote the youth guarantee, because young people out of jobs that's the worst thing for Europe and for the credibility of Europe. So we have to redefine and encourage and strengthen the youth guarantee. We have the platform workers, I think we have to reflect what will be the best way to implement social rights and good working conditions for platform workers.

So these are several ones, which sometimes request legal actions, legal instruments and finance, we have to gear our European Social Fund to the implementation of the pillar, that's obvious because that's what we want to implement. That's what we want to achieve.

1-014-0000

Agnes Jongerius (S&D). – My follow-up question would also concentrate on the Child Guarantee, because I must say we highly appreciate the recent commitment of the Commission in this regard. So it's important that it's in their agenda. But my question would be: what kind of instrument and also what kind of funding does the European Commission foresee for this European Child Guarantee, and how will you convince the Member States to support the EP proposal in the ESF+ negotiations and to allocate fresh money, instead of redeploying from allocations intended for other objectives of this fund?

1-015-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – We all agree that child poverty is the worst thing. Child poverty is destroying the future of this person, because being a poor child very often means that you will be a poor adult. It's terrible for the individual, but it is also terrible for society.

There are already now many instruments, many measures, acting for improving the situations of poor children. We have to refocus these actions. We have to bring them together. We have to concentrate them first on those who need it most in our societies, and I say it's not just in poor societies where there are poor children, it's also in wealthy societies where we have poor children. So we have to have a good approach how we deal with it and I could imagine basing it on the work which has been done in the Parliament to have some kind of recommendation. The money is important. Well I have understood that you cannot have an ambitious policy good for everybody without funding. So I've noticed what the European Parliament has said, and I think this is an interesting way and I will certainly bring that into the discussion, including with the Council.

1-016-0000

Dragoş Pîslaru (Renew). – We need a fighter on this portfolio, with the ideas to drive it forward but also the strength to fight the status quo. Our citizens, as shown in the election on 26 May, still

have hope in Europe, and our Group – Renew Europe – represents much of this hope to raise the bar in fulfilling the dream of a citizen-centred Europe.

I have witnessed your professionalism in ESCO work and I see and I feel you can be the ambitious Commissioner in having no hesitation in pushing further this agenda. However, nowadays we are in a dire situation. We have over 25% of our children living in poverty. We have youth limited in opportunities. We have the Youth Guarantee, we have the ESF+, and we are starting to see, as through the fog, the vague shape of the European social pillar. So in terms of youth, how do you plan to actually link the Youth Guarantee with the future work agenda and fulfil the promise towards a revamped Youth Guarantee?

1-017-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – I think that what I said already, about the Youth Guarantee, we have to revamp, we have to rethink, we have to adapt the Youth Guarantee to the present situation. The Youth Guarantee has been quite successful, not everywhere in the same manner, but globally the Youth Guarantee has been quite successful. But now we are facing new challenges. Well, first we have the issue of the precariousness of our young people entering the labour market and the very precarious conditions. This is something we have really to reflect on and to tackle this situation, because we have to give young people the opportunity to build their lives on more security.

Second, the situation of the digital transition is something which is everywhere and, unfortunately, even young people, though they are playing all the time on their on their telephones, they are not always equipped with the knowledge to enter this new digital area. So one of my ideas will be to introduce for every young person going through the Youth Guarantee or being unemployed, a basic fundamental digital training adapted to her or his knowledge, adapting also to the job they are aspiring to, but every young person has to get the tools to enter the digital labour market. This is one of the essential things, so I will ask my Directorate-General to study how we give all the chances, all the opportunities to young people and this has to be done also with other Commissioners – the Commissioner for the Digital, the Commissioner for Education – how we can really push the young people and give them the best opportunities in the digital society, in the digital economy, in order to make it good opportunity and not just a period of insecurity and of high risks.

1-018-0000

Dragoş Pîslaru (Renew). – For the first part, we need a bold plan as you're suggesting. First, are you willing to see a restructuring of the Commission with at least a new unit or a directorate even dealing with children and youth? So that's the first part.

The second part is what are the concrete plans to support the creation of a flexible and permanent skill-set market in Europe, including vocational training and permanent upskilling? We need locksmiths to know digital locks, we have plumbers who need to deal with smart heating systems and car mechanics to deal with smart sensors. Carpenters right now use 3D wood printers, how do you plan to support this and the new skills-set market?

1-019-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – What's very important – I indicated already – is good coordination between different Commissioners and also the coordination, which has to be organised by the Vice-President. I have, as Minister for Jobs, who has also to deal with skills, to work closely with the different Commissioners, including also Commissioner Schinas.

Second point: vocational training is essential, and vocational training is not the second best. It's always presented as a second best because you have not been successful to go to university, then you go to – no. Vocational training is one of the best – equally best – and therefore we have really

to sustain, to support vocational training. This Commission has done a lot on promoting vocational training at national level, at European level, but also above the European Union, and everybody knows now that in those countries where vocational training is strong, youth unemployment is low, and that's the basis on which we have to build. And I guarantee that's also integrating the digital in vocational – there is no difference – and also, having new forms of training, outside perhaps the classical training or the education system.

1-020-0000

Kira Marie Peter-Hansen (Verts/ALE). – Vi lever i en tid med klimaforandringer, og der er behov for en hurtig omstilling til en mere bæredygtig levevis for os europæere. Min generation - og vores allesammens Fridays For Future-venner - kræver, at denne omstilling går hurtig, og at den ikke rammer socialt skævt. Vi har et ansvar for at sikre, at europæerne har et værdigt levestandard, og at de ikke falder ned i bundløs fattigdom, hvis de f.eks. mister deres arbejde, hvis de skal efteruddannes, eller hvis de af andre grunde ikke er i arbejde i en periode. I Danmark ved vi, at et højt niveau af social sikkerhed gør os danskere i stand til at omstille os hurtigt og til at uddanne sig gennem hele livet. Jeg vil derfor spørge dig, om du vil foreslå lovgivning om minimumsindkomst, som vel at mærke ikke må forveksles med minimumsløn, men derimod kan sammenlignes med den danske kontanthjælp, så vi sikrer os, at de europæiske arbejdstagere er fleksible og omstillingsparate, når omstændighederne kræver det, uden at de behøver at være bange for at falde ned i et hul af fattigdom?

1-021-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – First, I would say that what you have said in the beginning is absolutely shared and when you read the political guidelines by the President-elect, that's very clearly stated that we want in Europe a society of well-being, of social justice, of fairness and this is something we have to strive for, because our historical experience show us that when this is not any more guaranteed even Europeans might become crazy – politically crazy. So I think this is an essential part of our European way of life, of our European social model.

Now about the revenue, a minimum revenue. We have in most of our countries, I think in nearly every country – Member State – we have some kind of a minimum revenue. But they are very different, very low in some, higher in others, and you might say, well that's subsidiarity. No, there is some common thing, some common interest in having a guarantee for every European citizen to be able to live decently, even if this person cannot be tomorrow on the labour market and can make a living of his or her own, and therefore we have to look after some kind of criteria, of benchmarks, to permit people to live decently. This means like the minimum wage, it cannot be the minimum revenue the same in Luxembourg and the same in Bulgaria or somewhere else. But it has to take into account the overall living standard and the situation, the economic, financial, budgetary situation, but it has also to guarantee to each European citizen, wherever he or she lives, a decent living. And that we have to work on, if it should be what instrument is appropriate – that we have to study. Because this has to be done in a discussion, in dialogue with Member States and especially also with all the organizations who are dealing with poverty and inclusion. I want to listen to what they have to tell me.

1-022-0000

Kira Marie Peter-Hansen (Verts/ALE). – Det er jo dejligt at høre. Jeg kunne godt tænke mig at spørge dig om, hvorvidt du vil forpligte dig til at tage dette spørgsmål op med Timmermans og Dombrovskis i Kommissionen inden for de første 100 dage, så vi kan sikre en transition hen imod den grønne omstilling?

1-023-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – I have not understood rightly the question. I must say the translation started...

1-024-0000

Kira Marie Peter-Hansen (Verts/ALE). – I'm asking you (I'm happy for your answer) if you will then commit to taking this question up with Dombrovskis and Frans Timmermans in order to secure this proposal within the first 100 days?

1-025-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – We cannot finish the job in the first 100 days, but then we have to reinvent what we are doing for the rest of our mandate. But it's very clear that people expect some clear and strong signal very rapidly. So we have to sit together and study what are the best tools, what are the best instruments, what is the role of the European Union in promoting this minimum revenue standard all over Europe. And this has to be done rapidly. We will not push that at the end of the mandate. We will do that very rapidly. But, I have to add, we have to consult, and I insist very much on consultation, because we Commissioners do not know everything (I suppose). So we have to consult those who know sometimes things better than we do.

1-026-0000

France Jamet (ID). – L'emploi est effectivement un sujet prégnant qui inquiète au plus haut point nos concitoyens: il y a des défis, il y a des dangers. Il y a surtout l'évidente faillite d'un modèle productiviste fondé sur l'utopie de la croissance sans fin et la surconsommation, qui nous entraîne inexorablement vers le moins-disant social et salarial.

Alors, Monsieur le Commissaire, la politique européenne d'austérité impacte nos retraites. La politique européenne d'inclusion des migrants sur le marché du travail s'impose au détriment de nos demandeurs d'emploi. Et cette politique européenne dérive vers l'esclavagisme, tend à la suppression des droits minimum des travailleurs et de la dignité. Elle instaure un véritable dumping social qui s'organise notamment autour du travail détaché.

Ma question: Quand allez-vous laisser l'économie servir les hommes et non le contraire, et quand l'Union se mettra-t-elle au service des peuples et non le contraire?

1-027-0000

Nicolas Schmit, commissaire désigné. – La présidente élue a clairement fixé un cap: mettre non seulement l'Union, mais aussi l'économie au service des hommes et des femmes. Tout ce qui est dans le programme présenté par la présidente, tout ce qui est dans les grandes lignes que je viens d'exposer, a un objectif, c'est de renforcer la protection sociale, l'État de protection sociale en Europe. C'est de renforcer, de réactiver le progrès social en l'adaptant aussi à une économie qui change, à un environnement économique qui change, notamment à la mondialisation. Mais nous ne devons pas être naïfs face à cette mondialisation, c'est aussi pour cela aussi que nous devons apporter nos idées, nos concepts dans la gestion de cette mondialisation. Sur le dumping social, je crois que l'actuelle Commission a fait des propositions extrêmement importantes, en particulier sur le détachement, qui n'est pas encore mis en œuvre puisque nous sommes encore dans la phase de transposition de la directive, mais le principe fondamental, qu'il faut absolument veiller à mettre en œuvre, est celui d'un même salaire au même endroit pour le même travail. C'est une petite révolution dans l'Union européenne et quand on a démarré les négociations autour de la directive concernant le détachement de travailleurs, cela n'était pas acquis. L'Union européenne y est pourtant arrivée et je crois que dans cette philosophie, effectivement, nous allons continuer sur la voie de justice sociale et de la protection sociale, avec un instrument dont nous disposons à présent – la recommandation sur la protection sociale pour tous – et sur l'inclusion. C'est pour cela que nous parlons d'une garantie pour les enfants et d'une garantie pour les jeunes. Tout cela contribue à renforcer l'État social dont l'Europe peut être fière.

