

COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND EDUCATION

INVITED COMMITTEES:
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY
COMMITTEE ON CIVIL LIBERTIES, JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

CONFIRMATION HEARING OF
ROXANA MÎNZATU

EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

(People, Skills and Preparedness)

TUESDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2024

BRUSSELS

1-0002-0000

IN THE CHAIR:**LI ANDERSSON***Chair of the EMPL Committee***NELA RIEHL***Chair of the CULT Committee*

1-0003-0000

(The hearing opened at 14:30)

1-0004-0000

Li Andersson, *Chair of the EMPL Committee*. – Good afternoon everyone, dear colleagues, first of all, I would like to welcome Ms Roxana Mînzatu, Executive Vice-President-designate for People, Skills and Preparedness, to this confirmation hearing, which is jointly held by the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and by the Committee on Culture and Education. I would also like to welcome the members of our committees, the Chair and the Vice-Chair and members of the invited committees, namely the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.

I am happy to be co-chairing this confirmation hearing with my colleague Nela Riehl, Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education. Also welcome to the Commission and Council colleagues who are here today and to those following us online as this confirmation hearing is being streamed live and it will also be available afterwards on the EP website via video recording.

Before this confirmation hearing, the Committee on Legal Affairs assessed the question of potential or actual conflict of interests. It has raised no objection to the holding of the confirmation hearing of the Executive Vice-President-designate, Roxana Mînzatu.

Furthermore, the Commissioner-designate has replied to a number of written questions. We acknowledge your responses to the horizontal written questions and your readiness to cooperate with the European Parliament. This is particularly important in the context of the revision of the Framework Agreement between the European Parliament and the Commission, in particular regarding your engagement to be regularly present in committees and plenaries, to follow up on Parliament's legislative initiatives and to timely share information to Parliament as co-legislator and arm of the budgetary authority. We count on the full implementation of these commitments and emphasise the Commission's role as an honest broker in all legislative procedures and interinstitutional negotiations, ensuring equal treatment of Parliament and the Council. I equally count on your full cooperation to inform our committees in advance of all upcoming proposals, with detailed justifications for those requiring urgent action. This will ensure transparency and allow Parliament to properly exercise its prerogatives.

Before I give the floor to my co-chair, as Chair of the EMPL Committee, I would like to express our dissatisfaction as regards the title of the Commissioner-designate's portfolio, which we think does not reflect entirely her future responsibilities, namely the aim of strengthening the European Pillar of Social Rights, in particular with respect to jobs and social rights. From the EMPL Committee perspective, it is of utmost importance to ensure a strong and consistent policy for strengthening

quality jobs and the welfare state, with strong coordination of contributions from many Commissioners-designate to social and employment policies. I will now hand over to my co-chair.

1-0005-0000

Nela Riehl, *Chair of the CULT Committee*. – Thank you very much, Li, and also for my side a warm welcome. We do share, as the CULT Committee, the dissatisfaction regarding the title of this portfolio, as education is not mentioned. We consider that education goes beyond strengthening Europe's human capital. Education policy is key to providing access to learning and also delivering effective and relevant knowledge, skills, values and competences, contributing to better prepared and resilient future generations. Therefore, the fact that education is not explicitly mentioned in the title of this portfolio is both confusing and also very regrettable.

Having in mind the recent societal trends and electoral outcomes, the CULT Committee believes that more than ever, in the next five years, education will be fundamental in preventing discrimination and strengthening our democratic values, and enhancing democratic participation.

After having said this, from a procedural point of view, let me recall the structure of this confirmation hearing. The Commissioner-designate is invited to make an oral opening statement of no longer than 15 minutes. At the end of the meeting, she will also have five minutes for a closing statement. Then, after the introduction of Ms Minzatu, we will turn to the questions from our members.

The confirmation hearing will be structured in four rounds. A first round of political group coordinators, with five-minute slots each: one-minute question, two-minute answer from the Commissioner-designate, with a possibility for a follow-up question from the same member, no longer than one minute again and then again a two-minute answer from the Commissioner-designate.

A second round of questions with three-minute slots each based on the overall distribution of speaking time among the political groups, including the representatives from the non-attached members.

A third round of questions by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the invited committees with three-minute slots each.

Then a final round of questions by the political groups in reverse order. Also, again, three-minute slots each.

Please note that all slots of three minutes will be divided into one minute for the question, and then two minutes for the answer from the Commissioner-designate. At the end we will conclude the confirmation hearing.

Interpretation today will be available in 23 languages, and I would like to make clear that we will need to be very, very strict with the time because, if we run late, some members will not be able to take the floor. Ten to fifteen seconds before the time lapses, the star will appear and we will ask the speakers to conclude. As a last resort – and people having been in my previous hearing know that I'm very strict on that – we will actually mute you. This is not because I'm unkind, it's just the last resort, and I really beg you to really stick to this one minute.

Now I would like to give the floor to Ms Minzatu for her opening statement of 15 minutes.

1-0006-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Honourable Members, today I ask for your trust – trust that in these next five years, I, as Executive-Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness, will be able to guide our overall work for our strong Social Europe by empowering all generations, by making our citizens more resilient in society, in democracies, in the labour market.

To do that, you need to know who I am. What I stand for. Where I come from.

First, then, where I come from. My home is Braşov, which is a city in the centre of Romania, a spectacular city once a trade centre lifted by guilds in the Medieval age, and in the 20th Century it was an industrial city.

As I was growing up, in the 1980s, it was a workers' city – my own parents included. It was in Braşov, almost exactly 37 years ago, on a sunny election day on 15 November 1987, that the first Romanian revolt against the Communist regime erupted.

Many workers took to the streets because of hunger, because of in-work poverty. That first attempt failed. The rebellion was quickly stifled. Some were imprisoned and tortured. But it was the beginning of the end.

I can still remember the excitement, the sense of possibility, as Communism collapsed in Romania, two years later, in December 1989. Then Romanians embraced democracy and European values with each individual life story, with each aspiration.

Someone recently asked me to name some famous writers or famous fighters from whom I draw inspiration. I will tell you: no writer; no fighter. I draw inspiration from ordinary people, from those that are around us, from their wisdom, their resilience, their suffering, their hopes and their dreams. It's the people that we meet everyday in our lives. And that – if you confirm my appointment – will be the starting point of my work.

The citizens of Europe have gone through many uncertainties in the last five years. COVID, first. Then the war at our borders. Then companies relocating, energy prices going through the roof and inflation fuelling poverty. Year after year, our regions face new climate-driven disasters – and we have all seen the unfortunate events that recently happened in Spain.

The bottom line is that Europe is an athlete in a very complex competition, one that needs to step up on its preparation, on its training, on building its stamina so that it can both empower and protect its people from a young age to old age.

It is a time when security and open strategic autonomy matter more than ever, but it is also a time when the guiding principles of the European project also matter more than ever: democracy through rights and values respected; freedom through opportunities and choices; safety; and, as well and most importantly, the European social model – the jewel of our project that continues the promise of a better today and tomorrow together in a united, strong Europe.

Europeans and all sectors of our societies have worked together, showed resilience and done their bit so far. But we have even higher expectations of what still needs to be done in the future to improve everyday lives at work, at home, in our surrounding natural environment, in society – not just for us, but for the future generations.

That is why, first and foremost, I want to start by listening to people in each and every one of our Member States, because everything in my mandate is about their needs, and especially their

engagement. So as soon as I take office, I will launch an EU-wide social policy dialogue on Europe in action for the people.

To ensure that work and well-being remain in sync, we should reflect not only on the skills needed for the future, but also on how people's expectations about work and work-life balance are shifting, and which interventions can contribute towards fairer and more sustainable working conditions.

I'll be present on the ground in the first year of my mandate, engaging with all relevant stakeholders, social partners, governments, national parliaments, the citizens, the youth organisations. I want to be present, and I will listen.

I want to launch an inclusive debate, a democratic engagement on the future of our well-being, of our work and of our skills. Jointly, this is how we will fuel one of my key commitments as entrusted in the mission letter for 2025 – a new action pillar, a new action plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights, thus reinforcing social protection and activating policies to underpin well-functioning labour markets and social welfare systems.

Honourable Members, my intention is to structure my mandate on three pillars that are equally important. They are not in order; they are all equally strong and important. The first pillar is preparedness, but in a wider sense, individual and societal preparedness.

Mulți dintre noi au trecut prin mai multe schimbări în viețile noastre recente decât am fi putut anticipa vreodată. Europeanii vor experimenta și mai multe schimbări în următorii ani, de aceea trebuie să construim o cultură a pregătirii pentru viitor, pentru a face față cu brio tuturor schimbărilor, tuturor potențialelor riscuri. Care sunt vitaminele noastre esențiale pentru a fi pregătiți? Educația. Competențele. Pregătirea începe cu școala obligatorie, dar depinde de învățare pe tot parcursul vieții, rutină pe care noi, adulții, trebuie să ne-o asumăm de asemenea. În acest domeniu, sunt convinsă că spațiul european al educației poate aduce cu adevărat valoare adăugată.

Obiectivul: o educație de calitate și formare profesională pentru toți, cu acces echitabil pe întreg teritoriul Uniunii Europene; în fiecare școală, în fiecare universitate, în fiecare comunitate; dincolo de granițe; motivând cadrele noastre didactice; construind pe baza a ceea ce știm deja că a funcționat, cum este programul Erasmus. Erasmus+ este un exemplu-cheie despre ceea ce Europa face cel mai bine, dar să nu ne păcălim singuri. Nu totul funcționează atât de bine. De exemplu: asistăm la o deteriorare a competențelor de bază ale tinerelor generații; observăm un deficit alarmant al cadrelor didactice în majoritatea statelor membre; avem deficiențe majore de competențe în domenii-cheie, cum ar fi științele, tehnologia, ingineria și matematica, importante pentru competitivitatea noastră, și mulți europeni nu au competențele digitale necesare.

