

Vice-President Dombrovskis' remarks at the press conference on Investing in People, Social Cohesion & Values

Dear colleagues,

Good afternoon,

From the first day, this Commission has promised to propose a budget which 'protects, empowers and defends'. Today, we want to highlight some of the programmes that make that promise concrete.

As you know, the context of next Multiannual Financial Framework negotiations this time around is probably more difficult than ever before – if such a thing is even possible. With the UK leaving the EU, the income side had to be revisited, including through new own resources. With plenty of new challenges that need to be addressed, we also had to prioritise expenses.

The package we put forward today reflects the widely shared ambitions for a social and fair Europe, as highlighted at the Gothenburg social summit of November 2017. Concretely, it allows us to more effectively support progress on the European Pillar of Social Rights, which guides our policies in this field.

The priority is to invest in people, assure them Europe is on their side. If we get the new funding to match social needs more closely, the EU can make a real difference in empowering people to meet today's challenges and prepare them for tomorrow.

That is the logic behind all of the proposals we present today.

We propose an integrated European Social Fund Plus to boost cohesion, to improve the employability and the skills of our labour force, and also to focus on those who need it most. We want to tighten the link with the European Semester, in order to support the pace of structural reforms in Member States, in full complementarity with the Reform Support Programme.

Besides, the new European Globalisation Adjustment Fund is our way of reacting to profound changes brought about by shifts and shocks in the global economy.

Commissioner Thyssen will explain more in detail what the changes imply for the ESF+ and the EGF.

We also propose a revamped Erasmus programme, our "classic". With doubled funding, this programme will be even more effective to enable millions of young Europeans to study, train or learn abroad while broadening their experience and awareness of Europe, and increasing their future chances on the job market.

Investing in people also means focusing on culture, which also helps to address societal and economic challenges. The EU budget should therefore also promote common values and a sense of belonging to the EU.

The goal of the new Creative Europe programme is to strengthen and protect European cultural and linguistic diversity, cultural heritage and creativity, as well as the competitiveness of Europe's cultural and creative sectors.

Commissioners Navracsics and Gabriel will elaborate on the proposals for Erasmus+ and Creative Europe in a moment.

Let me finish with a few words on the new Justice, Rights and Values Fund. Open, democratic and inclusive societies are at the heart of Europe's identity.

With this fund we propose to invest €947 million over 7 years, while simplifying the existing programmes in this field. The Fund consists of two programmes: the Rights and Values programme (€642 million) and the Justice programme (€305 million).

The idea behind the latter is to further support the development of a European Area of Justice based on the rule of law and mutual trust. It will support, for instance, judicial training or mutual learning programmes, and the use of Information and Communication Technologies in our justice systems.

The Rights and Values programme is focussed on protecting and promoting rights and values as enshrined in the EU Treaties. This includes supporting civil society organisations and NGO's.

At a time where we are confronted with extremism, radicalism and societal divisions, it is even more important to stand up for our common EU values, and to ensure people can truly enjoy their rights in our Union.

With that, I now pass the floor to Marianne.