1-028-0000

France Jamet (ID). – Juste quelques points de précision. L'ubérisation de notre société n'est pas en soi une bonne chose, vous en conviendrez. Chez moi, dans ma région, les apprentis disparaissent parce qu'on fait appel aux travailleurs détachés et on ne fait plus le choix de former des apprentis,

on assiste donc à la disparition de nos métiers. Je vois, dans cette harmonisation ou cette réglementation des salaires, un nivellement des salaires par le bas. Quand vous parlez de dumping social, je crois qu'on pourrait déjà commencer par parler des accords de libre-échange, qui sont parfaitement dangereux pour notre économie. Je crois que nous le savons tous ici, et même vous, puisque si vous annonciez tout à l'heure de futures crises et si vous précisiez qu'il fallait absolument obtenir le soutien de nos concitoyens, qui n'est pas au rendez-vous, c'est bien que quelque chose ne fonctionne pas.

1-029-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *commissaire désigné*. – Nous avons évoqué la protection des travailleurs des plateformes, ce que vous appelez l'ubérisation. Cette Commission a annoncé qu'elle va travailler sur la protection des conditions de travail et des conditions sociales des travailleurs qui utilisent ces plateformes.

C'est un grand objectif, que nous devons aborder très rapidement. Je ne sais pas si ce sera dans les 100 jours, mais ce sera très rapidement, puisque c'est un secteur économique qui s'étend, qui devient de plus en plus important, qui n'a pas que des mauvais côtés, mais où il est absolument nécessaire d'introduire une réglementation sociale. Le social ne peut pas être en retard sur l'évolution technologique.

Sur la formation, nous l'avons dit: nous voulons investir et j'entends quand même des voix qui me viennent de l'un ou l'autre pays, y compris celui que vous devez connaître très bien, qui nous confirment que l'on investit énormément. On veut investir énormément dans la formation des jeunes et notamment la formation en alternance (*dual training*) dont nous avons parlé, qui est la fameuse formation «vocational training», car elle constitue une garantie, pour les jeunes, de trouver des emplois décemment payés et, surtout, avec une sécurité suffisante.

1-030-0000

Elżbieta Rafalska (ECR). – Panie Komisarzu! Jednym z priorytetów nowej Komisji Europejskiej jest wspieranie rozwoju małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw oraz mobilności pracowników. To cenna deklaracja. Tymczasem aktualnie trwają prace nad rewizją rozporządzeń związanych z koordynacją systemów zabezpieczenia społecznego, myślę tu o rozporządzeniu 883 i 987. Wśród zaproponowanych zmian są takie, które zwiększają obciążenia przedsiębiorców, zwiększają biurokrację. Obawiamy się negatywnych konsekwencji dla takich sektorów jak sektor międzynarodowego transportu, budownictwo czy rynek usług opiekuńczych.

W związku z tym chciałabym zapytać Pana, czy przewiduje Pan rewizję tych przepisów, ale taką, by rzeczywiście wspierać konkurencyjność na unijnym rynku, i równocześnie chciałabym przypomnieć, że wiele krajów, jak Niemcy, Luksemburg, Belgia, Austria, Dania, Szwecja, Polska, Węgry, Czechy i Słowacja, było za odrzuceniem tych rozwiązań.

1-031-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – I agree fully with you when you say that the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are very important. They are important for our economy, they are important for our growth, they are important for jobs and they are the enterprises that create most of the jobs. But at the same time we have to make sure that everybody who works has decent working conditions. Working in an SME or working in a big company, that's not the question. Every citizen, every worker in Europe has a right to have a correct salary (a correct wage) and correct working conditions. We have to help. We have to support SMEs in these changes: that's obvious. We have to make them fit for a new economy, for the digital economy. That's a very important element. We cannot build the future of SMEs on bad working conditions and very low salaries – that's not the future for the economic model in Europe.

I agree that the question of administrative burden remains always high on our agenda. We have to ensure that these burdens are not destroying the competitiveness, especially of SMEs. Therefore, the President has said that we have to be very careful by introducing always new legislation; we have to really assess if new legislation is necessary. But we cannot say that the economy does not need some kind of frames. And what has been done in the framework of 883 – there are elements of making things easier, and I trust very much in our new digital capacity to make things more transparent, more easy, especially for SMEs, especially through the European Exchange System on Social Security, where you can have very rapid exchanges of information, also by the introduction of a social identity card.

1-032-0000

Elżbieta Rafalska (ECR). – Panie Komisarzu! Wielka nieobecna w europejskiej polityce społecznej to rodzina – takie mam wrażenie. Rzadko o niej mówimy. Mam wrażenie, że rodzina w Europie jest atakowana, niszczona, że jest na nowo redefiniowana. Jaką rolę dla rodziny widzi Pan w polityce społecznej, tej europejskiej? Chociaż zdaję sobie sprawę, że polityki rodzinne to polityki autonomiczne, ale bez troski o rodzinę celów europejskiej polityki społecznej na pewno się nie osiągnie. W Polsce mówimy, że silna rodzina to silna Polska, a czy możemy to samo powiedzieć w Europie?

1-033-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – Well we all agree that family is the basis of our society. I think nobody was putting that into question. When we talk about child poverty, when we talk about work and life balance, when we talk about fighting poverty with really strong means, we think also strengthening, helping, supporting families, because child poverty is first family poverty, poor children live in poor families, so we have really to design policies – not only through children – who help also the families, so I do not see how the European Union is not supporting and helping families. I think our social model is precisely helping, strengthening families by giving families good social and economic opportunities and the possibility, especially for kids, to go to school and to have good healthcare and have really equal opportunities. That's part of an active family policy which Europe supports, but I agree, family policies are mainly national, but they have also to follow basic rules or basic principles in relation to non-discrimination.

1-034-0000

Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová, Chair EMPL. – Please note that the follow-up question should stick to the subject of the main question always.

1-035-0000

Nikolaj Villumsen (GUE/NGL). – Hr. Schmit! I dit skriftlige svar til Europa-Parlamentet peger du på, at et EU-initiativ om mindsteløn bør respektere medlemsstaternes og arbejdsmarkedets parter kompetencer, såvel som nationale traditioner for lønforhandlinger. Derfor bedes du venligst besvare, om du kan garantere, at en europæisk lovbestemt mindsteløn vil respektere de nationale arbejdsmarkedsmønstre, som ikke har en lovbestemt mindsteløn, men som udelukkende bestemmer løndannelsen gennem kollektive forhandlinger, sådan som vi har det i den nordiske aftalemodel, og om du i så fald kan uddybe præcist, hvordan du vil sikre dette?

1-036-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – Well, we just talked about the importance, the essential importance of collective bargaining, and how we should revamp, support, develop, strengthen collective bargaining all over Europe. So how could I, when I've said that, when I have shared this view, on the other hand weaken a system which is based on collective bargaining and which has been very successful, including establishing good wages and fairness in the in the world of work?

So, this frame for minimum wages by no means – I say it very clearly – by no means will put into question the system based on collective bargaining, which provides for good wages in the

countries where it applies and we will not force – by no means – these countries to change their very old and very well-established tradition.

Now I think we have not the intention, by the way, to fix a European minimum wage. How could we? What we want to do is to create a framework, especially in those countries where maybe this bargaining system, collective bargaining system, doesn't exist, to make sure that minimum wages are established in a transparent and predictable way. That's the frame we have to establish, but this does not touch upon the tradition, the culture of collective bargaining, where wages in all sectors, including the minimum wages, are the result of this collective bargaining.

So I do not see any danger for this system which we have absolutely to preserve and I would encourage many countries to copy it, but that's not so easy.

1-037-0000

Nikolaj Villumsen (GUE/NGL). – Tak hr. Schmit! Som et opfølgende spørgsmål vil jeg venligst bede dig besvare, om du er enig i, at et lovforslag om mindsteløn bør indeholde en undtagelse for de medlemsstater, der besidder et højt organiseringsniveau, og hvor langt det meste af arbejdsstyrken er omfattet af kollektive overenskomstsystemer?

1-038-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – If you want to call it an exemption, call it an exemption. I was very clear on that. I think we will not put disturbance or put this system into trouble by creating this kind of a European frame for minimum wages. We have to preserve what works well. Don't fix what works well. So this is a guarantee I can give you.

1-039-0000

Cindy Franssen (PPE). – Dank u wel, mevrouw de voorzitter, mijnheer de commissaris. De digitalisering en de ontwikkeling van de platformeconomie is hier al kort genoemd en we weten dat deze een aantal mogelijkheden heeft geboden voor Europese werknemers en ook de zelfstandige tewerkstelling heeft aangezwengeld. Dat is goed, maar anderzijds heeft de platformeconomie ook een aantal negatieve aspecten. Zo zijn de arbeidsverhoudingen aangewakkerd wat betreft de tijdelijke contracten, deeltijdse en kortetermijncontracten. Mijn vraag is hoe u concreet de sociale bescherming van alle werknemers zult garanderen, ongeacht hun contractuele bepalingen. Ik verduidelijk mijn vraag: bent u bereid om de huidige regels, zoals de uitzendrichtlijn, uit te breiden naar de platformeconomie en zo niet, welke instrumenten zult u voorstellen om de arbeidsomstandigheden te verbeteren?

1-040-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – As I mentioned already, we have to make sure that the technological evolution is escaping us and that the social guarantees, the social protection we have created in Europe is finally completely destroyed by this technological evolution.

As you probably know, in the US, in California, they have now adopted a law on platform workers. This is very interesting because that's the place where, finally, the whole platform economy was invented and they were totally aware that there is a gap now between the technological evolution and the social conditions, and we have really to close this gap. That's what, finally, this Commission has started to do, with the directive on predictable and transparent working conditions, with the recommendation on social protection which covers also self-employed persons. We have to make sure that these rights are strengthened and developed, that people working on the platforms have the same social rights as all the other workers. They should have the right also to have collective bargaining, by the way, so we have to sort out that when people come together, also platform workers who are considered to be self-employed, that they are not opposed to competition law, because that's absurd. So we have to give them really the

same rights and therefore we will have a comprehensive approach to the social and working conditions of platform workers. For that reason, I will talk to with Vice-President Vestager, but also the Commissioner in charge of industry. My idea would be to gather very rapidly a big conference with all the stakeholders to discuss this and then work on a good standard for people in the new digital economy.

1-041-0000

Cindy Franssen (PPE). – Dank u wel, mijnheer de commissaris.

Niemand zal het mij kwalijk nemen dat ik hier als Belg ook zeg dat onze verwachtingen ten aanzien van uw werk hooggespannen zijn. Wij hopen dat u het goede werk van onze voorganger Marianne Thyssen zeer hard en sterk kunt voortzetten. Mijn tweede vraag betreft schijnzelfstandigheid, en dat is hier natuurlijk ook deels aan gerelateerd. Dat ligt al een tijdje op tafel in het Europees Parlement. Hoe zult u hier een plan van aanpak naar voren schuiven, zonder de rechten van de zelfstandigen te schaden?

1-042-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – Nobody wants to attack the self-employed, and those who want to be self-employed should stay self-employed. There are many people – young people – who want to be self-employed. We do not want to prohibit them from being self-employed.