Because basic skills at a young age are the foundation to be able to reskill or upskill as an adult. This allows one to benefit from opportunities when the economy has to transform or has to adapt.

I will also ensure that our labour force such as our builders, our chefs, our nurses or carers or electricians are highly trained and able to move freely in a market that recognises their skills and qualifications. And for that reason, I will propose an initiative on skills portability. Skills portability, that means people and their skills can circulate freely and contribute to a stronger internal market to support European industries, European start-ups, European SMEs. In addition, I will look into a system that gives European recognition for vocational and educational training in a similar manner to what we are doing in the higher education initiatives.

Now, I'm conscious, as I speak, that I'm outlining actions I'd be leading because you need to be clear on where I'd lead in relation to people, skills and preparedness. Of course, in my mandate I will work very closely with the President, with all the members of the College, because cooperation is key for a strong social Europe. Naturally, I will work specifically close with my fellow Commissioners, if I am confirmed by you. Some of the achievements of this broad collaboration will draw on the Niinistö report and the Commission will propose an EU Preparedness Union Strategy.

Now, to a very important pillar. I will not call it the second. It's a key pillar: quality jobs. In meeting many of you, I have heard your deep concerns, the need to ensure a fair transition so that our Union's competitiveness goes hand in hand with the rights and protections of our workers. A deep concern for quality jobs. A quality job provides decent wages and fair working conditions. A quality job offers the same rights, whether offline or online, whether nationals posted or third country nationals, regardless of the type of contract. A quality job empowers learning and growing and training and a quality job is based on strong social dialogue and effective collective bargaining.

Collaborating with the social partners to create a strong and protective framework for workers, starting with a Quality Jobs Roadmap, will be a priority for the first months of my mandate. At the same time, I will make sure that our social acquis is implemented, starting with the Minimum Wage Directive. I will work to ensure the right to disconnect that will improve our workers' intra-EU mobility conditions. And I have the ambition to complete the modernisation of our social security coordination. I will strengthen our European Labour Authority.

So preparedness, quality jobs, first two pillars, if you confirm me in this role.

Le troisième élément d'importance égale est la justice sociale. Je travaillerai pour aider tous ceux qui en ont le plus besoin. Tous. Peu importe leur âge, leur genre, leur religion ou l'endroit où ils vivent.

Voici quelques faits notables concernant la situation sociale de notre Union:

un quart de nos enfants européens est à la limite de l'extrême pauvreté. Un quart d'entre eux;

notre Union compte 100 millions de personnes en situation de handicap, parmi lesquelles un grand nombre pourrait et souhaiterait travailler, mais ne le peut pas;

nous avons presque 1 million de sans-abri, et, je vous le dis, nous pouvons éradiquer le sans-abrisme en Europe;

en outre, aussi incroyable que cela puisse sembler en 2024, les femmes – à savoir la moitié de notre société – se battent encore pour obtenir l'égalité femmes-hommes. L'égalité femmes-hommes sera au cœur de mon action. Elle sera présente dans l'ensemble de mes efforts.

Ce sont autant de défis que cette Commission relèvera, avec toute la détermination et l'efficacité nécessaires. Concrètement, et pour ne citer que quelques-uns des outils que j'utiliserai, je renforcerai la garantie européenne pour l'enfance et je m'assurerai que le tout premier plan européen pour le logement abordable inclura des solutions solides et durables pour les plus vulnérables.

À l'aide d'une stratégie européenne ambitieuse de lutte contre la pauvreté, nous nous attaquerons aux causes profondes de la pauvreté: depuis le contexte social, l'âge, le sexe, la situation géographique jusqu'aux symptômes comme le cas des travailleurs pauvres, la pauvreté énergétique, la précarité liée aux transports ou encore le manque d'accès aux services de base ou au logement.

We must improve long-term care to respond better to increasing needs in Europe and enhance people's dignity to live independently and safely. We must improve, as well, the working conditions, the training, the recognition of carers so more informal caregivers can access or return to our labour markets. We must provide more quality, affordable childcare so parents who want to can return to full-time work. The fundamental priority is that we invest in children, and supporting children is crucial for their integration in the education system and for their mental health, which is important for all ages. Childcare is an investment in our families, in our economies and in our societies, all in all.

Honourable Members, this next Commission will be an investment Commission, catering for the increasing and different needs of all peoples, of our workers. Social economy will be one sector that we will boost. I have implemented a cohesion policy in Romania, and my role will be also to achieve a higher impact from the European Social Fund+, to ensure that the Social Climate Fund can powerfully mitigate the social impacts of our green transition.

But our challenges need more tools: public and private social investment; social conditionalities for public funding. You can count on me to work with my colleague Commissioners to deliver on game-changing solutions so that our pillar for social rights become a reality.

In closing, I know that my task is one that is hugely ambitious, but let me just quote this: 'the greatest risk to most of us is not that we aim too high and we do not reach that level, but that it is too low and we reach it'. That is my promise to you for the next five years, working energetically together with this House. You can count on my engagement, and I'm looking forward to our dialogue today.

1-0011-0000

Li Andersson, *Chair of the EMPL Committee*. – So we now start the first round of questions. You all remember the time rules, and you will remember that we will be strict with them. I give the floor now to the coordinators starting with the EPP.

1-0012-0000

Dennis Radtke (PPE). – Liebe Roxana! Herzlich willkommen hier in unserer Runde und vielen Dank für deinen umfangreichen Überblick. Ich möchte trotzdem gerne in zwei Punkte ein bisschen tiefer einsteigen. Das eine ist die Frage der Arbeitsmobilität, die du ja auch angesprochen hast – ich denke eine Schlüsselfrage gerade mit Blick auf ökonomisches Wachstum und die Frage von Wettbewerbsfähigkeit.

Du hast ja die Verordnung (EG) Nr. 883/2004 angesprochen: Was sind deine konkreten Planungen, um Arbeitskräfte, Mobilität, gerade grenzüberschreitendes Arbeiten zu stärken?

Der zweite Punkt: die Zukunft der Europäischen Arbeitsbehörde. Wir haben hier als Parlament im Januar eine Stellungnahme abgegeben, wie wir uns eine Weiterentwicklung des Mandats vorstellen, gerade auch mit Blick auf ein Initiativrecht der ELA, gerade auch mit Blick auf Angehörige von Drittstaaten. Es wäre gut, wenn du dazu aus deiner Sicht noch etwas sagen könntest.

1-0013-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Mobility, I think, is at the heart of the quality jobs project and at the heart of our competitiveness drive as well. So that is why I will have it on my desk from day one. In terms of working with you to complete seven and a half years of work on the 883 Regulation modification, I think, in this aspect, there's been already so much that has been gained.

Obviously, so many complex topics still remain on the table. What has been gained is really, really important for our mobile workers.

And I really think that we have a new Parliament, a new Commission, a new drive, and obviously we'll have also a new presidency in the first half of the next year. And my plan is to give it a go. I want us to work on 883. I want us, together, to do our best to deliver on the modification that has been under debate for so many years. I want us to use the gains that have been obtained for our workers, and I want us to find the solution for what has remained on the table in terms of unemployment benefits and all the other technical aspects that are the prior notification that are important.

So obviously, this is a work that I will do with you and with the Council, but for our Europe, it is clear that more and more our mobile workers are relevant, are important and their rights and their protection need to be ensured. And this is important, but obviously taking up on the fact that the Parliament, this House, has also requested the strengthening of the mandate of ELA, I would support the strengthening of the mandate once I see the evaluation which is now performed by my services. My interest is that we tackle all mobile workers, third-country nationals as well.

1-0014-0000

Dennis Radtke (PPE). – Vielen Dank. Ich denke, das war klar bei der ELA. Aber nochmal zu der Frage der Arbeitsmobilität und wie wir bei der Verordnung (EG) Nr. 883/2004 weitermachen.

Die Frage ist: Wollen wir einer Ratspräsidentschaft nach der anderen die Möglichkeit geben, dieses Thema doch noch zu lösen? Oder kommen wir irgendwann zu der Idee: Die Kommission muss doch noch einen neuen Aufschlag machen – weil wir sowohl aus Beschäftigtensicht als auch aus Arbeitgebersicht einfach Themen haben, die geklärt werden müssen, Stichwort: A1-Bescheinigung. Da müssen wir endlich zu Fortschritten kommen.

Wäre vielleicht in diesem Zusammenhang die Einführung des Europäischen Sozialversicherungspasses für dich eine Option B, dieses Problem zu lösen?

1-0015-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you for the follow up. The ESSPASS is the next level of protection for our workers. Currently, this is a digital solution that is piloted through two projects that are financed through Digital Europe, through the involvement of certain Member States. We will look at the way that they are piloted on the A1 portable format document and on the European health card.

We will look at the end of 2025 at the results of the pilots. Obviously we have to take into consideration what some Member States already have in place in terms of systems that do work for them. So this is not an easy answer that the ESSPASS can be delivered as a consequence of what we are piloting with the EU intervention. But using this kind of input – the input from the ESSPASS pilot project, the expertise, the best practices from Member States – we will go forward.

