



Conference  
on the Future  
of Europe

## Cross-border Dialogue "FutureLabEU - Your ideas for Europe!"

On November 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021

An event in the framework of the Conference on the future of Europe

- DEMANDS ON POLITICS -

### Work, employment and training in the digital age

The first workshop on “Digitalization and labor market” was led by Mr. Franz Clément, social scientist at LISER (Luxembourg Institute of Socio Economic Research) in Esch-Belval. After getting to know each other, Franz Clément started with a keynote speech. First, the general situation in the Greater Region was discussed. The main conclusion was that the COVID-19 pandemic, the developments in the field of digitalization, home office and the current labor market situation have led to an unneglectable acceleration, which otherwise might not have happened to this extent. Afterwards, the point of view of each participant were heard, collected and formulated as concrete ideas by the group.

The ideas proposed are the following:

#### *1. Internships, trainees*

Internships and trainee positions are very important for the Greater Region. Due to the Corona situation, we have drawn various conclusions:

The Corona pandemic has resulted in many internships and trainee positions being cancelled or only partially taking place. The Corona situation has also made it harder to get internships that take place in another country. It is very important that these are reintroduced.

Online internships have also often lacked human contact and training. **Research would need to be done on how to make online internships better and more interactive if they have to be online again. Furthermore, it would be desirable to have more internship options for young people that are cross-border. For example, we propose a Greater Region Internship Program where interns and trainees can do stays in Germany, France and Luxembourg. This would also promote cultural and linguistic exchange among young people in the Greater Region.**



## *2. Borders in the Greater Region and their impact on young people and their job opportunities*

Border closures during the Corona pandemic often made life difficult for people in the border region. There were situations where residents had a hard time getting gas because the nearest gas station was in a town across a closed border, or where people had a hard time going to work, the doctor's office, or the university because they were across a closed border. In some cases, friendship groups or families were even separated for short periods of time because of border closures. **More needs to be done and, above all, more communication is needed among the countries of the Greater Region so that the lives of people living in the border areas are not negatively affected. Therefore, one could introduce some kind of border legislation or border agreement so that these problems cannot occur in the future.**

## *3. Labour market in the Greater Region*

The Greater Region is a large labor market. **We propose a Greater Region Treaty for Labor, where the topic of labor can be discussed with three or four countries of the Greater Region, for example SaarLorLux, Rhineland-Palatinate, and Belgium.** So far, these discussions have taken place rather bilaterally.

## *4. More rights for workers and a labor agency*

**We propose an employment agency for the Greater Region. This agency would bring together internships, apprenticeships, companies, job seekers, and employment services to help people in the Greater Region get along better in the future. More work could also be done on uniform labor laws. This agency could be designed as a kind of online platform.**



### *5. Motivation of the young people during Corona, influence on career start*

Corona hit young people particularly hard in the area of social contacts. Statistics show that young people found it difficult to concentrate when studying and often suffered from loneliness. Young people could go out less, exchange less. Young people could travel less in the greater region. Newspapers report a so-called "**Lost Generation**" or "corona scars" among young people. **There should be more state-supported initiatives to improve the motivation and mood of young people; for example, in the form of training on how to organize meetings so that young people can network with each other themselves. We propose a working group for young people in the Greater Region, where young people can meet and exchange online and in person.**

### *6. Establishing more uniform teleworking rules*

Working in the Greater Region showed that countries in the Greater Region had different rules for home office. Statistics show that teleworking one or two days a week can actually increase productivity in some areas. **We would like to see more uniform teleworking rules and teleworking rights in the Greater Region.**

### *7. More digital training for everyone. Through employers and public events*

The digital age means that digital training is becoming increasingly important. Lifelong learning is of great importance. Artificial intelligence will play a major role in the future. It is predicted that about 9% of jobs will be eliminated by artificial intelligence. But new jobs will also be created through digitalization. **As young people, we demand more digital training in schools, universities and society. All people in the Greater Region have the right to digital training.** There must therefore be more public digital training courses. As young people, we therefore see a right to digital training and education. We also see a responsibility to pass on this knowledge to older people through, for example, volunteer work in our local communities.