The second point is, once you have said that, the self-employed should have the same social protection rights as other workers, because if we do not guarantee some social protection, we will have a big problem in the next 10, 20 or 30 years, or maybe immediately. If they have no health insurance, what happens if they are ill? If they have no insurance against accidents – very concrete cases we experience with so-called self-employed in the Uber economy – what happens to them when they have an accident?

So I think we have to respect self-employment if it's really accepted self-employment. If it's wrong self-employment, where finally people are employed but they are told that they are self-employed, then we have to correct this situation absolutely.

1-043-0000

Marianne Vind (S&D). – Tak til hr. Schmit for at være her i dag og for at sidde der og ikke ved siden af mig heroppe! Arbejdsmiljø og sikkerhed er et spørgsmål om liv og død for Europas arbejdstagere. Vi i S&D-Gruppen er derfor skuffede over, at der i kommissærkandidatens missionsbrev fra Kommissionens formand Ursula von der Leyen ikke er inkluderet nogen forpligtelser til at forbedre arbejdsmiljøet. På vegne af S&D-Gruppen vil jeg gerne stille kommissærkandidaten følgende spørgsmål: Den forrige Kommission udarbejdede en strategiramme for sundhed og sikkerhed på arbejdspladserne 2014-2020. Vil Kommissionen præsentere en opfølgning, som indeholder en europæisk vision om nul dødsulykker på arbejdet og nul tilfælde af arbejdsrelateret kræft? Og hvornår planlægger den at præsentere den lovede fjerde batch med skadelige stoffer i henhold til direktivet om kræftfremkaldende stoffer og mutagener?

1-044-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – When you say that you want an economy which serves the people, I think one of the first elements of such an economy is to protect people at work, and it is absolutely a scandal that people who go to their workplace are exposed to health risks, they are exposed to major accidents, and some cannot go home that evening because they have died in their workplace. So for me, health and safety is an absolute priority. You have said this is not in my mandate. Yes, it is absolutely my mandate. There is something on working conditions, by the way, linked to platform, but I'll read it as a more general invitation, but it's number ten of the principles of the social pillar. We have to work out an action plan and we have to implement the social pillar,

and we have to, where needed, also to adopt legislative measures to implement the social pillar. So this will happen, absolutely, to health and safety.

Certainly, I could not imagine that after the expiring of the framework we just would say, well, this is not needed anymore. I certainly will work on that and make proposals to the College. We have to work on new issues which are important in this field. You have mentioned a bunch of these directives linked to cancer and to other substances. I think there is good preparation work which has already been done so that we can table this directive quite rapidly and start the legislative process.

We have to look at the new forms of health dangers like the more psychosocial, and for that, I think, the social partners are discussing for the moment the digital economy, and they have included in the discussion on digital economy also this aspect of working conditions, because in this new digital economy, working conditions is a very important issue, but health and safety has forms of mental illness, for instance, which have to be tackled and looked after.

1-045-0000

Marianne Vind (S&D). – Tak hr. Schmit, jeg er rigtig glad for svaret. Ifølge Det Europæiske Arbejdsmiljøagentur oplever hver fjerde arbejdstager arbejdsrelateret stress. Agenturet fortæller også, at der er risiko for alvorlige tab i produktivitet på grund af muskel-skelet-lidelser. Desværre har både Barroso- og Juncker-Kommissionen nægtet at handle. Hvis De bliver kommissær, vil De så foreslå yderligere initiativer til at forbedre arbejdsmiljøet ved at forebygge arbejdsrelateret stress og skader fra ensformige gentagne arbejdsbevægelser?

1-046-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – I just mentioned the new economy, and these are elements also of the new economy; these are elements also in a period of big transformations in the companies, where people are really suffering from stress, even sometimes going to suicide. So this is something very serious, and this is something which engages not only the Commission, but it engages first the employees and the employers, and the employers have to be aware that these situations are bad not only for their employees, but they are at the end bad for the whole company. So I think we have really to foster the awareness that we have to find the right solutions on the working environment linked to stress, to burn out, to these musculoskeletal diseases.

Now, it's not easy to come up with legislation. That's very difficult, because some countries have tried, but no real good solution has been found. This is a question of very practical approaches. It's a question of 'no size fits all', very adapted to all kinds of enterprises. But it has first to be a question of awareness. It's bad for everybody. It's bad for the worker, and it's certainly bad also for the company, because when you have this mental illness, people are absent not for days; they are absent for weeks, sometimes for months, or they have difficulties to reintegrate anyway their job. So really, we have to work on that with social partners, with the Member States, and I'm optimistic that we can come to some positive results.

1-047-0000

Sylvie Brunet (Renew). – Madame la présidente et Monsieur Schmit, la libre circulation des travailleurs est une des plus belles réussites de l'Europe. Elle favorise les échanges entre les peuples européens, crée des perspectives professionnelles pour tous les travailleurs, ouvre de nouveaux marchés aux entreprises et contribue ainsi à la prospérité et à la liberté sur le continent.

Pour autant, de plus en plus d'Européens ont le sentiment que les règles de la mobilité ne sont pas justes et que cette libre circulation introduit une forme de concurrence inéquitable entre les États et d'injustice entre les travailleurs. Ce sentiment est alimenté par une réalité: le fait que deux

entreprises, pour effectuer le même travail, sur le même lieu, dans le même pays, peuvent être soumises à des niveaux de cotisations sociales, et donc de coût du travail, très différents.

Partagez-vous, Monsieur le commissaire désigné, ce diagnostic? Et comment, d'après vous, peut-on apporter une réponse à cette situation, qui peut nuire au sentiment d'adhésion à l'Europe?

1-048-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *commissaire désigné*. – Je crois que la libre circulation et la libre prestation des services est un grand acquis de l'Europe, comme vous l'avez dit, et permet, quand elle est appliquée correctement, c'est-à-dire pas dans une perspective de fraude ni de dumping social, un gain pour chacun. Mais du moment où, effectivement, il y a des formes de ce qu'on appelle le dumping social, cela devient nuisible.

Nous avons fait un grand progrès avec la directive sur le détachement – je l'ai dit tout à l'heure – sur le principe «même salaire, pour le même travail, au même endroit». Nous devons maintenant mettre en œuvre correctement, je dirais même scrupuleusement, cette directive dans l'intérêt de tous, pas uniquement des pays qui reçoivent, mais aussi des pays qui envoient. Parce qu'aucun pays ne peut, finalement, utiliser une forme de dumping social pour ses propres salariés. Ce n'est pas dans l'esprit européen. Je compte beaucoup sur l'autorité du travail pour assurer que le système fonctionne, que les abus sont combattus, que les conditions de concurrence sont aussi proches que possible.

Le problème de la sécurité sociale est un problème complexe puisque nous ne sommes pas, en Europe, dans un système où nous avons une sécurité sociale, la même pour tous. Nous ne le voulons pas. Chacun est attaché à son système de sécurité sociale. Donc, quand il y a prestation au-delà des frontières pour quelques semaines, pour quelques mois, nous ne pouvons pas obliger la personne à s'inscrire à la sécurité sociale de l'autre pays, puisqu'il y aurait des droits dont elle ne bénéficierait jamais. Je vois donc vraiment mal comment on pourrait égaliser la sécurité sociale en cas de libre prestation. Mais la Commission va bien sûr analyser cette situation et regarder si, effectivement – parce que j'ai des doutes à ce niveau –, à cause de la sécurité sociale, il y a des conditions concurrentielles inacceptables.

1-049-0000

Sylvie Brunet (Renew). – Merci, Monsieur Schmit. Voici ma question complémentaire: pensez-vous que cette convergence sociale améliorée puisse être une réponse à la problématique de pénurie des compétences dans beaucoup de nos pays européens?

1-050-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *commissaire désigné*. – Je crois que notre but, c'est la convergence économique, très importante, parce qu'on ne peut pas construire une Europe solidaire sur des disparités énormes en matière de développement économique, et bien sûr aussi la convergence sociale, puisque la solidarité européenne est la promesse de l'Europe. C'est finalement ce que j'ai dit au début: c'est la prospérité partagée.

Nous devons donc faire en sorte que chacun, là où il habite, puisse avoir des conditions de travail et de revenus correctes. Dans le même temps, nous garantissons à chaque citoyen européen la libre circulation. Effectivement, nous avons vu qu'aujourd'hui, 17 millions d'Européens vivent dans un autre pays que leur pays d'origine. Et en vivant souvent dans un autre pays que leur pays d'origine, en travaillant dans ce pays, ils aident aussi à combattre les manques de main-d'œuvre qui peuvent exister ici et là. Et je crois que c'est au bénéfice de tous.

Mais la libre circulation ne peut pas être une libre circulation forcée. Cela doit être une libre circulation volontaire, une libre circulation qui profite à la fois à l'individu, au pays qui reçoit mais aussi au pays de provenance. C'est comme ça que nous pouvons construire une Europe solidaire.

1-051-0000

Markus Ferber (PPE). – Sehr geehrter Herr Schmit! In Ihrem *mission letter* ist ja auch der Aufbau einer Arbeitslosenrückversicherung als Aufgabe benannt, und Sie hatten in Ihrem Eingangsstatement ja nur ganz kurz auf makroökonomische Stabilisatoren hingewiesen. Ich würde gerne wissen: Wie stellen Sie sich vor, wie so eine Arbeitslosenrückversicherung ausgestaltet sein könnte, ohne dass sie am Ende dazu führt, dass das eintritt, was wir *moral hazard* nennen, dass ich also als Staat Versprechungen mache, für die ich am Ende nicht geradestehen muss? Ich würde da gern von Ihnen genauer hören, wie Sie sich das vorstellen.

1-052-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Designiertes Mitglied der Kommission. – Erstens, würde ich mal sagen, hängt alles von den Bedingungen ab, wann eine solche Rückversicherung im präzisen Fall in Kraft tritt. Und das müssen wir definieren. Was muss also der ökonomische Schock sein, durch den man dazu übertritt, dass der Mechanismus einer solchen Rückversicherung in Kraft tritt? Das sind Parameter, die wir gemeinsam definieren müssen.

Und in dem Kontext muss natürlich auch sichergestellt sein, dass es nicht schon vorher eine *moral hazard gap* gab. Das ist die Frage – nicht, dass dieses Instrument *moral hazard* produzieren würde. Es würde eigentlich nur dazu beitragen, den *moral hazard*, der schon vorher war, noch zu verstärken. Und das heißt ganz einfach, dass wir dafür sorgen müssen, dass wir eine gute Haushaltspolitik betreiben – und ich weiß, dass Sie dafür sehr stark eintreten – und dass es natürlich Regeln gibt, die die Staaten auch respektieren müssen. Das ist ganz klar.

Es kann nicht sein, dass man die Regeln nicht respektiert, und dann kommt ein Instrument, das die Situation rettet. Das ist überhaupt nicht der Sinn dieses Instruments. Aber dass es Schocks in unserer Wirtschaft geben kann, dass diese Schocks auch sehr oft asymmetrisch sind, ist leider Bestandteil unseres Wirtschaftssystems. Und wir müssen diese Schocks abfedern – darum geht es. Nicht um irgendwie permanente Transfers von den Einen zu den Anderen zu organisieren, sondern darum, sicherzustellen, dass erstens bei einem solchen Schock die betroffene Wirtschaft nicht ins Bodenlose sinkt, und zweitens, dass die Menschen in dieser Wirtschaft die Möglichkeit haben, auch irgendwie sozial abgesichert zu sein – selbst wenn der Staat aus finanziellen und budgetären Gründen große Schwierigkeiten hat, das noch zu tun.