1-0016-0000

Estelle Ceulemans (S&D). – Chère Vice-Présidente exécutive désignée, chers membres de notre commission de l'emploi et des affaires sociales, chère Roxana, le portefeuille pour lequel vous êtes désignée n'est pas important que pour notre groupe politique: il l'est aussi – et surtout – pour les travailleurs, les travailleuses, les citoyens et les citoyennes de l'Union, pour qui nous avons la responsabilité d'aller vers une Europe plus juste et plus sociale.

Or, l'un des défis majeurs auxquels nous devons répondre concerne les répercussions de la numérisation et de l'intelligence artificielle, qui se font déjà ressentir fortement aujourd'hui, et qui se feront sentir encore davantage demain, que ce soit sur le volume de l'emploi, les besoins de formation, la qualité de l'emploi, les conditions de travail, la conciliation entre vie privée et vie professionnelle ou la protection des données privées.

Ma question est donc la suivante: afin d'accompagner cette transition numérique, vous engagez-vous à des propositions législatives telles qu'une directive relative à l'intelligence artificielle sur le lieu de travail, une sur le droit à la déconnexion ou une encore sur l'encadrement du télétravail, et ce avec une approche spécifique en matière d'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes et de respect de la concertation sociale?

1-0017-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Rights should be rights, offline or online, and this is the bottom line. So if this is the bottom line, as I've announced in my opening speech, obviously it will be at the heart of a quality jobs initiative that I will be focused on.

On the right to disconnect, things are very, very clear: from day one when I take up my mandate – if you confirm me, obviously – I will launch the second phase consultation with the social partners. This is extremely important, as you've mentioned, because on the right to disconnect we have a pretty strong impact on female workers, stronger than in the case of men, so this is a gender issue as well but not only.

We have to acknowledge that AI and technology offer opportunity, offer quality jobs in itself, in many industries, they can do so, but we need to look at the labour market relations. And this is what I will do.

Obviously, the AI Act, the Platform Work Directive, in certain ways approached the issue of human-centric approaches of the AI, of regulating what happens for platform workers, but what happens to workers that are in physical environments and are impacted by algorithmic management? This is an important issue. It will be a core part of my quality jobs initiative, with other aspects as well, because we're looking at mental health, obviously.

So this is the commitment that the core of my work will be: to have a strategic response in terms of policy, potentially legislation, and that will help us to ensure that the rights of a worker are also protected and respected, even if they choose hybrid or telework or other ways in which the online dimension is present.

So this is clearly a strong message that I want to send so that all Europeans understand it: not just opportunities, but protection when we have AI and algorithmic management at work, but still supporting our companies to be agile and competitive. I don't want to burden them.

1-0018-0000

Estelle Ceulemans (S&D). – Comme vous l'avez souligné, votre lettre de mission vous charge d'élaborer un plan d'action pour le déploiement des vingt principes du socle européen des droits sociaux, dont un volet concerne justement la qualité de l'emploi.

Il est en effet urgent d'agir face à la détérioration des conditions de travail et à l'augmentation de la pression au travail, qui touche de nombreux travailleurs et travailleuses, un phénomène qui conduit à d'importantes pénuries de main-d'œuvre dans des secteurs essentiels comme ceux du soin ou de

l'enseignement, pour ne citer que ceux-là, mais qui représente aussi un risque majeur de décrochage des jeunes – qui ne se projettent pas dans des emplois aliénants ou de piètre qualité – et qui entraîne, évidemment et malheureusement, des phénomènes et des risques croissants de troubles de la santé mentale et de burn-out.

D'où ma question: quels sont vos engagements concrets en matière, justement, de qualité de l'emploi? On en parle beaucoup, mais quels sont-ils vraiment de manière concrète? Et vous engagez-vous à proposer un projet de directive sur la prévention et la prise en charge des risques psychosociaux et du burn-out?

1-0019-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – I would want to first have us all look at the impact of the current legislation. This is important because you have certain directives that are in place, and we need to understand: do they cover psychosocial risk? Do they cover stress, anxiety? Do they protect our workers? Are they adapted to our current challenges? And then be strategic and be looking at quality in intervention in terms of delivering policy and legislation.

But obviously this is also part of the quality jobs initiative that I want to support and that, together with social partners, we want to define. So, bottom line: this is also a very important aspect that we need to have mental health workers protected. This is seen in the statistics and this is seen in the health reports, but we need to do it strategically inside a very impactful type of legislative or non-legislative intervention.

1-0020-0000

Mélanie Disdier (Pfe). – Madame la Vice-Présidente exécutive désignée, il y a quelques semaines, dans ses lignes directrices pour les politiques sociales des États membres, la Commission a demandé que l'âge de départ à la retraite dans les pays membres soit augmenté. En France, Emmanuel Macron a par ailleurs très bien suivi cette ligne, contre l'avis de la majorité du peuple français, n'hésitant pas à contourner le vote de l'Assemblée nationale pour cela. Confirmez-vous vouloir rester dans cette ligne politique? Si oui, que comptez-vous faire face aux peuples qui s'y opposent?

À ce titre, nous avons pu constater que la position politique qui se dessine chez les principaux soutiens de la construction européenne, notamment les membres de l'actuelle coalition au Parlement, est d'exclure systématiquement de toute fonction au sein de l'institution ceux qui représentent une partie substantielle du peuple européen. Confirmez-vous que traiter une dizaine de millions d'Européens comme des sous-citoyens correspond à votre vision de la démocratie?

1-0021-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – I would want to maybe ask you to repeat the first part of the question, if it's possible. Can we have it very short?

1-0022-0000

Mélanie Disdier (Pfe). – Allez-vous suivre la directive des politiques sur les retraites, sur l'augmentation de l'âge des retraites? Êtes-vous sur cette ligne ou non?

1-0023-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Pensions are regulated in Member States, but we are living indeed in an ageing society with new challenges in terms of how we approach the length of our presence in the labour market. What we at the European level are doing and should be doing is ensuring that we have adequate pension systems in all Member States.

It is not an EU competence, indeed, but we have the tools to look at the systems of our Member States to ensure: that adequate pensions, for which contributions have been provided, are offered; that all the conditions that the sustainability, that the cost of financing, that the investment in these pensions is one that is sound and that is also stable. This is the level of involvement that, technically, we can have from the EU level.

But for me, it's very important to note that we have a very important gap between men and women in old age. We have a gap of income due to in-work poverty in decades previous, and this is very important to note because this type of element is what we are looking at when we are trying to use the Semester, the European Social Convergence Framework in order to look at Member States plans concerning the social rights, the social investments, the social expenses in their Member States.

Beyond that, obviously, it's a discussion related to demography in each Member State, to the labour market history, evolution, and that is something that we must respect in terms of national competencies.

1-0024-0000

Mélanie Disdier (PFE). – La deuxième partie de mon intervention: je n'ai pas entendu votre réponse, madame Mînzatu, donc je voudrais quand même revenir sur les problématiques de la démocratie. Je ne vous ai pas entendu déplorer le fait que la troisième force politique du Parlement n'ait pas une seule présidence de commission ni même de vice-présidence, ce qui contrevient pourtant aux valeurs et aux principes fondamentaux de l'Union européenne.

Êtes-vous contre ces principes et ces valeurs démocratiques? Si vous êtes contre ces principes, comment pouvez-vous sérieusement exercer votre rôle de défense des intérêts européens, qui requièrent à tout le moins d'adhérer à ces valeurs fondamentales?

1-0025-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – I am all for European democratic values, supporting our shared values that unite us together in this common European project, and democracy also means the freedom to vote, the freedom of alliances which emanate into structures that generate leadership positions in democratic institutions.

So obviously, my support for democratic values is full and I can only confirm that that will be seen throughout my work.

1-0026-0000

Chiara Gemma (ECR). – Signora Commissaria designata, nelle sue risposte scritte ha ribadito come la prossima Commissione europea investirà molto nelle persone, confermando a Erasmus+ un ruolo cruciale per una transizione ottimale verso il mercato del lavoro.

Prendiamo atto, però, che molti giovani europei devono rinunciarvi, perché non possono sostenere i costi accessori. Le chiedo: quali strumenti prevede di integrare per migliorare il supporto finanziario, sostenendo gli studenti attraverso una gestione oculata delle risorse europee?

Se poi consideriamo i giovani con disabilità, le difficoltà nel ricoprire i costi legati alla loro condizione, all'accesso ai servizi essenziali, diventano davvero impossibili. E allora le chiedo: quale misure concrete prevede di integrare per rendere Erasmus+ veramente equo e inclusivo per tutti, anche in termini di supporto e accessibilità?

1-0027-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Grazie, honourable Member. It was my first request for our services in the Commission when I met them in preparing these hearings: that Erasmus needs to become more inclusive. I was one of those potential Erasmus students who could not afford to take a scholarship, because the resources were just not enough to take up on the mobility.

Obviously, in recent years, Erasmus numbers have improved: some 17 % of the total beneficiaries now come from vulnerable backgrounds. My ambition is to go to at least 25 %. I would want that at least one in four Erasmus beneficiaries come from vulnerable backgrounds, and that we have the resources to support them.

Obviously, my mission letter says that I will strengthen Erasmus, and I will strengthen Erasmus: first, by making it more inclusive; but second, also I want to look at how we will tackle those that are more in need. And I think that we need to look at top-ups, we need to look at synergies: Erasmus and European Social Fund Plus. In my country as well, and probably in some Member States, we have tested combinations of interventions from Erasmus and other financing sources so that we can afford to give supplementary support to certain vulnerable groups. Even now in Erasmus, young people with disabilities have special formats of mobility and some special form of support.