## A Social Europe - How to protect and improve the social rights of Europeans

In the second workshop, a group of four young people from France, Germany, Luxembourg and Italy discussed online how they imagine a social Europe of tomorrow.

The first phase of the workshop was dedicated to exchanges and presentations on social Europe, in order to provide participants with up-to-date knowledge on this broad topic. Mr. Olivier Brunet, professor at the University of Nantes and speaker of the EUROPE DIRECT team, presented them the major current challenges: Working conditions, employment conditions and social security. Camille Djurovic, Head of the EUROPE DIRECT Lorraine Center, explained the history and the concrete progress made by the European Union in this field.

### Discussions about the limits of a social Europe

*To start the exchange and get the participants to express their views on social Europe today, they debated several statements. Here are the results of their debates:*

The group tended to share the view that the EU is a project built on the basis of economic and financial cooperation. They stressed that the EU had limited competences in the field of social policy and that economic integration had been the first driver of cooperation. However, one participant stressed that the EU was based on common values that went beyond purely economic interest.

It was difficult for the group to take a position on the statement "Today the EU protects my social rights." One participant emphasized her lack of knowledge on this topic, but pointed out the fact that it is often the EU that is accused in the media of "breaking the European social system".

Conversely, 3 out of 4 participants positioned themselves against the statement that "Europe promotes social values within its territory, but does not apply them when negotiating/bargaining with countries outside Europe." Examples were given to support their knowledge (EU-Vietnam free trade agreement, EU-South Korea).

Finally, the participants agreed that Europe is doing something against discrimination (LGBTQI strategy, strategy for inclusion of people with disabilities...).



Participants then discussed several situations in their daily lives where the social rights of Europeans are not respected, regarding:

### **Gender equality:**

"Women still earn on average 23% less than men, and for the same working hours, they earn 16.8% less than men (INSEE-2017 data)."

"Unfortunately, the gender pay gap is still very high today. One possible solution would be to increase the mandatory time that the father must spend at home after the birth of the child. Many inequalities arise from the fact that only women have to leave their jobs for many months."

### **Minimum wage:**

"In some countries, such as Italy, there is no minimum wage. European legislation should be created so that each state sets its own minimum wage."

### **Long-term care:**

"Despite the health crisis, 5700 hospital beds were cut in France in 2020, and 25% of facilities closed their doors in the same year. As a result, the waiting time for treatment is getting longer, emergency rooms are closing and people are not being cared for long enough. We need to invest in the public care service and stop this restructuring."



## Proposals supported by the participants

In order to improve and strengthen the social rights of Europeans, the participants would like to see:

### ***1. Equality between women and men must be achieved in practice.***

To this end, it is suggested that men should spend more time at home.

However, this is not enough, as inequalities persist. Action is therefore needed in Europe at two levels: (1) at the level of legislation and (2) at the level of culture and education.

### ***2. Teach social sciences in European schools to equip students at a young age.***

### ***3. Prohibit unpaid internships in the European Union.***

### ***4. Introduction of a minimum income in the European Union***

### ***5. Harmonisation of corporate tax rates within the European Union***

### ***6. Respecting the right to shut down outside working hours***

### ***7. Giving the EU more powers in the field of health.***



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## The Conference on the Future of Europe - #Makeyourvoiceheard!

The Conference on the Future of Europe is a series of debates and discussions where people from all over Europe can share their ideas and help shape our common future. This works, for example, via the multilingual digital platform that was created especially for the conference. On this platform, the ideas of FutureLabEU were also entered after the event and are thus visible!

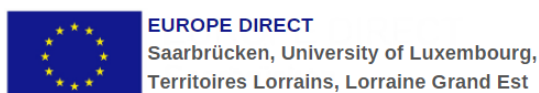


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The cross-border workshop was organized as a cooperation of the EUROPE DIRECT Centers Saarbrücken, University of Luxembourg, Lorraine Grand Est (Nancy) and Territoires Lorrains (Colombey-les-Belles).

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