Das muss in diesem Instrument sichergestellt werden, und ich bin auch optimistisch, dass man das tun kann.

1-053-0000

Markus Ferber (PPE). – Dann ganz konkret: Wenn Sie sich die wirtschaftliche Situation der EU-Mitgliedstaaten der letzten Jahre oder des letzten Jahrzehnts anschauen, wo konkret würden Sie sagen, dass da ein Fall gewesen wäre, wo so eine Arbeitslosenrückversicherung gegriffen hätte? In welchem konkreten Fall?

1-054-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Designiertes Mitglied der Kommission. – Ja, also ich habe schon konkrete Fälle. Ich weiß nicht, ob das jetzt sehr fair ist, einen zu nennen. Aber wenn ich mir diese letzte Krise anschau, dann sehe ich, dass in verschiedenen Ländern die Ursache eigentlich nicht war, dass sie übermäßige Haushaltsdefizite produzierten. Sie sind eigentlich Opfer dieser Krise geworden, obwohl sie anfangs sehr stabile Haushalte und sogar Überschüsse in ihren Haushalten hatten. Sie wissen, von welchen Ländern ich hier rede – auch von südlichen Ländern.

Diese Länder wurden natürlich voll von dieser Krise getroffen, und die ersten Opfer dieser Krise waren die Jungen – junge Menschen, die keine Arbeit gefunden haben, die arbeitslos wurden. Das waren die ersten Opfer, und deshalb hat man diese Jugendgarantie geschaffen.

1-055-0000

Neena Gill (S&D). – Mr Schmit, you've outlined the role of social economy in tackling poverty and reducing inequality. I welcome the greater emphasis by the EU on the social economy because I believe it fosters alternative business models, while addressing key social concerns. Could you clarify the potential of social economy in the sustainable transition and how you would combine this with the current challenges in investment for social needs?

And I also would like very quickly to follow up on Markus Ferber's point in terms of the European unemployment benefit reinsurance scheme. Could you actually, maybe dwell a bit on how you will garner support from Member States which have so far opposed it, and how will you ensure that this kind of counter-cyclical stabilisation function will support national unemployment schemes in times of stress and stimulate public investment without punitive conditionality for the Member States?

1-056-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – The first point on social economy: I think we have already a very active – all over Europe – a very active social economy which is acting in our regions, in our territories, which is delivering important social services, especially very often to those who need it most, who guarantee care, childcare, care for the elderly, so this is a very important sector in our society. And so we have to strengthen this sector, not only because it delivers good social services, but it's also an active job creator, because we have seen during the whole crisis that this is a sector where finally no jobs were destroyed. There were even jobs created in this sector without an unemployment reinsurance scheme. So we really have to promote that.

About investment, I think this is an important point, the Parliament has allowed to write into the Strategic Investment programme, the Juncker plan, the right also to give loans, to give credits to the social economy. This is a very important recognition of the economic and social role of social economy and this means also that we have to focus a lot on social investments. If we have to have a competitive economy, we have also to have stable social conditions, which means social investment in education, in childcare, in health. This makes a good economy, when you have a stable social environment, so investment in social services is very important.

And then the new economy – I think there is a linkage between new economy, but there is also the sustainability where the social economy can be very active, new models for energy, for instance, or other issues.

On the unemployment scheme, I think we have to work hard and persuade and take away the understandable reservations which we just have heard, that it's not a model just to finance or to encourage more hazard, but it's again in the interest, not of the country which benefits, but it's in the interest of all the countries and especially of a stable European monetary union.

1-057-0000

Neena Gill (S&D). – Just to follow up on the issue of unemployment. You refer to the impact of digitalisation and AI in the workplace. Now it's estimated 50% of the jobs in the EU will either change or disappear. There are 61 million people with low skills, what measures will you put into place as Commissioner to tackle the skills gap that exists and also keeping in mind the greater gender parity that is necessary, especially in the tech sector?

1-058-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – I would not discuss the 50%, but certainly the impact of the digital economy or the digital transformation will be very strong and very heavy. What is not taken into account are the new jobs, but the new jobs can only be occupied if people have the right skills. So anyway, skilling – upskilling – is the central issue for the forthcoming years. We have really to make sure that not only the young people have the right skills, they have the good education, but also those who are in a job now get the upskilling or re-skilling to face the

transformations of their jobs, or even the jobs which will disappear and they have to take new jobs. So we have to invest more in upskilling and in re-skilling. ESF+ has to dedicate more money into skilling and upskilling. This is a central issue, and this has really to be integrated also in the country-specific recommendation, which has been done already in the near past. So I think investing more money in people is essential. We have a skills agenda and I've been invited by the President-elect to revise, to revamp, to strengthen this skills agenda, and that will be focused on that.

1-059-0000

Mounir Satouri (Verts/ALE). – En somme, je crois que nous pouvons tous convenir ici que la promesse européenne doit reposer sur deux socles: le droit du travail et le socle social, qui doivent protéger tout le monde.

Pourtant, Monsieur le Commissaire, des acteurs économiques s'arrangent pour échapper aux deux socles par des recours à des travailleurs indépendants imposés ou à des autoentrepreneurs. Ils construisent une relation de travail sans respect du droit du travail. On précarise les individus, on travaille sans respect des horaires ni de la sécurité. Parfois, ces mêmes acteurs ont recours à une multitude de sous-traitants et l'on finit par ne plus pouvoir déterminer la responsabilité. Il y a parfois des accidents et des crises et, parce qu'on est dans cette chaîne multiple de sous-traitance, le socle social n'est pas respecté.

Monsieur le commissaire, j'aimerais une réponse précise à ces deux questions: allez-vous porter une législation visant à renforcer l'application, à toutes et tous, du droit du travail au sein de l'Union? Et allez-vous renforcer la responsabilité, y compris sociale, des entreprises, quels que soient les artifices des chaînes de sous-traitance, pour que, lorsqu'une difficulté survient sur le terrain, on soit capable de remonter au premier donneur d'ordre, de le mettre face à sa responsabilité et d'appliquer le droit?

1-060-0000

Nicolas Schmit, commissaire désigné. – Très précisément sur la première question sur la sous-traitance, la première directive modifiant le détachement établit clairement la responsabilité des sous-traitants et de ceux qui sous-traitent. Il y a donc une chaîne, comme vous l'avez bien décrit, et les responsabilités doivent être clairement identifiées. J'attends, là aussi, de l'Autorité du travail qu'elle suive ces cas où, par des constructions obscures, on efface les responsabilités des uns et des autres aux dépens des salariés qui sont détachés d'un pays à travers des boîtes aux lettres, etc. Donc, je crois que c'est un point important, qu'on peut développer, mais c'est surtout un point qui exige une mise en œuvre pointue des règles qui existent déjà.

Sur le bon travail, je crois que nous devons prendre conscience que cette idée de la concurrence de tout un chacun contre tout un chacun n'est pas, et ne peut pas être, le fondement de notre système économique. Je crois qu'il y a un début de prise de conscience: on veut retrouver les vertus de ce qu'on peut appeler une vraie économie sociale de marché, avec des droits, avec une négociation sociale. C'est cela que nous devons encourager, avec des droits sociaux pour chaque catégorie de salariés. Nous avons parlé des salariés sur les plateformes et des salariés détachés, qui ne peuvent pas être soumis à n'importe quelles conditions. Il faut des règles strictes et surtout un contrôle très strict. Donc, là où nous remarquerons que des abus existent effectivement, il faudra à chaque fois se demander comment nous allons limiter ces abus et lutter efficacement contre ceux-ci. Je sais que, pour toutes ces formes nouvelles de travail, de sous-traitance, de *self-employment* (non volontaire très souvent, parce que les personnes ne savent même pas qu'elles sont *self-employed*), nous avons besoin de règles, et nous allons travailler sur ces règles pendant les cinq ans à venir.

1-061-0000

Mounir Satouri (Verts/ALE). – Monsieur le Commissaire, merci pour vos réponses. Il me semble – mais vous reprendrez – que, dans le cas des détachements et de la sous-traitance, le contrôle et l'application des règles est une compétence nationale.

Si nous voulons que l'Europe dispose d'une autorité sur ce sujet, nous ne pouvons pas nous en remettre aux États pour ce contrôle. Pensez-vous alors qu'il faut se diriger vers une responsabilité et une autorité à l'échelle européenne, avec des contrôles qu'organiserait l'Union?

1-062-0000

Nicolas Schmit, commissaire désigné. – Je crois que l'Europe, c'est toujours une affaire de progrès, de pas faits l'un après l'autre. Mais je crois que la création et la mise en place d'une autorité pour le travail devraient commencer à nous donner un outil important.

L'autorité pour le travail, ce sont les États, la Commission, la présence du Parlement; mais c'est surtout aussi la présence des partenaires sociaux, c'est-à-dire des syndicats.

Je crois que cette autorité peut, comme je l'ai dit, organiser des inspections sur les lieux où, effectivement, ces pratiques-là ont peut-être lieu, puis faire des propositions pour lutter efficacement contre ces dérives et ces abus.

Mais je dis aussi clairement que les États doivent se doter des moyens et des ressources nécessaires. Je constate que tout le monde se plaint du dumping social, mais en même temps – et je parle aussi du pays que je connais très bien –, les effectifs et les ressources, par exemple des inspections du travail, n'ont pas augmenté ou ont même été affaiblis. Tout cela va ensemble: on ne peut pas parler de dumping social d'un côté et ne pas se doter des instruments nécessaires de l'autre.

Que l'Europe joue un rôle important, oui, mais que sur le terrain, finalement, l'Europe pousse les États à contrôler; qu'on organise des coopérations, oui, mais que l'Europe elle-même joue ce rôle, je crois qu'il faudra être encore un peu patient pour cela.

1-063-0000

Elena Lizzi (ID). – Signora Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, signor Commissario designato Schmit, con il mio intervento vorrei portare all'attenzione un paio di temi legati alle frontiere mobili, il lavoro transfrontaliero nella revisione del coordinamento dei sistemi di sicurezza sociale e la delocalizzazione all'interno degli Stati membri dell'Unione europea.

Per quanto riguarda il primo tema, è noto che lo scorso marzo il testo non ha ottenuto la maggioranza qualificata in Consiglio a causa dell'opposizione di alcuni Stati, tra cui il Lussemburgo. Come intende conciliare la difesa dell'interesse nazionale del suo paese con la *one size fits all policy*, che la Commissione ha perseguito nell'ambito del coordinamento dei sistemi di sicurezza sociale?

Venendo al secondo argomento, il fenomeno della localizzazione all'interno degli Stati membri, la mobilità dei lavoratori e il distacco dei lavoratori possono portare ad una forma molto pericolosa di *dumping* sociale, come abbiamo sentito, tra gli Stati membri.

Intende favorire l'introduzione di nuove politiche industriali che prevengano, o quanto meno limitino, la delocalizzazione e il *social dumping*?