But I do agree with you that it is not enough, that it is the way in which we should strengthen our programme, and that will be reflected in a democratic way, I'm sure, even in the civic and democratic engagement of those young people that we will be able to support, and we are now leaving them outside of this such popular programme. So my commitment is, yes, to increase significantly the vulnerable beneficiaries and also to offer additional support.

1-0028-0000

Chiara Gemma (ECR). – Ritorno ancora sulle persone con disabilità. Le statistiche di Eurostat indicano chiaramente che le persone con disabilità devono affrontare ancora gravi barriere in molti ambiti della vita. Ciò è particolarmente vero quando si tratta di accesso all'istruzione e all'occupazione, come Lei ha prima sottolineato.

Le chiedo: come intende creare sinergie con i portafogli degli altri commissari competenti per aiutare gli oltre 100 milioni di persone con disabilità in Europa ad acquisire le competenze necessarie alla loro integrazione attiva nel mercato del lavoro?

Prenderete in considerazione un'iniziativa mirata, come la garanzia per i giovani, ma rivolta esplicitamente a stimolare la partecipazione delle persone con disabilità al mercato del lavoro?

1-0029-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – As we are looking at closing the gaps in our labour market, I want us to look very closely at ways to support our youth, people with disabilities, in ways to be activated, to have chances to work. Assistive technologies are an example of synergy that I would want to offer. I would want to work with the Vice-President for Cohesion, for example, to have in place assistive technologies for people with disabilities so that they are able to work.

On the Child Guarantee, I will work obviously closely with the Commissioner for Youth, who has the strategy on children's rights, but my priority connected to the first European anti-poverty strategy will be to strengthen the Child Guarantee. We have earmarked funds now for certain countries to the Child Guarantee recommendation. We deliver. I can give you maybe some

examples, maybe not now, because time is not on my side, but I will strengthen it with a special look for vulnerable young children and children with disabilities.

1-0030-0000

Jana Toom (Renew). – Thank you, Commissioner-designate, for your presentation. When we are talking about quality jobs and social rights, my mind goes to the workers that live in regions dependent on fossil fuels. Hundreds of thousands of people are going to lose their jobs and livelihoods as the continent transitions to climate neutrality.

In the previous mandate, we adopted the Just Transition Fund that was meant to help these workers. Not only the funds scheduled to last only three more years, but we have also not seen enough jobs being created as a result. Certainly not when I look at my own country, for instance.

How will the Commission ensure that the Just Transition Fund is used efficiently and effectively for the creation of jobs in the affected regions? Are you going to look at the implementation of the Just Transition Fund to see how much it contributed to creating quality jobs, and if it did enough to change the local economy of these regions towards other sectors?

1-0031-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Yes, thank you. The Just Transition Fund – which I do not lead on, but which is very important for the work on social rights and on jobs and on quality jobs, so I will closely work with the Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms on that and with all my colleagues in the Commission of course – is, I think, a tool that can deliver.

Again, I would combine it in terms of intervention that it has in place. It has interventions in terms of skilling workers affected by the restructuring of their economies, in terms of creating new jobs, new start-ups in the region. There are already opportunities in place. The results are mixed and I think we should give it a bit more time to assess it. But let us have in mind again the synergies, combining it with what we are already doing with the European Social Fund Plus on skilling, on reskilling.

Looking maybe into other types of tools, and I was mentioning a social investment, so that where maybe the intervention from a single instrument such as the Just Transition Fund is not sufficient, we can combine it and have more impact on the ground.

I really believe that we need targeted tools like the Just Transition Fund. Again, it's not my own, but I know it. I've worked with it. It's a territorial instrument. There are regions where the territorial uptake and capacity has been good, has delivered results, regions where it does not offer the jobs or the skills that are expected.

But overall, the skills portability initiative that is also at the core of my mandate will also look at this aspect, at how we can support those that are affected to uptake, to take or to better make use of EU instruments and funds to get green skills, tech skills or those skills that allow them to make better use of their potentials.

So that's how I would see it. Let's combine the instruments and see how we can do better, and let's acknowledge the territorial benefit of this instrument for a just transition. Use the lessons that are favourable.

1-0032-0000

Jana Toom (Renew). – Of course we do know that this is not your portfolio, but by accident, this is about jobs which are your portfolio.

As you're responsible for preparing the Quality Jobs Roadmap, are you planning to look at the fossil fuel-dependent regions in preparing this roadmap?

Are you committed to deal with them? For this is really a separate issue and this is a very sensitive issue. And if European people believe that the just transition is unjust, this is a huge problem.

So in terms of the Quality Jobs Roadmap, what is your approach to this issue? Thank you.

1-0033-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – The best value that we can offer to the quality jobs roadmap is to work at it with the social partners. This will be essential. Then we will have the right ingredients to tackle regions that have been affected by the restructuring of their economies, energy intensive industries and so on and so forth.

So I want the approach in my mandate to be as pragmatic as possible, and to have the sectoral approach very on place. The example is very good, but the social partners' involvement will be key so that we can deliver on certain industries, on certain sectors.

Also, let us not forget the Social Climate Fund, with which we will intervene, certainly, in a different way, but will intervene to mitigate the social cost of our of our climate transition, let's say.

So I will be keenly active in having the quality jobs initiative tackling these aspects.

1-0034-0000

Kim Van Sparrentak (Verts/ALE). – Dear Commissioner-designate, we already discussed that the world of work is drastically changing, and strengthening workers rights and accompanying workers in the twin transition is really key to fulfil your mission.

You already mentioned the impact of digitalisation in the world of work. Algorithmic management and more generally the deployment of AI is rapidly spreading across the entire labour market and there is already ample evidence about the effects it has on workers' rights.

We successfully regulated this for platform workers, and I think we should build on this. The AI Act recognises that automated decision-making poses significant risks to decent working conditions and fundamental rights, but it does not actually regulate the use of algorithmic management at work, nor labour rights.

Do you agree that the current legal framework is not sufficient? And will you propose the initiative on algorithmic management announced your mission letter in the form of a directive? And will it cover the protection of workers rights, fundamental rights, health and safety, transparency and how to organise social dialogue on its introduction and use?

1-0035-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – As mentioned before, I have looked at what work has already been delivered with the involvement of this House of the previous Commission – actually the current Commission, they are still in place. Their progress is really commendable in terms of having – in the AI Act, in the Platform Work Directive – some very clear and groundbreaking

aspects recognised: that AI management, that algorithmic management should be human-centric, that it has a certain impact on work relations. These are in legislation, and the Directive on Platform Workers will be enforced, and it's important to see how it is put in place.

But it is not enough, in my opinion. Do I have a response that going beyond means also legislation or non-legislation? Not yet, but what I can commit to is that it is a priority because it's not a priority for me only, or for you, and for the current generation of workers. We are talking here a lot about poverty and children and their rights. They will be the workers most impacted by AI at work. This is the most important topic I want to discuss with them in the youth policy dialogues. Obviously they might be not so interested now in regulating AI at work and what type of protections we will include or not, and how we balance it with the competitiveness of the companies. But for our children, we have to do it. We have to look at it. And I will champion this in the Commission, together with my colleagues, of course. If you will give me your vote to do this work, you can count on me.

1-0036-0000

Kim Van Sparrentak (Verts/ALE). – Thank you for your answer, but discussing the twin transition, it's of course not digitalisation alone that is rapidly changing our jobs. The entire economy is undergoing a deep transformation in order to meet our climate goals. And in this we can't leave anyone behind. And in this context, workers need to be equipped with green and digital skills. How will you ensure the right to training for all workers is ensured in the context of the twin transition?

And also, you've been tasked to develop the Quality Jobs Roadmap to ensure a just transition for all. For this transformation to be successful, workers need to have the opportunity to be involved in shaping it, so social dialogue will be key. Will you propose a directive or just transition that guarantees the mentioned training and the anticipation and management of change, and effective information and consultation of trade unions?

Will you make sure the Green Deal is properly reflected in the Quality Jobs Framework?

1-0037-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – I think we need a skills revolution. It might not be a breaking news title, but it is a reality. The skills portability is one way to explain to our people that we need to step up on our ambition to have adults that are skilled and reskilled and protected against or helping them take advantage of these adaptations of the economies in which they work.

So I do think we need to look into aspects such as: who pays for the training? Can the employee do it during his working hours or outside of the working hours? So count on me to look at this specific approach in terms of respecting what is a social right, which is the right to train. This is very, very important. It will obviously be part of the quality jobs roadmap.

In terms of anticipation and management of change, first we're looking at the current situation of legislation, how the information and consultation of workers is going, and then looking at new approaches in terms of involving social partners in the management of changing companies.

1-0038-0000

Leila Chaïbi (The Left). – Chère Madame Mînzatu, Madame la Commissaire désignée aux personnes, aux compétences et à l'état de préparation, je vous avoue que cela fait deux mois que je cherche la ou le commissaire désigné en charge de l'emploi et des droits sociaux. Je vous écoute

depuis presque une heure maintenant et j'ai l'impression que nous avons trouvé la commissaire désignée, du moins à l'emploi et aux droits sociaux, mais je suis navrée que, sur votre pupitre, au bas de votre micro, ne soit pas indiqué que vous êtes en charge de l'emploi et des droits sociaux.

Je voulais donc savoir – première question – si, comme moi, vous aimeriez voir inscrit, sur votre pupitre, «droits sociaux et emploi».