1-064-0000

Nicolas Schmit, commissaire désigné. – Sur la première question du 883, effectivement, il n'y a pas eu de majorité qualifiée. Mais je peux vous assurer que ce n'est pas le Luxembourg qui a manqué à cette majorité qualifiée, compte tenu du poids que le Luxembourg a dans la majorité qualifiée.

Mais soyez rassurés, je suis commissaire désigné. Je ne suis pas un Luxembourgeois qui ambitionne de devenir commissaire européen. Ce qui compte pour la Commission, et pour chaque commissaire, c'est l'intérêt commun, l'intérêt européen. Donc n'ayez aucune crainte à ce sujet.

J'espère qu'on va trouver, grâce notamment au Parlement européen, une bonne solution pour le 883, une solution équilibrée sur tous ces aspects importants qui permettent une mobilité équitable et une bonne protection de tous les salariés concernés par ces questions de sécurité sociale.

Concernant le dumping social, je crois que nous avons introduit maintenant toute une série de mesures. Avec cette commission, nous avons parlé de la directive sur le détachement, il s'agit maintenant d'assurer la bonne mise en œuvre de cette directive.

Il ne s'agit pas uniquement de créer à chaque fois un nouvel instrument juridique ou législatif. Ce qui est important, c'est d'appliquer scrupuleusement, comme cela vient d'être dit dans la question précédente, les règles que nous avons créées. Et s'il y a de nouvelles situations de dumping social, il faut alors réagir rapidement et mettre en œuvre de nouvelles mesures, calibrées pour ces nouvelles situations.

Mais je crois que nous avons maintenant un certain nombre d'outils qu'il faut bien mettre en œuvre. Je le répète: l'Autorité européenne du travail est un nouvel instrument que nous devons faire vivre et faire agir efficacement.

1-065-0000

Elena Lizzi (ID). – Sempre riguardo al *dumping* sociale e alla concorrenza sleale che si verifica tra i paesi, in particolare tra l'Italia e i paesi limitrofi, e per prevenire drammatiche corse al ribasso delle condizioni e dei diritti dei lavoratori, nonché per garantire l'equità sociale di tutte le trasformazioni in atto e delle transizioni caldegiate attraverso il progetto politico di Ursula Von der Leyen, può meglio specificare come intende adeguare le politiche salariali all'interno degli Stati membri dell'Unione europea, perché ci sono forti squilibri sul piano del costo del lavoro, che sono proprio all'origine della delocalizzazione e di forti ingiustizie sia in termini di lavoro che di mercato?

Grazie per le risposte di prima e per quelle che darà.

1-066-0000

Nicolas Schmit, commissaire désigné. – Je pense que vous avez déjà indiqué ce qu'il faut faire. Notre ambition est d'activer, de renforcer la convergence sociale. Comme je l'ai dit, on ne peut pas construire une Europe, même une Europe compétitive, dynamique et innovatrice, sur une concurrence effrénée, sur la course aux plus bas salaires. Ce n'est pas un modèle qui va marcher puisqu'il y aura toujours des régions dans le monde où les salaires seront plus bas.

En revanche, lors des discussions sur un cadre pour les salaires minimums, on va essayer d'atteindre une certaine convergence salariale en Europe. Convergence ne veut pas dire identité. Convergence ne veut pas dire que le salaire minimum en Bulgarie, en Roumanie ou autre sera le même qu'au Luxembourg ou en France. Oui, nous devons travailler sur cette convergence et je crois que si on crée ce cadre sur le salaire minimum, il aura des conséquences au-delà du salaire minimum, il aura des conséquences sur tous les salaires et je crois que cela permettra aussi de lutter contre le dumping social.

1-067-0000

Beata Szydło (ECR). – Panie Komisarzu, wśród powierzonych Panu zadań znajduje się między innymi gwarancja na rzecz dzieci. Tutaj priorytetem powinna być przede wszystkim walka z ubóstwem. Pragnę zaznaczyć, że dzięki programom społecznym skutecznie wprowadzonym przez rząd, którym miałam zaszczyt kierować w Polsce, udało nam się ten problem zredukować o ponad połowę.

W przesłanych nam odpowiedziach zaznacza Pan, że aby poprawić sytuację dzieci, najpierw trzeba poprawić sytuację ich rodzin. W związku z tym chcę zapytać, czy ten nowy instrument będzie odnosił się również do problemu odbierania dzieci rodzicom przez urzędy na przykład przez Jugendamt, zajmujące się w teorii dobrem dzieci, a praktyka wygląda inaczej, ponieważ dzieci odbierane są bezpodstawnie, ogranicza się im kontakt z rodzicami, a niejednokrotnie wprowadzano także zakaz komunikowania się w języku ojczystym.

Parlament Europejski w zeszłej kadencji przyjął rezolucję na ten temat, natomiast Komisja Europejska nie chciała się tym tematem, tym problemem zająć. W związku z tym chciałam zapytać, czy Pan jako Komisarz odpowiedzialny za kwestie społeczne ten problem podejmie.

1-068-0000

Nicolas Schmit, commissaire désigné. – Mais pourquoi ce refus de la Commission? C'est très simple: ce n'est pas une compétence de l'Union européenne, c'est une compétence des États membres. Je ne peux pas me prononcer sur tel ou tel cas. Il peut y avoir des cas où, effectivement, ce n'est pas dans l'intérêt de l'enfant de rester avec ses parents. Mais ce sont des cas spécifiques, et ce n'est pas à Bruxelles de déterminer qui, quand et dans quelles conditions, on devrait appliquer de telles mesures. Je crois que cela relève fondamentalement des compétences des différents États membres et des services qui s'en occupent.

Je crois qu'en ce qui concerne la garantie pour les enfants, vous l'avez dit effectivement, toute action qui favorise l'égalité des chances des enfants, l'investissement dans les enfants, doit être saluée et doit être montrée à tous ceux qui, peut-être, auraient intérêt à suivre cet exemple.

1-069-0000

Beata Szydło (ECR). – Mówimy tutaj o kwestiach praw rządów narodowych, parlamentów narodowych i chciałam zapytać w związku z tym, czy nie uważa Pan, że takie wypracowanie współpracy powinno mieć miejsce. Tym bardziej, że ci obywatele, którzy zwrócili się z prośbą do Parlamentu Europejskiego i do Komisji Europejskiej o pomoc, są Europejczykami i czują się obywatelami drugiej kategorii. W związku z tym, czy nie uważa Pan, że Komisja Europejska, idąc śladem Parlamentu Europejskiego, który ten temat podjął, jednak powinna powziąć refleksję, czy nie zacząć współpracować w tym względzie również z państwami członkowskimi.

1-070-0000

Nicolas Schmit, commissaire désigné. – Je répète encore une fois que, selon moi, ce n'est pas dans les compétences de la Commission d'intervenir directement. Si, maintenant, surviennent des cas entre États membres qui relèvent effectivement du droit familial applicable entre plusieurs États, il faut déterminer comment résoudre ces situations, puisque nous sommes dans un monde où beaucoup de familles vivent dans différents pays et où les parents ont des nationalités différentes. Il faut donc veiller à ce que le droit familial des uns et des autres soit appliqué correctement et dans l'intérêt de l'enfant. Je crois que ce qui est important, c'est l'intérêt des enfants. Nous avons tous ratifié la convention sur les droits de l'enfant: il faut donc veiller à ce que ces droits-là soient absolument préservés et respectés.

1-071-0000

Stelios Kympouropoulos (PPE). – The European Network on Independent Living organised its conference this week, so I dare to say that my question is timely. I would like to know if the Commission plans to include measures in the European Disability Strategy for 2020-2030, to

improve access to the labour market for disabled persons, including measures to promote social inclusion and social enterprises, accessible recruitment procedures, accessible transport from and to the workplace, career development and training, and finally, obviously, accessible workplaces?

1-072-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – I think we have adopted recently now the Accessibility Act, which is a progress and which helps disabled persons also in their working life. But it's very clear that our employment policies have to be much more focused on what we could call vulnerable populations. When we look at the figures, we really see that people with disabilities are those who have the most difficulties or are among those who have the most difficulties on the labour market. First, because very often they have not the skills. Why don't have the skills? Because our school systems already are not very much in favour very often of disabled persons, so they have not the opportunity to get the skills and the education, because our school systems are not geared to their specific needs. So we have to make sure, also in that sector, that there is no discrimination, because no discrimination is one of our fundamental principles.

Second, we have to make sure that disabled persons can indeed get exactly the same opportunities, exactly the same chances on the labour market, and therefore we have to dedicate more means, more resources – also from the ESF – into policies which include all categories of persons who have greater difficulties on the labour market, and disabled persons are among them.

So I think this is really an objective for our inclusive society we are really striving for. I would really like to make out of this subject one of our big objectives, one of our big aims of the next years: to give the opportunity to everybody, including also people with disabilities. I must say, new technologies could help us. New technologies are the right way. But then we have to allow, we have to support people in getting the right digital skills, and I'm optimistic that we can at least reduce sharply the gaps which still exist.

1-073-0000

Stelios Kypouropoulos (PPE). – Do you think that corporate social responsibility could be a suitable tool to stimulate employers to employ disabled workers, with incentivising measures for employers to fully engage to this process, would you propose? Thank you very much for your answers.

1-074-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – I'm a believer in social responsibility. But at the same time, I do not expect everything, so you have also to get some rules and to oblige employers to respect these rules. There are countries which oblige employers indeed to employ at least one percent (or five percent – I do not remember how much in Luxembourg is the case) – five percent of their staff hiring people who are disabled. So I think we have to play on both, but it is again the vision of a more cohesive society to give everybody a good opportunity. I have seen in many cases, when I was still a Minister of Labour, that there is no difference in the capacities of a person with a disability and others. They can be as much – and sometimes more – productive because they are more motivated. So encouraging entrepreneurs or companies, yes, but pushing them a bit and helping them also because you have also to accommodate the working place, for instance: these are instruments we should really develop.

1-075-0000

Abir Al-Sahlani (Renew). – Fru ordförande! Tack, herr Schmit, för både dina skriftliga och muntliga svar. Jag ser er entusiasm och tror att den kommer att behövas framöver.

I enlighet med artiklarna 4 och 5 i EU-fördraget ska unionen respektera medlemsstaternas likhet inför fördragen samt deras nationella identitet, som kommer till uttryck i deras politiska och

konstitutionella grundstrukturer. Befogenheterna som tilldelas ska också avgränsas av unionens principer om subsidiaritet och proportionalitet.

Varför detta tjat från de skandinaviska länderna om just arbetsmarknadsfrågorna? Jo, för att kommissionär efter kommissionär har lovat att inte *fix what is broken*. Men på EMPL-området läggs det förslag på förslag om just detta, där koordinering egentligen är harmonisering. Därför vill jag ställa följande fråga: Hur tänker ni konkret säkra och värna nationella skillnader och arbetsmarknadsparternas autonomi?

1-076-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – Well, I can only repeat what I have said. You know I'm really a fan of subsidiarity, and I'm really a fan, I can say it, also of social systems which are based on strong social dialogues, on strong social partners, and it would really be absurd to interfere in this system or try to alter this system. So what I can say is that, if we put forward a framework for minimum wages, there will be full guarantees for all the systems which are based on collective bargaining. So I cannot say more. I give you this guarantee, and be sure that I will talk a lot to my colleagues in the Commission who are very sensitive to this issue, but I will also talk to the European Parliament and to those here who are very sensitive to this issue. Several of you have already mentioned it, and I will go to these countries, including Sweden (but also some other countries) to really discuss with social partners and governments to make sure that you can absolutely preserve your system you are so much attached to.

1-077-0000

Abir Al-Sahlani (Renew). – Tusen tack för ditt svar. Det är ju klart att detta känns väldigt betryggande, samtidigt som jag vet att man kan bli fartblind. Man kan bli lite *trigger-happy*, som man säger. Därför blir det en väldigt viktig fråga för oss som har denna modell som bygger på historia, på tradition, på kultur, då vi gemensamt har kommit fram just till metoder och ett system som funkar, och där också de lägsta rättigheterna faktiskt är väldigt höga, om man jämför med andra länder.

Du bollade också över frågan om den sociala dialogen och sa att arbetsmarknadsparterna var välkomna att delta. Jag skulle vilja veta följande: Hur tänker du öppna upp för sådana samtal så att också arbetsmarknadsparterna är involverade? Tack så mycket på förhand för dina svar.

1-078-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – On this particular issue? Well, I think when we are talking about a framework or a legal framework on minimum wages, I could not imagine not to talk to social partners. This is something which I really cannot imagine – and not only talking at the European level to social partners, but we also have to go to the social partners in the different Member States, and especially to those who are very sensitive to this issue for the reasons you just elaborated on, and we have to talk to them and to make sure that what we want to establish is preserving absolutely the system, because it's not an issue: it's not the issue to transform or change this system, which has worked well. So I really want to give you all the tranquillity I can that that's not my intention and will never be.

1-079-0000

Matthew Patten (NI). – Does the Commissioner agree with me that when it comes to jobs, the European Union is institutionally racist? Despite President von der Leyen's mission to you, to promote full and productive employment and decent work for all, you've made no specific plans for the shocking situation facing many of the 50 million European citizens who come from ethnic and racial minorities. Research suggests that one in four of these European citizens are discriminated at work. In some Member States as many as 76% are not in employment, education or training, compared to 8% of the rest. Here in Belgium, the home of the EU, one third of Belgians are educated to degree level compared to 60% of Afro-Belgians, yet those Afro-Belgians are likely

to be four times more likely to be unemployed. Only one percent of staff directly employed by the EU has a minority background. The EU motto is 'United in diversity'; frankly it should be united in diversity as long as you're white. Where better for the new Commissioner of jobs to start than with Europe's worst transgressor: his own organisation, the institution of the EU itself? Why should Member States take any notice of the Commissioner, or the President, if they fail to get their own house in order? Or does the Commissioner agree with me that when it comes to jobs the European Union is institutionally racist?

1-080-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – I can be short. I think non-discrimination is a fundamental principle of the European Union, but I'm not naive. I'm not naive. I know that they are vulnerable populations who are suffering also on the job markets, and really we have not only good principles, we have to give us the right instruments to implement these good principles everywhere, including in our own businesses, in our own institutions: wherever. I think this is something which also characterises Europe, and we have to work hard on that. And I think what I've said on other vulnerable populations applies also to people with different origins, and certainly I will fight and engage myself and commit myself to apply and to make sure that this principle of non-discrimination for any reason is really applied and enforced. And this is up to the Member States, but it's also up to all companies. Many intelligent companies start understanding: they start understanding that diversity is a big asset. So let's encourage them and let's duplicate their good example.

1-081-0000

Matthew Patten (NI). – I don't buy that, Mr Schmit; I think you've absolutely fudged it. 20 years after EU laws forbidding discrimination, the EU continues to hide behind its policy in terms of being colour-blind. The social pillars pledge equal opportunities and access regarding employment, regardless of race or ethnic origin. You've come forward with no plans for that. You talk, you promise about action, you promise concrete actions yet you have nothing to say except vague – please get your own house in order. Why can you not do that immediately? There's no consultation. You've no stakeholders. You can do it for your own department. Will you do that?

1-082-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – Briefly, I have no problem to do so. Really, give me a chance; I'm not yet a Commissioner, I'm only a Commissioner-designate. But non-discrimination is high on our agenda, and I'm sure it's very high on the agenda of the whole Commission and especially also of the President-elect of this Commission. So we will really work for it. It's easy to accuse, but there are no easy (unfortunately) solutions. But we will, yeah: 20 years, that's the past; we look at the future. I am not responsible for the past. I may become responsible for the future, and we'll come back in five years and then evaluate the situation.

1-083-0000

Manuel Pizarro (S&D) – Sr. Comissário Schmit, muito obrigado pela profundidade das suas respostas. Apesar de alguma evolução positiva em 2017 continuam a existir 113 milhões de europeus em risco de pobreza ou de exclusão social. Ora isso para o nosso grupo, o Grupo S&D, é totalmente inaceitável. Por isso pergunto ao Sr. Comissário indigitado o seguinte: compromete-se a apresentar uma estratégia europeia de combate à pobreza, abrangente e integrada, que dê resposta a problemas como a persistência da pobreza entre os trabalhadores, as desigualdades de género nas pensões e nos salários, a falta de habitação a preços acessíveis e o desemprego entre os jovens, os quais, juntamente com o desemprego de longa duração, continuam a apresentar uma incidência muito elevada?

1-084-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – We had an ambitious objective: 20 million fewer poor people, and we didn't really attain this objective. There is improvement in the last years, but we

have not obtained the objective we had fixed in 2010. I think we are talking a lot about poverty, and it is difficult to accept that in the richest part of the world there are so many – one out of five people living in poverty, sometimes in very deep poverty. So I think we need efficient, well-funded resources to combat this situation. We need a good way, a good strategy to do so. I think, as I mentioned already, it's in the interest of everybody, of each Member State and of the Union as such.

We have to use first the European resources. There is the idea that at least 25% (the Parliament proposes more) of the funds going for inclusion, fighting poverty. We have to have a comprehensive strategy for fighting poverty. We have talked a lot about kids. Kids are very important in this strategy to fight poverty, and the Child Guarantee is part of this strategy. We cannot separate this Child Guarantee from an overall strategy to fight poverty.

Young people: yes, young people, very often not well-skilled: needs. So we have to focus on these categories, on vulnerable people, also people with disabilities who do not find a job, who end up in big poverty. Single parents: that's the family issue. Single parents are those who are the most in poverty risk.

So I think we have to get this comprehensive strategy. We have to have the right resources in the ESF+ – we have decided that already – and we have to get strong lines also in the country-specific recommendation, which is already the case, to really focus, because here also there is no 'one size fits all'. We have to adapt to the different contexts: to regions, to localities, to urban poverty, to rural poverty. This is a very differentiated picture, and so we have really to encourage Member States to be part of that strategy, because at the end, it's the Member State who has to play an important role.

1-085-0000

Manuel Pizarro (S&D). – To fight against poverty, I think we must come back to the issue of the minimum income, and I must ask you if you are committed to a European framework directive on decent minimum income schemes, setting minimum standards for the national systems in order to provide social protection in all Member States?

1-086-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – I do not want to commit myself now on the type of instrument we need. It can be a directive, it can be another instrument – it's not the question. What the question is, is that we really have, in each Member State, the right level of minimum income. But as I already said to a colleague, minimum income is an indispensable instrument, because if it doesn't exist or is at too low a level, we have huge problems in our societies. Huge problems in our societies. I will not go into details.

But it's only also a part of the overall strategy: employment, skills, education, housing. Housing is fundamental if we really want to fight poverty. If people cannot afford decent housing they will not come out of poverty, they will not have a job, and this is the vicious circle we have to break.

1-087-0000

Maria Walsh (PPE). – Commissioner, picking up from a previous question, you briefly discussed the role we must all play in supporting our citizens and their mental health. I want to outline for anybody sitting in here, for hopefully people watching, that across Europe one in six of our citizens has mental health problems, and that the total costs relating to mental health are equivalent to more than 4% of our GDP. Employment rates are significantly lower among our citizens with mental health problems. Building and ensuring that we have the right policies in place is essential to the millions we represent and not just in the Commission, in the European Parliament and in the Council. Commissioner-designate, in your role can you outline any specific actions for developing a mental health policy for the workplace?

1-088-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – Well this is linked to an overall policy for people with disabilities, that's something – it's part of that. So we have to find schemes for these persons to work. Perhaps they can work, but they cannot work in any job and they cannot work full-time, so there has to be a progressive integration of these persons into the world of work, into a job. The companies which are doing that have to be accompanied, have to be helped. So there is an overall strategy. I worked on that when I was a labour minister, together with the health minister and the minister for families and social affairs. So we're really putting into place also some guidance, some counselling for the enterprises taking the risk, but also engaging, committing to some strong social commitment to take on board, to take some people with mental health. That's the first point.

The second point is, yes, we have a sector which can better deal with these kinds of people – that's the social economy. We have to promote jobs also which can be taken by people who perhaps have difficulties in other companies but who could easily work in some different environment. So social economy also can be an answer to this issue.

1-089-0000

Maria Walsh (PPE). – Digitalisation often clashes with standard ways of organisation and patterns of working, which may cause risk of burnouts for our European workers. You did mention that previously. Will one of your priorities be the renewal of the EU compass for action on mental health, with special focus on mental health-related diseases?

1-090-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – I think I have to deal with the Commissioner who is in charge also of health policy, so we have to coordinate that. But, certainly, this is an issue which we have to follow up. We cannot just stop here and say 'well there is no follow up'. So I would certainly have a look at that, and together with the Commissioner in charge of health, we will do so. I have already mentioned that social partners are engaged in discussing mental diseases at the workplace, like the ones you mentioned – burnout and stress. I think we have to adapt a bit our knowledge, but also the ways we can prevent them: in many of these issues, when you have to start to cure, it is already very late. I wouldn't say it is too late, but it is already very late. What we have to have is a strong prevention policy. When people start to have a problem, you have to act, not when the problem is fully there, and so this prevention policy has to be integrated into our overall health and safety approach. Prevention is key.

1-091-0000

Leila Chaibi (GUE/NGL). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, je suis satisfaite de vous avoir entendu évoquer la question du travail ubérisé, qui touche l'ensemble des pays de l'Union européenne.

Cette question repose sur un piège assez grossier: le fait de faire passer des salariés pour des travailleurs indépendants afin d'éviter les obligations sociales. Pourtant les faits sont là: ces travailleurs doivent obéir aux plateformes qui ont le pouvoir de les contrôler et de les sanctionner.

Donner des ordres, contrôler, sanctionner: il s'agit là des trois critères identifiés par la Cour de justice de l'Union européenne pour définir ce qu'est un travailleur salarié. Ces critères n'ont pas été clairement retenus dans la directive relative à des conditions de travail transparentes et prévisibles que vous évoquiez. Si bien qu'aujourd'hui, des plateformes nous disent: «votre directive, c'est très bien, mais cela ne nous concerne pas». Elles nous disent que les livreurs à vélo et les chauffeurs VTC – que l'on croise tous les jours, que ce soit dans les rues de Paris, de Madrid ou de Bruxelles – ne sont pas des travailleurs, mais des partenaires.