La deuxième question concerne un sujet qui a déjà été abordé par deux collègues, celui de l'intelligence artificielle au travail et de la nécessité d'avoir une directive. Vous avez répondu en disant qu'il faudrait une initiative potentiellement législative, vous ne savez pas encore quelle va être la réponse, si elle va être législative: pardonnez-moi, mais cela ne suffit pas. Notre modèle social et salarial est basé sur l'encadrement des relations de travail. Alors, quand le lien de subordination est exercé par un algorithme, il nous faut de la législation. Je voulais savoir si vous, personnellement, vous vous engagez au sein du collège des commissaires à pousser, non pas pour défendre un constat, mais pour... *(la Présidente retire la parole à l'oratrice)*

(La Présidente retire la parole à l'oratrice)

1-0039-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – I would want my work to speak for itself. My speech has shown where my priorities are and you have understood how important social rights and jobs are for me.

I'm not the one who, obviously, can select the title, but I would be gladly open to any change that would happen. For me, it's about the core of the work, and the core of the work is in the pillar of social rights, and that's what has to be reflected in what I deliver. So that's an honest answer concerning the title.

On AI at work, I understand. I think you're the third Member of Parliament who is today mentioning this important topic. And this for me is important: hearing you, listening to you, working together with you, as it has happened in the past, will be key for me because that shows me what the priorities are. Clearly it's a top priority, and clearly we will have to look at all potential avenues to ensure that our workers' rights online are protected, for our future generations of workers more than for ourselves even.

So, you can count on me, as I've mentioned, and I thank you for putting up this topic again.

1-0040-0000

Leila Chaibi (The Left). – Ma deuxième question, ma troisième question en réalité, concerne la directive sur les marchés publics qui sera révisée durant ce mandat. Actuellement, ce sont 2 500 milliards d'euros d'argent public qui servent à rémunérer des marchés publics réalisés par des entreprises sans qu'il n'y ait aucun contrôle ni aucune conditionnalité en ce qui concerne le respect du droit du travail. La directive actuelle encourage le moins-disant social et environnemental, étant donné que le principal critère d'attribution des marchés publics, c'est le critère du prix, et le prix le plus bas. Il faut intégrer dans les règles de marchés publics un critère social obligatoire.

Je vous pose une question simple et je voudrais une réponse simple: est-ce que vous vous engagez à ce que la révision de la directive sur les marchés publics intègre des critères sociaux obligatoires dans l'attribution de ces marchés publics? Est-ce que vous prévoyez une implication directe de vos services et de vous-même dans cette révision de la directive?

1-0041-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – I've worked on implementing public procurement directives, so I know how important it is to very well calibrate the conditionalities with the potential burden you create for companies.

Having said that, we need more tools than ESF Social Climate Fund. I mentioned it. We need more tools. Social conditionalities and public procurement, and social criteria and public procurement are something that we need to look at seriously. Again, having a very balanced approach, because I want our companies to have the investment flow running.

So, I will work with the Vice-President-designate on Prosperity and Industrial Strategy, who has on his table actually, as the President von der Leyen mentioned, the modernisation of the procurement directives.

They are needed also in terms of supporting European products, services and companies, and I will be a champion to include such criteria. But again, let's see in what terms – compulsory, non-compulsory – we need to be strategic.

1-0042-0000

Petar Volgin (ESN). – Госпожо Мънзату, Вие като социалист най-добре знаете, че каквито и социални политики да се предлагат на хората, те ще бъдат неефективни, ако се влошава общото икономическо състояние на страните в Европейския съюз. А то се влошава поради три фактора.

Първо, високата цена на енергийните ресурси заради санкциите срещу Русия. Второ, самопринудата на Европейския съюз да осъществява преход към климатично неутрална икономика, което води до закриване на цели икономически отрасли. И трето, предстои поставяне на икономиките на държавите от ЕС на военна основа, както заявяват фигури като Шарл Мишел и Урсула фон дер Лайен. Фон дер Лайен каза, че Европейският съюз се нуждае от 500 милиарда евро инвестиции за отбрана през следващите 10 години, и призова лидерите на държавите да мислят как ще бъдат осигурени тези средства.

Ръководния елит в Брюксел директно заявява на обществеността, че предстоят огромни разходи за отбрана и те ще се случат задължително, дори това да е за сметка на свиване на други бюджети по ресори, дори и да е за сметка на обедняването на европейските граждани.

1-0043-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Never: without protecting our citizens and their rights, there is no European Union; there is no political project. That's what we are here for, together, to support, as I've mentioned, a social Europe. What we do have to do – and this is clearly a challenge for our generation of politicians, not just for a Commission or the current Parliament – is to look at how the next Multiannual Financial framework should be built, at new types of tools, as I've mentioned here, looking at social investment, public, private and new platforms to support our citizens.

Yes, we will have the Social Climate Fund to support our citizens, our households in face of energy poverty, in face of transport poverty, our companies – we have tools in place to support them – whose resources will be ensured. But we need more, and this is the challenge: not to become less, but to be able to cater both for the security of our Europe and to the prosperity and the protections and the rights of our Europeans. One without the other is simply unimaginable.

So our challenge is to look at all potential sources and investments in order to cater for the priorities of our project, but I am here to support that the rights, education, employment, social protections of our workers, of our children, of all people with disabilities are protected and are ensured to keep our Europe strong in the future.

1-0044-0000

Petar Volgin (ESN). – В своите писмени отговори Вие посочихте, че следващата Комисия ще бъде Комисия на инвестициите, което според Вас включва инвестиции в хората.

В същото време в Европейския съюз се наблюдава тенденция на увеличаване на централно управляваните инвестиции, подкрепени от определени идеологически насоки, като например тези в зелените технологии. Имайки предвид, че за грешни инвестиционни решения в частния сектор отговорността поемат самите компании, докато за обществените инвестиции – данъкоплатците, бих искал да чуя Вашето мнение по следния въпрос: как в качеството си на комисар ще гарантирате, че значителният дял от 20% от многогодишния бюджет на ЕС, който попада във Вашия ресор, няма да бъде използван за политически мотивирани инвестиции, които могат да доведат до отслабване на конкурентноспособността на успешните индустрии, закриване на работни места и влошаване на жизнения стандарт на хората в Европа?

Зелената идеология и антируските действия вече убиха европейските икономики. Да не се окаже така, че тези политики ще съсият и социалните права на европейците.

1-0045-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you. I do not think, for example, China or the United States – who are investing huge amounts of money in their green technologies – would call it ideological.

It is a fact of reality that we need our technologies, our economies, to pollute less in order to protect our planet, our lives, the future of our generations. So this is clear, what we need to understand is that the values that we share together are the values of a Europe that is going to survive, first of all, and contributing to a green economy is essential. So the important aspect here that we have to look at is that we are also competitive on the global market, and Europe has really the chance to be, or is, a leader in many green technologies.

It is economically smart – not ideologically, let's say, debatable – to have Europe invest in this sector.

1-0046-0000

Li Andersson (The Left). – Thank you very much and now we will go to the second round of questions. One minute for the questions and two minutes for the answers.

1-0047-0000

Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski (PPE). – Nie ma na tej sali nikogo – od Prezydium po wszystkich członków – kto uznałby, że edukacja jest tematem trzeciorzędnym. Niestety edukacja nie znalazła się w nazwie Pani portfolio. Czy wyraziła Pani swój stosunek do tego faktu?

Chciałbym zapytać też o Erasmusa. Erasmus składa się z bardzo wielu elementów, takich jak szkolnictwo wyższe, szkolnictwo zawodowe, uczenie się przez całe życie. Czy Pani ma zamiar zmienić proporcje, jeżeli chodzi o te zadania? Rozszerzyć czy zawęzić, także jeżeli chodzi o finanse? Wiadomo, że dominuje szkolnictwo wyższe (34%), na drugim miejscu jest szkolnictwo

zawodowe, a zaledwie 2% jest na wychowanie fizyczne, sport. Czy planuje Pani zmiany jakichkolwiek proporcji w tej materii?

I ostatnia rzecz – Erasmus+. To jest program, z którego jesteśmy wszyscy dumni. Jest on najważniejszy. Czy chce Pani jeszcze do tego programu coś dodać, uzupełnić go, wzbogacić, czy wręcz odwrotnie – zredukować?

1-0048-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Reduce it? Never! I will make it stronger – and not only in terms of the mission letter. I've mentioned that I wanted to make it more accessible for the vulnerable categories, but more than that I wanted to finance more of what the future of our Europe needs.

For example, right now it finances European university alliances, which for me are the blueprint for the future, a way to stop the brain drain in a way, and to offer a future to our students in multi-campus universities. Erasmus+ does that – access to tremendous resources in one complex alliance. So I want Erasmus to do that for schools as well.

So it's important to say, first of all, not how much money, but what do we want to do with Erasmus in the next generation of financing? What are our ambitions? Then we will find the money – and I promise you that we will.

Yes, we are looking at the current figures, and there is a discussion here. Do I first do higher education, second vocational? If I say vocational will be a priority, I upset universities, and the other way around. So that's not the idea. It's the type of vision that we deliver. One part of my vision is that I want to strengthen vocational education and training. This is essential for what we are discussing here – skills portability, ensuring closing the labour gap on our markets.

It's one of the solutions, and I will want to work, as I mentioned in my opening speech, in a similar way in which we worked on the higher-education level to support the blueprint for future European degrees in that. Their recognition on the market should be emphasised, let's say, but yes, I want to make Erasmus stronger and we will make it stronger in terms of what we want to deliver through it. Together I think we will work on the next, let's say, phase of the programme and it will be financially sound in the next MFF. I can promise you that.