Ma première question est la suivante: me rejoignez-vous sur le fait que ces travailleurs doivent être considérés comme des travailleurs salariés? Par ailleurs, vous avez évoqué la convocation d'une conférence sociale sur le sujet: à quoi celle-ci doit-elle concrètement aboutir et pouvez-vous vous engager en faveur de l'adoption d'une directive spécifique au sujet des travailleurs des plateformes?

1-092-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *commissaire désigné*. – J'ai aussi vu cette émission intéressante, sur une chaîne française, sur la situation d'un certain nombre de travailleurs sur les plateformes. Je dois vous dire que cela m'a ouvert un peu les yeux, pour autant que je ne les avais pas encore suffisamment ouverts.

J'ai dans ma lettre de mission de travailler sur les conditions de travail des personnes employées sur les plateformes. Donc, tous les aspects que vous avez mentionnés doivent effectivement être traités. Nous avons maintenant un arrêt de la Cour sur les conditions qui font qu'un travailleur n'est pas un indépendant mais véritablement un employé et nous ne pouvons pas laisser aux différents tribunaux, y compris à la Cour de justice de l'Union européenne, le soin de régler cela. Nous avons besoin de définir clairement ce qui relève d'un statut de travailleur indépendant et ce qui relève d'un statut de travailleur salarié. Cela fait donc partie du travail que nous devons faire et de la définition des travailleurs sur les plateformes. Maintenant, si je savais déjà exactement tout ce que je devrais faire, je n'aurais pas besoin de convoquer une conférence sociale sur le sujet. C'est une question complexe et nous savons très bien qu'il y a mille façons de détourner la définition ou les définitions – c'est d'ailleurs très bien montré dans le film. Donc, nous devons avoir des définitions claires, nous devons avoir des droits clairement établis. Je dirais même pour tous les travailleurs, qu'ils soient salariés ou indépendants, parce que du moment où tous les salariés ont les mêmes droits, alors peut-être que l'intérêt de jouer sur les mots, de jouer sur les concepts devient moindre. Les personnes peuvent alors avoir le statut qu'elles veulent et qu'elles doivent avoir.

1-093-0000

Leila Chaibi (GUE/NGL). – Vous avez évoqué le fait que cette question semble faire l'objet d'une forme de conflit de compétence avec certains de vos futurs collègues.

Margrethe Vestager a été chargée, dans sa lettre de mission, d'élaborer une nouvelle directive relative aux services numériques qui couvrira aussi les conditions de travail des travailleurs des plateformes. Vous comprenez alors notre inquiétude: si l'on traite cette question sous l'angle des droits des salariés, ce n'est pas la même chose que si on la traite sous l'angle de la concurrence et du marché des services.

Alors Monsieur le Commissaire, ne risquez-vous pas – c'est ma crainte – de vous faire dépouiller de l'une des rares initiatives sociales claires qui pourrait être adoptée lors de ce mandat? En outre, de façon très concrète, vous engagez-vous à ce que la directive à venir sur les plateformes soit examinée sous l'angle du droit des travailleurs plutôt que sous celui du marché intérieur et des services?

1-094-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *commissaire désigné*. – J'ai bien lu ma lettre de mission. Je n'ai pas l'impression d'être dépourvu, ni d'être un pauvre commissaire qui n'a aucune influence. Ceux qui me connaissent savent que je ne me laisse pas aussi simplement priver de ce que je pense être mes compétences et mes droits.

Mais je dois vous dire que j'ai aussi lu ce que Mme Vestager a dit, et elle a dit des choses très importantes. Elle a dit qu'elle voulait une économie numérique au service des citoyens, des hommes et des femmes. C'est donc aussi un engagement clair qu'elle a pris. D'ailleurs, nous sommes tous convaincus, de la Californie jusqu'en Europe, qu'on ne peut pas regarder la nouvelle

économie numérique seulement sous l'angle du marché, des firmes, de la compétitivité, mais que, finalement, le capital le plus précieux dans l'économie numérique, ce ne sont pas les machines, ce sont les humains.

Construire une économie numérique où l'humain est au centre: c'est cela, notre objectif. Et vous pouvez être sûr que je défendrai (et je trouverai, j'en suis persuadé, M^{me} Vestager à mes côtés) ce modèle économique, qui est d'ailleurs en train de faire école un peu partout.

1-095-0000

Milan Brglez (S&D). – Za politično skupino socialistov in socialnih demokratov so ključni dostojni pogoji zaposlovanja in dela, zato močno podpiramo vašo zavezo za pošteno minimalno plačo ter evropsko številko socialnega zavarovanja.

Vse delavke in delavci, ne glede na vrsto delovnega razmerja ali pogodbe, morajo uživati socialno varstvo ter socialne pravice, vključno s pravico do kolektivnega delovanja. Žal je realnost za mnoge delavke in delavce drugačna.

Veliko ste že povedali o zaščiti platformnih delavcev, zanima pa me, ali bo direktiva o dostojnih pogojih dela ključni okvir za opredelitev njihovih pravic? Kateri elementi ne bi smeli manjkati v njej? Ali boste predložili tudi ukrepe za večjo transparentnost plačil in zagotavljanje enakega plačila za enako delo na enakem delovnem mestu poleg obstoječe direktive o napotjenih delavcih?

1-096-0000

Social protection is really key and so the adoption of the recommendation on social protection really is an important step in that. There is also a mechanism on how Member States have to implement this recommendation. I think we really have to organise good follow-up of the implementation of this recommendation. This is an important element that the implementation is absolutely efficient and equitable. So this is my first answer.

As for the second, I have to come back to what I said on the Labour Authority. We have created an instrument and now we have to use it. We have the social partners on board, we have the Commission on board and we have Member States on board. So we really have to make sure that this instrument becomes operational, and that is why I want it to become operational as soon as possible. This is important for posting. This might also be important in the future for all kinds of other labour-related issues, including safety issues, because, very often, posted workers are also not the best protected when it comes to health and safety. This is also something we really have to look at.

So it's not only about legislation, it's about implementation, and here Member States have a big responsibility. We have to talk to Member States. We have also to take the good opportunity of the European Semester and a lot of recommendations are now in the social area, so we also have to use the recommendation in the European Semester to increase the awareness of Member States to respect the rules and to have good policies in all the issues you just mentioned.

1-097-0000

Milan Brglez (S&D). – Tudi moje dopolnilno vprašanje zadeva pravice delavcev in delovne pogoje.

Da bi bili boljše pripravljene ter se hitreje prilagodili na spremembe v multinacionalnih podjetjih, je bila leta 1994 sprejeta ter leta 2009 spremenjena direktiva o ustanovitvi Evropskega sveta delavcev. Žal se še vedno soočamo z zelo resnimi težavami pri njenem izvajanju, tudi zato ker ni ustreznih odvrtilnih kazni.

Ali morda razmišljate o vnovičnem predlogu spremembe te direktive, da bi z njo dosegli večjo pravno jasnost in gotovost ter učinkovite sankcije, ki bi zagotovile njeno ustrezno implementacijo v državah članicah ter najpomembneje boljšo informiranost in vključenost delavk in delavcev?

1-098-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – That's a directive you are referring to about the committees in companies. There are some weak points in this directive. I think it was a big progress but there are some weak points, because it's a directive functioning on some voluntary basis, and the point is some apply it and some do not apply the directive, and those who apply the directive sometimes do not really apply the directive. So I think we have really to reflect on this measure, on this directive. I will invite social partners to enter this reflection, and I am not too optimistic, I tell you. But I think it's important that social partners talk about it. They have already talked about it, but they have really to analyse what the weak points, what can we improve.

Sanctions are good, but sanctions do not resolve all the problems, because if we increase the sanctions, what will be the consequence? Then even fewer companies will enter the application of the directive, because they say: I do not take the risk to be sanctioned, so I do not adopt it.

So I think we have to have an evaluation of what results this directive has brought (and certainly there are also some positive results); what the weaknesses of this are; and how we can assure a better implementation again of this directive. I think this Commission has proposed some measures on this – a handbook for instance – and this has been refused.

So this is on our agenda. We will have a look at it, but I cannot say it will go in this direction or that. But it's an important directive, so we have to take this very seriously.

1-099-0000

Kim Van Sparrentak (Verts/ALE). – In the EU more people are homeless and citizens are struggling to afford a roof over their heads. Will you take the responsibility for an EU strategy on social housing as a part of your commitment to reduce poverty?

And next to that, in my country, starters and lower middle income families can often not find appropriate housing on the private market. But the EU has forbidden the Netherlands to provide this group with social housing. This is the EU hindering actively a successful social policy. To truly deliver on social housing, will you push in the College to remove the restrictions imposed by the EU on Member States social housing policy to only target specific users?

1-100-0000

Nicolas Schmit, *Commissioner-designate*. – I come also from a country where there is a housing problem, and the housing problem is now in many Member States. Though the competence in this area is with the Member States, I think that Europe can really play a triggering role when we encourage first more investment in housing. We are now about to create a certain number of new investment tools, and when we talk about poverty, investing in housing is also a tool to reduce poverty: people who are homeless, or people who are in bad housing conditions, do not come out of poverty – and, especially, their children cannot come out of poverty. So I think we have to discuss with the Member States social housing under fair conditions – you mentioned the problem of competition; indeed, what we really have to analyse and to have a serious look at is if these conditions are still adapted to the reality on the ground. But I think there is a necessity for promoting investment in housing in many places in Europe – not all of them; in many places in Europe. So, certainly, within the limits of the competences of the Union, I will very much try to integrate this dimension into our fight against poverty and include our commitment for inclusion.

1-101-0000

Kim Van Sparrentak (Verts/ALE). – Thank you for your answer, but will you actively take this responsibility for an EU strategy on social housing? You mentioned a lot that you find it very important for young people to have a fair start on the labour market and I hope you agree that it's also very important for young people to have a fair start on the housing market.

1-102-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – Yes. Now it's not only the Commissioner for Jobs and eventually Social Affairs who can do that. We have to do that with other Commissioners. It's an economic issue, it's certainly a social issue, it's a financial issue. We have to sort out what kind of financial means we can mobilise in order to encourage investment in housing. I am part of a team. The Commission is not one Commissioner deciding that's what we will do, but the Commission is also a college. It's a team. So if we can work, and I think this Commission really intends to do something in relation to the housing problem in many areas of Europe, linked to the situation of young people, linked to the situation of kids, linked to jobs. If you have no house you won't find a job. So I will certainly be one of them, pushing for solutions, given the limited competence the Union has, but also taking into account the financial means we can mobilise for at least pushing Member States to do more in this very crucial and sensitive area.