1-0049-0000

Gabriele Bischoff (S&D). – Dear Commissioner-designate, dear Roxana, I mean, you heard it: a lot of workers in Europe have strong concerns about their future amidst all these transitions and even the word 'transition' triggers with many workers already rejections.

This is why, if we want to change it, we really need to have tangible results. Our policies need to empower workers to feel optimistic about their future and to achieve this also the workers need to be involved in changes.

This Parliament came up with a proposal in 2021 for a directive on the just transition, strengthening democracy at work and also anticipating change. In your quality jobs initiative, this package, will this play a role here? Will you take this up to make sure that we can have and develop policies that will come up with concrete solutions to address this?

1-0050-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much, dear Gabby. Indeed, you are right. If you want to have on board our workers, our populations during these, yes, transitions, changes that our industries are going through, we need to empower them.

So I totally agree that beyond information and consultation, through the involvement of social partners, we need to have a stronger stance in terms of how we engage them, how they can anticipate what is happening to their companies, how they can be involved in the evolution of their companies. Obviously, together with what I've mentioned, also being able to skill them continuously so that they are strong and resilient and can take benefit of whatever changes happen. So yes, in my quality jobs initiative, I want this aspect to be very strong.

Looking obviously at how the current legislation works is essential, but also looking at what more we could include in terms of anticipation and management of change. This will be a discussion also with the social partners in the Quality Jobs Roadmap and I hope that it is a deliverable that comes in common and joint discussions with the social partners. Key aspects will be there and that I can announce you.

1-0051-0000

Rosa Estaràs Ferragut (PPE). – Señora Mînzatu, quisiera en primer lugar referirme a los acontecimientos desgraciadísimos que han sucedido en Valencia y en otras regiones de España por la tormenta que ha supuesto más de doscientas veintidós víctimas en este momento y múltiples desaparecidos. Las zonas afectadas por la DANA suponen un tercio de pérdida del producto interior bruto de España y el 25 % de pérdida de empleo de toda la provincia de Valencia. Por eso le solicitaría ya que apoye en el empleo y en sus competencias la reconstrucción, con la ayuda de Europa, aunque el Gobierno de España no lo pida o lo pida de manera tardía.

En cuanto a la digitalización y la inteligencia artificial, necesitaría ya el compromiso de cómo asegurar el equilibrio entre la necesaria supervisión humana y el desarrollo de la inteligencia artificial por todos los beneficios que puede traer y de cómo aumentar las capacidades digitales de la población activa europea para conseguir la inclusión.

1-0052-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – What was the question?

1-0053-0000

Rosa Estaràs Ferragut (PPE). – Sí, son tres preguntas: la ayuda para el Gobierno de España por la pérdida de empleo; todo el tema de la digitalización e inteligencia artificial; y cómo podemos conseguir la digitalización para todos los colectivos para que no haya una discriminación, por ejemplo, en el sector de la discapacidad.

1-0054-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – I tried to listen in Spanish and I shouldn't do it, I should just listen to the English, sorry.

First of all, I want to pay my condolences to what happened in Valencia, where a lot of my fellow Romanians have suffered loss, and some died. And natural disasters will do that more and more. The European Commission has intervened, through the European ERCC with the mobilisation of the technical resources and also through our common Civil Protection Mechanism with our

pooling of civil protection resources that are offered by the Member States. These are the types of support that have been put at the disposal of the government of Spain by the Commission.

In need, we can also use the rescEU, which is the highest level of common resource that we put for civil protection, and that can be obviously at any time offered to alleviate in case of disaster. That is why it is important that we have a coherent and common response to disaster management and to crisis management, and the EU does that.

In terms of AI at work and how it impacts the lives of workers, as I've mentioned, on the one side, we have to acknowledge the fact that it does provide workers with the opportunity to be flexible, to do hybrid, part-time, remote jobs. It does maybe even generate new types of jobs and new types of opportunities, and helps people get on the labour market, people with disabilities. But we need to also regulate in terms of quality jobs, their rights and their protections against mental distress, against their care responsibilities in the home, and that's what I will do inside the quality jobs initiative.

1-0055-0000

Catherine Griset (Pfe). – Ma question portera sur la réserve européenne des talents, que vous évoquez comme l'une de vos priorités dans vos réponses écrites. Dans le cadre du pacte sur l'immigration et l'asile, le réservoir européen de talents vise à recruter des demandeurs d'emploi de pays tiers afin de travailler, en principe, dans les professions en pénurie. Ce dispositif pourrait cependant participer à priver les pays en développement de leurs ressortissants les plus qualifiés. En outre, des ressortissants de pays tiers pourraient entrer en Europe grâce à ce dispositif et y rester illégalement après leur période de travail, voire sans avoir réellement travaillé.

Afin d'éviter que ce dispositif ne facilite l'immigration clandestine, vous engagez-vous à vérifier la validité et l'équivalence des diplômes dont se prévaudront les candidats migrants? Conditionnerez-vous l'accès au dispositif à la conclusion d'un accord de réadmission effectif avec les pays tiers concernés? Enfin, supprimerez-vous le bénéfice de ce dispositif aux ressortissants des pays qui refusent de les reprendre?

1-0056-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – The EU talent pool is exactly the type of mechanism that we want to set up so that we manage, in a beneficial way, the workers that are coming from third countries. And they are already coming, and they are coming and working sometimes in poor conditions and sometimes are exploited, sometimes become homeless and so on and so forth.

And it is a mechanism through which we can also look at the employers: what they offer, what the conditions are. So this is a safety-first approach, let's say, to matching the demand and the supply. Those that are requesting jobs – and Europe needs jobs, and look at the care industry at how many more carers we need or construction – and those that are coming and requesting jobs in Europe. So I think that the EU talent pool is the way into which Europe can really make sure that those third country nationals who arrive have their rights protected.

In terms of the drain that we might generate – although, as I've mentioned, they're already coming – the EU has also the talent partnerships in place, which is an instrument that ensures that in those countries of origin, we invest in the skilling and the preparation of those that are there, that work there. This is a way through which Europe is doing its part in ensuring better education and opportunities for third countries.

So this is important. We have to look at the EU talent pool as one part of the whole solution that we need for a competitive labour market. We are having workers missing from many, many important industries without which we cannot deliver. We have to activate our own, but we also need a legal way to manage migration for those jobs that are necessary.

1-0057-0000

Lara Magoni (ECR). – Gentile Commissaria designata, lo sport è un settore importante dell'economia e rappresenta circa il 3 % del PIL dell'Unione europea, impiegando quasi sei milioni di persone, senza dimenticare il notevole impatto sociale ed educativo che ha sui nostri giovani.

Ciò premesso, Le chiedo: quali misure intende mettere in campo per rendere lo sport protagonista a livello europeo?

Inoltre, in connessione con le competenze affidateLe su Erasmus+, Lei ritiene di poter rafforzare i relativi progetti di sviluppo nel programma relativi allo sport? Si tratta di progetti che rappresentano un'opportunità per diffondere i valori dello sport e consentire ai giovani di esprimere il proprio potenziale.

Infine, Lei non ritiene necessario che le persone con disabilità debbano avere la stessa possibilità di diventare a loro volta maestri di sport, visto che ad oggi questo tipo di opportunità non è prevista, dando loro la possibilità di un lavoro per la loro indipendenza e per la loro dignità?

1-0058-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Yes, I want to mainstream sport in more of our policies, Ms Magoni, together with my colleague Commissioner for youth, obviously, and sports. I've mentioned many times in conversations I've had with you that, yes, we support Erasmus mobilities for sports professionals, but that's just a small part of what we need to deliver better.

Sports means preparedness. Sports means health, mental health, physical health. Obviously, we have the cohesion policy in place, which in some countries delivers programmes through which sport is used, and I've tested these instruments. Sport is used as a social inclusion instrument. I've worked on it with Roma young people, and it's the best way to offer them values and opportunities and self-confidence and to integrate them and to promote them, let's say.

Sports is therefore a tool that I would see much, much better mainstream than, of course, what it is now – performance, a strong industry in Europe, a European-based sports, values-based and European sports model, the solidarity between the grassroots and the competitive side of it.

So you can count on me to support it and also to have a special attention for young people or for adults with disabilities who can and should be supported in terms of engaging into sports activities. And again, here we can invest in assistive technologies that will allow them to be part of activities, sports activities and even competitions. It is important to note the Paralympics, what has happened in Paris, what will happen in Italy soon. These are strong messages that we are giving, that we are including all of our citizens into all the benefits and rights, including the right to train, to be healthy and to play sports.

1-0059-0000

Laurence Farreng (Renew). – Madame la Commissaire désignée, l'Europe des compétences est un concept révolutionnaire, enfin mis en œuvre par le rapport Draghi. Pourtant, maintenant, il faut des actions et une réelle volonté des États membres. Je cite deux éléments clés: le premier, c'est le

diplôme européen; le deuxième, c'est la reconnaissance automatique de tous les diplômes et des qualifications professionnelles.

Sur la question du diplôme européen, alors qu'il n'en est qu'à ses débuts et qu'il permettrait une harmonisation des compétences et la mobilité future de nos travailleurs, il se bute déjà à la résistance des États membres. Comment allez-vous faire pour lever ces freins?

Deuxième sujet: la reconnaissance automatique des diplômes et des qualifications professionnelles. Alors que nous travaillons depuis des années sur l'espace européen de l'éducation, qui doit être achevé en 2025, nous sommes loin d'être au bout. Là encore, quelle sera votre action dans ce domaine? Et je cite et souligne deux fois la question des compétences et des formations professionnelles.