1-103-0000

Jordi Cañas (Renew). – Estamos de acuerdo en que esta debe ser la legislatura del desarrollo efectivo del pilar europeo de derechos sociales. Este es clave para consolidar y profundizar en el proceso de integración europeo y conseguir el objetivo de una Europa de y para sus ciudadanos. Yo creo que ahí estamos —casi todos los que estamos aquí— de acuerdo, ¿no? En este contexto, el papel actual y futuro del sector de la economía social es fundamental. A día de hoy hay prácticamente tres millones de empresas y entidades que emplean a casi catorce millones de ciudadanos europeos, representando casi el 8 % del PIB de la Unión. Pero, pese a su importancia económica y social, pese a ser fundamentales para mejorar la cohesión económica, social, territorial y medioambiental, pese a ser un motor económico sostenible que trabaja junto a los más vulnerables, tan solo quedan reconocidas a escala nacional, en algunos Estados miembros y con distintas formas jurídicas. Por ello, ¿se compromete usted a presentar un plan de acción europeo para la economía social que establezca un marco jurídico claro y homogéneo a nivel de la Unión durante su legislatura?

1-104-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – I can make you a confidence. You know I'm a big fan of social economy. I have been a minister of social economy, so I really believe in the important role of social economy, already now, and certainly there is still more potential to develop social economy, especially given the challenges we have – environmental, social, poverty, exclusion: all these issues can be well tackled, sometimes better tackled if we have a strong social economy sector.

Certainly not every country knows exactly the same model of social economy. We have to respect the different cultures; the same thing with collective pay. We have to respect the different models which exist in the different countries. But I think there is a lot of room for action together. In 2011, Commissioner Barnier and Commissioner Andor, and also Commissioner Tajani, had a social business conference which really created a positive dynamic for social economy in Europe. So my idea would be, again with other Commissioners (it's not only the Commissioner for Jobs who can be responsible and who can tackle this issue), to really replicate such an initiative, to bring actors together and to have a plan to promote social economy in relation to the big challenges we have in our societies and to use the tool of social economy. To give social economy – I've mentioned the financial aspect; to promote the financial aspect – the jobs issue is very clear.

So I think there is potential. We have to use it. The internal market is an important issue. Social economy should have the same rights on the internal market as any other enterprise, so I'm looking forward to work on that with other Commissioners to make social economy even more solidly established in Europe and part of our social market economy. That's also linked to social responsibility, which was mentioned by our colleague.

1-105-0000

Jordi Cañas (Renew). – Es complicado obtener concreción. Es complicado tener concreción, pero yo creo que es necesario y sería necesario avanzar hacia un marco homogéneo, con unas reglas claras y reguladas. Sin embargo, dentro de los retos a los que asistimos en esta legislatura también —y que usted ha planteado con algunas direcciones muy interesantes, que compartimos—, como el seguro laboral europeo, hay otro aspecto, como el desempleo juvenil, que es especialmente lacerante en algunos países, con porcentajes de desempleo inaceptables, absolutamente intolerables y que tenemos que combatir todos. Y una pregunta, que para mí es relevante, es si usted apoyará la reserva obligatoria de fondos, que es al menos del 3 %, a medidas de apoyo al empleo juvenil y que los Estados miembros más afectados, aquellos con una tasa superior al 15 %, destinen el 15 % a combatir esa lacra, que creo que a todos nos preocupa y nos afecta especialmente, y en esta legislatura se deben impulsar medidas para combatirla efectivamente.

1-106-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – Just a brief response. You know, if we really want to harmonise exactly the status of what we call social economy, which has a very different name in Germany – when you talk about 'social economy' in Germany, they do not understand what you mean, but they have also a very strong social economy sector – we will end up nowhere. But we can have a very practical, pragmatic approach on that and mobilising and creating some level playing field for all kinds of enterprises, associations, and so on, who consider themselves as belonging to the social sector. That's just a compliment to your question.

The second one is very important – that's youth unemployment. I think this also absolutely remains a priority on our agenda. I won't give you a clear answer now about whether it should be 3% or 15%. First you have to know exactly what can we do better, what can we do more? How can we use the existing tools we have? We have talked a lot about the Youth Guarantee, but it's not only the Youth Guarantee – it's education, it's training. All this has to come together and certainly, the funds we have to dedicate to youth unemployment, we have especially to dedicate them there where youth unemployment remains a major problem. Where youth unemployment is very low, where they can tackle their problem more easily, but it's where the concentration of youth unemployment is high that we have to focus our resources.

1-107-0000

Krzysztof Hetman (PPE). – Panie Komisarzu! Mówił Pan bardzo dużo na temat pracowników delegowanych, ale chciałbym zwrócić uwagę na pewien problem i zadać krótkie i proste pytanie. Dyrektywy zobowiązują państwa członkowskie do publikowania wszystkich informacji na temat warunków delegowania i wynagradzania pracowników delegowanych na jednej oficjalnej krajowej stronie internetowej. Niestety, jak pokazuje praktyka, te strony internetowe często są niekompletne.

Jakie środki zamierza Pan, jako kandydat na komisarza, podjąć, aby zapewnić, że te strony internetowe będą odzwierciedlały faktyczny stan prawny w państwach przyjmujących?

1-108-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – Once again it's a question of implementation. It's not enough to have good rules, to have good regulations, you have to make sure that what you have decided is also implemented. Now I must say I admit that I didn't know that, so I will certainly

check if this is the case. If the information is not available, if the websites are not complete, if the information which has to be given, which has to be delivered, is not given, and if this is the case, well we have to act. We have to make sure that those who are posting workers also give the right information.

You know, posting is a positive thing. It's very often presented now as the worst imaginable thing, but it has to respect the rules. It has to be fair. It has to be fair to the posted country, to the posting country, but also to the workers, not only those who are posted but also those who are directly impacted by posting. Therefore to make it fair you have at least to have all the information on the conditions, and if this is the case that all the information on this internet is not given, well, the Commission will certainly do something about it and enter into a discussion that this will be the case, but I have to check that. I must admit that I was not aware of that, but I'm not yet in the job, so give me a chance.

1-109-0000

Krzysztof Hetman (PPE). – Tak, skorzystam jeszcze z możliwości zadania tego ostatniego już tak naprawdę pytania. W odniesieniu do wykonania i wdrażania dyrektywy o pracownikach delegowanych, jak Pan, jako kandydat na komisarza, zamierza zaradzić nieproporcjonalnym środkiem narzucanym przez niektóre wymogi administracyjne w niektórych państwach członkowskich? Jak zamierza Pan zapewnić sprawiedliwy, swobodny przepływ pracowników i usług w odniesieniu do dyrektywy o pracownikach delegowanych?

1-110-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – I think I have already partly answered this issue. Nobody wants to create an impossible administrative burden, because we all know that if you're creating this kind of burden you have some second thoughts, and we do not want to have this kind of second thought. We want to have the administrative files which are absolutely needed, but not something which makes life impossible for enterprises, for people, or for the posting and posted countries; this should not be the intention. So what is important is that we have to evaluate what makes posting efficient; what makes posting fair; what is the information we need; how can this information be provided; and what happens if you do not have, prior to the posting activity, the famous A1, but have it shortly after? All these very practical issues have to be evaluated, and on the basis of this evaluation, there have to be some adjustments if adjustments are needed. We have not created a system to make posting impossible. We have made a system which makes posting beneficial to everybody – and, especially, acceptable to everybody – because if we do not have rules, there is a very strong rejection. We consider posting as part of the freedom to provide services and free circulation, so we have to make sure that it is working properly and fairly. That we will do, and also on the level of administrative procedures.

1-111-0000

Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová, Chair EMPL. – The last 30 seconds you got as a bonus, Mr Schmit, I didn't use my hammer. Thank you to all of you for your questions. Thank you very much, Mr Schmit, for your answers and now you also have the chance to make a final statement, for no longer than five minutes.

1-112-0000

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner-designate. – First I want to thank you for the very interesting, instructive, stimulating and critical discussion we had. I must say this is European democracy! We all come from our Member States, and we had responsibilities in our Member States: well, I do not know many Member States where such an exercise takes place, and we should really be proud of this democratic system.

I congratulate our Parliament – and I'm still a Member of our Parliament – for having introduced this debate, this exchange, because the job of a Commissioner should be very strongly and directly related to the work in Parliament. We are not far away from what happens here.

I often hear it said that 'these Commissioners are not elected'. Well, I became a minister in my Member State without being elected. Now I have been elected to our Parliament and I have been, or I will be, judged by you, which doesn't happen in many Member States – I think in none of them. So thank you very much for this stimulating exercise. I liked it a lot. I cannot say that I suffered, but it was tough, and it has to be tough.

(Applause)

We had a good debate today but that does not mean that we should not have this kind of debate very frequently, and I will come back whenever you ask me to, or whenever I have the urge to talk to you, to take your advice and your opinion – very diverse, very different, sometimes quite critical, I must say, but I think this is what makes our European politics lively and really democratic. So I make the commitment today to be often with you and to continue what we started today, if you allow me.

I think we have a common project, a big common project: everywhere, everybody with their own ideas and ideals. We are not the same, otherwise there would be just one party here, which we would not like at all. But what we have in common is to serve our people: to serve European citizens; to bring Europe once again closer to the citizen.

Our citizens have their daily lives, and their daily problems, and we have to deal with their daily problems. Many of the questions you asked me, about a minimum wage, about social protection, about poverty, about children, are all part of the daily life of our citizens. So we have to make sure that our policies serve our citizens in their daily life, and that, after five years of this Commission, Europeans will be able to say: 'There has been some real, positive progress. There have been some important changes in my life thanks to Europe.'

That's the big promise of Europe. It's not just about peace, though peace remains a big and important issue. But this shared prosperity, this idea that everybody has a right to be part of it – an equal right to be part of society, and to have equal opportunities – is what makes Europe great. I think we have to defend these values, and not just by words. I agree we have to defend it day after day in our political action, and that's what we have to do together, the Commission, the Member States and the Council certainly, but also together with Parliament, because you are the voice of our citizens and we have to listen to that voice.

(Applause)

1-113-0000

Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová, *Chair EMPL*. – As Chair I would also like to comment on a few things and make a few remarks, if you would allow me to do so.

First of all, it was very interesting for me, as this was my first hearing.

(Interjection off microphone)

Yours too? We have something in common!

It was very interesting for me to follow your questions, which were tough and quite critical. It was very interesting that the social dimension of the portfolio was actually much more vivid at the hearing here today than the topic of creating jobs, which is basically the top topic of Mr Schmit's portfolio. But if we are talking about the social inclusion of the socially excluded, like people from minorities or people with disabilities, I can't imagine a better inclusion than through the labour market. So I think we all know that we do have to focus on this. We have to focus on creating sustainable jobs for those who really need them, because right now they are excluded in so many Member States within the European Union and it is a luxury because there is a huge gap on the labour market and we need these people to get rid of the gap on the labour market.

I very much appreciate what you said, Mr Schmit, that you will focus on data-based evidence discussion, and on impact assessment of our policies. I think this is very important because we have been talking about the social European Union for years now, and the truth is that one quarter of the children living within the EU live in poverty, and that on our streets we have 70% more homeless people than we had 10 years ago. These are data, so something is not working as well as we imagine.

The last thing is that what we've heard is a very ambitious plan, full of topics that you want to open that right now are dividing the Member States, rather than uniting them. You want to open very sensitive topics.

My last remark would be that we should only promise what we can actually deliver, because the expectations of people within the European Union are huge. There is a huge rate of populism among politicians in various Member States, basically in all Member States. I think that some of the plans you have might be misused if we don't deliver what we have promised.

Thank you very much to all of you, especially to Mr Schmit.

(Applause)

(The hearing closed at 11.50.)