Enfin, vous avez dit votre attachement à l'enseignement supérieur, et il n'est dans aucun portefeuille aujourd'hui. Je voulais avoir votre point de vue sur ce sujet.

(La Présidente retire la parole à l'oratrice)

1-0060-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – I believe in the European universities and obviously in a European degree. I know that we are talking also about, you know, academic autonomy and the autonomy of universities, the different positions of Member States in terms of moving a bit more ambitiously forward with university alliances, with European degrees and even with the automatic recognition of diplomas, but inside the Union of Skills concept and inside the European Education Area, I think that's what we must do. We must be more ambitious. It's a question also of political will from the Member States, not just of initiative, but I will put on the table the work that is necessary to be more ambitious in terms of automatic recognition and European degrees.

So what we are doing right now and what we should be doing in the future is to first ensure that the European Universities alliances have the chance to obtain a legal status, then to explore all the potential options that could be accepted by Member States in terms of the European degree, because there are options on the table. Some are softer, some are degrees per se, some include the European label. Let's look at all these options because the idea is to offer the students the acknowledgement that they have received a programme that is multi-campus, multi-research, multi-university and maybe they will return home, then have the right to stay.

And in terms of automatic recognition, on which we have a Council recommendation from 2018, I even looked at the Member States and how they are doing in terms of quality assurance, in terms of putting forward the system that allows for mutual recognition. Obviously, there are still a few countries in red and my intention is to work with each Member State, one on one, bilaterally, to gain their support, to gain their engagement and their commitment, so that we get through with these very important elements of the Union of Skills. So my work with the Member States will be key on aspects like that in order to deliver on a true European dimension of education.

1-0061-0000

Gabriela Firea (S&D). – Madam Commissioner-designate, I would like to ask you about the young Europeans as well: 1 in 6 people in the European Union is young. For them, the European institutions have set up programmes in the field of education, social and health, IT and digitalisation, for mobility and transport, equal opportunities.

How can we make sure that all young Europeans from the cities and from rural areas, from richer countries or from countries with slower progress, can access the programmes, including for increasing the birth rate?

1-0062-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – We need a Europe that looks at all territories, that looks at all regions, that looks at all backgrounds and all vulnerabilities and ensures fair opportunities.

And for the young people, this is more important than with any other, let's say, category, though they are our future. For them, we have put in place the Youth Guarantee, which has delivered actually for some 50 million young people in Europe in terms of an offer of employment or training and apprenticeships, so this kind of support was especially targeted for young people from vulnerable backgrounds or from regions or from areas where the precarity was stronger.

I want you to know also that in the future EU anti-poverty strategy, the first ever of its kind, the age dimension will be essential. I want us to clearly have in place responses to tackle youth unemployment and youth opportunities – children being also supported through the Child Guarantee – but I want us to look very closely at the young generation in terms of young people also with disabilities or from different kinds of minorities and communities, this is very, very important. So that's how I would see a response for you.

We cannot put in a silo the discussion about supporting youth: 'Okay, we we have the solution: we use Erasmus', 'We have the solution: we use the European Social Fund Plus'. No, they have to be present in the discussion, as I've mentioned, about potential legislation on workers' rights, on AI at work, they have to be present in the discussion about the mobility of work, and they have to be supported through the European Social Fund, the European Social Climate Fund in terms of energy poverty and so on and so forth. I want to mainstream their needs in all of our policies. That would be my answer for them.

1-0063-0000

Sunčana Glavak (PPE). – *Welcome to the European Parliament*. Jasno je da Europa ubrzava svoju digitalnu transformaciju i stoga smatram da je važnost medijske pismenosti i snažnih digitalnih vještina ključna kako bi mladi ljudi bili dionici suvremenog digitalnog doba.

S obzirom na ambiciozne ciljeve Akcijskog plana za digitalno obrazovanje 2021. - 2027., koje konkretne korake planirate poduzeti kako biste integrirali medijsku pismenost u školske kurikulume, osiguravajući da mladi ljudi budu osposobljeni za kritičko razmišljanje, procjenjivanje informacija, prepoznavanje dezinformacija i odgovorno upravljanje internetskim sadržajem?

I kako ćete podržati države članice u standardizaciji digitalnih vještina kako bi se osiguralo ono što nam je nužno potrebno, a to je dosljednost i kvaliteta, te koja će se mjerila koristiti za praćenje napretka i utjecaja tijekom trajanja plana?

1-0064-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Such an important question and topic, not just for our democracies, but for our resilience, for our security. Media literacy is critical and it has been shown so many times that those who lack it can be manipulated and can be victims. And we do not want that for our Europeans.

Indeed, we have the digital action plan, which is one tool through which the Commission is tackling, including aspects that relate to the curricula and the schools, digital education – which has obviously more components, not just media literacy, but overall digital education is an important aspect.

Education is something where we are supporting Member States, and we are financing them as well, through the Recovery and Resilience Facility, for example, we are financing training on digital solidly across many Member States, and this has to be told to Europeans. But we are also supporting Member States through expert groups because it is important if we're talking about, let's say, digital education, we might only think about the good side of it. But there is also the more worrisome part. If there is AI at work and there is AI at the education level, how safe is it? How do we manage it in terms of safety and protecting the intimacy and the rights of the children and those of the teachers?

So the expert groups that the European Commission and the services offer are working exactly on guidelines, on standards that will help teachers across Europe Member States, institutions in charge with education, to implement in a safe way, in a useful way, digital training, and also to make use of digital resources in a safe way, but also to stimulate them, to give them models, to integrate them in the curricula.

Again, we have programmes – we have Erasmus, one great example, not only that – through which we stimulate digital education, but standards are the most important.

1-0065-0000

Diana Riba i Giner (Verts/ALE). – Señora Mînzatu, usted ha reconocido —para seguir un poco con la pregunta que nos han introducido ahora— que la alfabetización digital y mediática, el multilingüismo y también las habilidades de comunicación son esenciales para navegar en esta complejidad que tenemos en este mundo globalizado. Esta conexión que tenemos entre educación, entorno mediático y digital y lenguas nos parece muy relevante. Precisamente hemos tenido un estudio, el estudio de STOA sobre la igualdad lingüística en la era digital —que encargó esta Comisión de Cultura—, que afirma que nos estamos precipitando *de facto* hacia una política monolingüe, que es el inglés, y que dejaría atrás al 60 % de la población europea, especialmente en el ámbito digital.

La brecha entre el inglés y todas las demás lenguas que son oficiales en el territorio europeo es enorme en estos momentos en el ámbito digital y mediático. Nos gustaría conocer su visión sobre cómo promover el multilingüismo.

1-0066-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Great question for someone who learned English just through the digital and television programmes.

Indeed, we have the ambition in the EU that our population will speak at least 2 languages besides their native language, and we are indeed falling a bit behind with this task and this ambition, but we must not give in on this 'temptation', let's say.

We have to work with our younger generation and with our students, and in a way make use of technology – of AI – in terms of making it more attractive for students to take up more languages, because virtual reality can do so much for teaching, including for teaching even Latin in the Roman Empire and even a language that will connect you with the space where that language is spoken. Especially important for very small – there are no small languages – but for regional languages, which are very important for the identity of those people.

So I am a supporter to enhance this part of our European identity, the multilingualism. It is essential to do it and, obviously, I think that the angle we should use is to use our funding and our policies and guidance to encourage the use of technologies to enhance the take up of learning of new languages. This is the way, I think, and not being a victim necessarily of the monolingualism that is happening due to technology.

1-0067-0000

Liesbet Sommen (PPE). – Good afternoon, Ms Mînzatu, thank you for this interesting discussion. Mental health: what actions are you planning to improve mental health and well-being of workers to promote healthier workplaces? Do you commit to put forward an EU action plan on mental health? When do you intend to put forward a legislative proposal on the right to disconnect and what will its main features be?

What new and revised occupational exposure limit values are you planning to propose? What is your position towards the list of prioritised substances by the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work?

Moreover, how do you plan to facilitate the everyday lives of especially cross-border workers? Would you agree that regulatory obligations on workers and employers are only a good idea if they are proportional to the goal that we want to achieve?

1-0068-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Yes, mental health, as mentioned in my responses previously, is so closely interlinked with platform work, is closely interlinked with the situation of our young generation being very exposed to the new media. So obviously, I think mental health should be holistically treated, on the one side in terms of the youth and children's rights, that is essential, but also in terms of adult support.

If we are talking about adults, we are talking obviously about safety and health at the workplace, and there we have, as you know, strong legislation in place. Obviously, legislation needs to adapt. We have an advisory committee working on that, but we need to look at the new challenges of the workers in order to be delivering new protections for their health, including their mental health.

So while on the quality job initiative I will clearly look into the psychosocial risk aspect, which is essential and has been taken up by several Members of this House, this is only part of the discussion in terms of approaching it. It has to be part of other types of initiatives as mentioned before.

In terms of how I will approach the updating of the rules concerning the safety of workers in the face of hazardous substances, again here we rely on strong legislation, on the advisory committee who is delivering and on my services to be a bit quicker on the way we update this legislation.

So, we have received the input from Parliament as well. We have the expertise on the table in order to devise ways into which we may quickly be able to update our legislation. This is the commitment that I can make, that in terms of hazardous substances, we will be more efficient and more agile to respond.

1-0069-0000

Νίκος Παππάς (The Left). – Στις γραπτές απαντήσεις αναφέρεστε συχνά στην ανάγκη ενίσχυσης των θετικών, τεχνολογικών και μαθηματικών επιστημών στο πλαίσιο του ευρωπαϊκού χώρου εκπαίδευσης.

Αντιθέτως, δεν γίνεται αναφορά στις κοινωνικές και ανθρωπιστικές επιστήμες, των οποίων οι πτυχιούχοι αντιμετωπίζουν προκλήσεις στην επαγγελματική αποκατάσταση λόγω της έλλειψης επαγγελματικών διεξόδων. Ποιες είναι, λοιπόν, οι προτεραιότητες σας για την ενίσχυση των ευκαιριών απασχόλησης στους τομείς αυτούς και πώς σκοπεύετε να υποστηρίξετε τις διασυνδέσεις μεταξύ εκπαιδευτικών ιδρυμάτων, επιχειρήσεων και δημόσιου τομέα για βιώσιμες θέσεις εργασίας; Τέλος, υπάρχει σχέδιο για την αναγνώριση της κοινωνικής και πολιτιστικής αξίας των κοινωνικών και ανθρωπιστικών επιστημών στην αγορά εργασίας της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης;

1-0070-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Yes, thank you. You are right, and discussion about promoting STEM is obviously relevant. We need experts. We need engineers. We need women engineers. We need labour force. And we need our people on board.

But we cannot ignore the arts part, and that's why I think that a STEM approach would be much more useful in terms of having an intersectionality, a cross approach when we design curricula that we are certain that while delivering for science, for technology, for maths, we are also including in those curricula critical thinking and an education for society, so societal education, which is clearly needed. And we are talking about learning languages a bit earlier. So this is clearly the approach that I have.

I do believe that a strong partnership between the education system, the businesses, the future employers is very relevant. We have one example, innovative even – the European Institute for Innovation and Technology, which the European Union is deploying, let's say. The EIT, who is doing this job of connecting through the skills academies, for example, in the green industries, in the battery and the solar, is doing this job of connecting the businesses with their opportunities, their needs, with the education and with the innovation part. So I believe that we have to continue to be a supporter of these types of partnerships.

As I've mentioned, beyond that, I think that it is very important that we support the vocational and educational training, which is a component where the business sector is very close to the educational path. And that way, we are sure that we are offering our children, our youth, the best of opportunities when they graduate and they go into society and in the labour market.

1-0071-0000

Marianne Vind (S&D). – Dear Commissioner-designate, the European Parliament has recently adopted a strong resolution on the mandate of the European Labour Authority (ELA). In which specific areas do you intend to strengthen the Labour Authority to ensure fair labour mobility and support for mobile workers in Europe?

According to principle five of the European pillar of social rights, 'employment relationships that lead to precarious working conditions shall be prevented'. Against this background, will you come forward with a proposal on regulating labour market intermediaries and on a limitation of subcontracting chains, which are often used to disguise employment relationships to avoid tax and social security payments, to escape legal responsibilities and to exploit workers? Such an initiative should complement the necessary introduction of mandatory social criteria and public procurement rules.

1-0072-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you. As mentioned, I think we need to take action in terms of mobility. As I mentioned, again, I'm committed to work on ELA – the European

Labour Authority's – mandate, to make it even more efficient, although I think we can see that though it's a young institution, it's delivering more and more. But the joint inspections need to deliver more in terms of protecting also third country nationals.

I am worried about what is happening with the Agency, and with the posting of workers. My greatest concern is that we need to have solutions in place for those that are coming from third countries to an entry country, whichever that may be, and then are quickly posted to another EU Member State where their rights are not respected, their rights are not protected.

So the idea is that I will be looking very closely into how we can make sure, or first see, that the current legislation is doing its job, and if more is needed, then take up on that. We'll look into also subcontracting practices. But also first let's assess what the current legislation is doing, if it's failing in terms of legislation or is not implemented fully in Member States.

On public procurement, as I've mentioned in my responses earlier, we need to be balanced. Social criteria are useful, but you also need to make sure that our companies are still agile and being able to invest. So I will have both elements while working with my colleagues in the Commission and the revision of the directive on procurement. But yes, be assured that mobility, with all these facets are on my table, are among my priorities, as in the speech, as I've mentioned, and they will deliver for Europe.

1-0073-0000

Pál Szekeres (PFE). – Tisztelt Biztosjelölt Asszony! Fogyatékos emberként különösen érzékeny vagyok a diszkrimináció minden formájára, és szeretném kérdezni, hogy tesz-e különbséget majd megválasztása esetén a parlamenti képviselők között politikai véleményük tükrében? A második kérdés, ami már nagyon sokszor elhangzott itt a fogyatékos ügyben: a sorstársaim úgy érzik, hogy a háború, a járvány és a migrációs válság okozta új helyzetben kevesebb figyelem és kevesebb támogatás jut nekik. Milyen konkrét stratégiája van a fogyatékosok munkába állása tekintetében? És még egy dolog: a munkaalapú társadalom. Én úgy gondolom, hogy ez egy alapvető dolog. Előnyben részesíti-e Ön a foglalkoztatás bővítését, a családi adókedvezményeket, a dolgozó fiataloknak járó személyi adómentességet és minden ilyen típusú ösztönzést a segélyekkel szemben?

1-0074-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – In terms of better supporting people with disabilities, especially to help them when they can enter the labour market, I think an important starting step is to look at the good practices of our Member States.

It's true that in some Member States, one solution that was successful is to allow people with disabilities to retain their social benefits and return to work and gain a salary, and thus they were much encouraged. This is, I think, one way to guide, let's say, politically speaking, and to learn from each other in terms of better supporting people with disabilities.

Again, I think that the tools that finance our vulnerable citizens, including people with disabilities, the programmes should be a bit more targeted and focused. I work with people with vision impairment through the European Social Fund Plus in Romania and we really managed through assistive technologies to reach some targets in terms of employment for some categories. So it's important to also look at our policies, our tools, our financing tools, and to target a bit better the needs of people with disabilities.

Obviously, the tool that we have on hand is the strategy for people with disabilities and through these strategies, we deliver all initiatives and all recommendations and guidance that the Member States should and can use.

But for me, what is important is that we also learn from from each other and I think that, in terms of the last part of the question, this is a good example, in terms of sure, tax benefits could be an example, but there are also other ways into which we can stimulate those beneficiaries to take up jobs.

But we also need, you know, through the disability package guidance for the employers so that they can adapt the labour force and we do that as well.

1-0075-0000

Georgiana Teodorescu (ECR). – Bună ziua! Cred că cetățenii europeni s-au săturat de discursuri politice demagogice, de promisiuni care nu ajung să ne facă viața mai bună. Românii, de exemplu, suferă din cauza sărăciei, a nivelului educațional deficitar, care de multe ori duce la abandon școlar, precum și a imposibilității de a-și asigura un trai decent. Avem nevoie de acțiuni concrete. Așa cum reiese din răspunsurile pe care le-ați trimis în scris, veți fi responsabilă și de Fondul social pentru climă, care, din ce înțeleg, va fi implementat din anul 2026, dar, pentru programarea sa, se începe munca încă de pe acum. Ne puteți spune cam despre ce sumă este vorba, cine vor fi beneficiarii acestui fond și cum vă veți asigura că acești bani vor sprijini în concret persoanele din cele mai vulnerabile gospodării?

1-0076-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Comisară desemnată. – Fondul social pentru climă este strâns legat de sistemul ETS2, de aplicarea din 2027 a principiului „poluatorul plătește”. Este o alocare generoasă, dar nu spun că suficientă pentru Fondul social pentru climă: ne apropiem de 90 de miliarde EUR – 87 de miliarde EUR, cu tot cu o cofinanțare din partea statelor membre de minimum 25 % și sigur că ele ar putea cofinanța mai mult. Este un tip de instrument pentru care statele membre acum pregătesc un plan de țară cu maniera în care își doresc să cheltuie, să investească acești bani pentru a atenua cel mai bine nevoile celor care vor fi afectați de sărăcie energetică, de sărăcie în transporturi, care vor fi vulnerabili la aplicarea acestui principiu, „poluatorul plătește”.

Evident, sunt bune practici pe care statele membre le pot alege, ele vor depune planurile până în iunie 2025. Pot alege să dea banii atât sub formă de vouchere de suport, transfer direct financiar către gospodăriile cele mai afectate de prețuri crescute la energie sau la alte servicii, dar pot fi investiți în eficientizarea energetică a blocurilor, a clădirilor, a sediilor de companii. Beneficiarii pot fi atât persoane fizice, cât și companiile care, evident, și ele trebuie să facă parte din această tranziție climatică. Și sectorul transporturilor va fi afectat, și atunci și pentru zona transporturilor vor exista investiții eligibile. Opțiunea este a fiecărui stat membru. Se pot face din aceste fonduri și investiții, să le spunem sistemice, în sensul de a investi în capacități de producere de energie verde, regenerabilă, solară, de a avea capacitate de stocare a energiei verzi. Așadar, este un fond care pentru România, apropo, înseamnă 6 miliarde EUR, care va sprijini mult, dar e nevoie de suport suplimentar pentru tot ce înseamnă tranziția aceasta verde.

1-0077-0000

Brigitte van den Berg (Renew). – Thank you, Commissioner-designate Mînzatu, thank you for pleading for a skills revolution. It is so necessary. The EU has been working on the Skills Agenda since 2015 and I wonder what especially vocational trained experts have really noticed it. I hope we

can make results as concrete as possible this mandate. I hope. But we have to put, then, vocational trained professionals at the heart of our policy.

So yes, let's increase the numbers of vocational trained participants in the Erasmus+ program, and let's invest in the centres of vocational excellence to increase the cooperation between business and educational systems.

But most of all, most important of all, can you commit to making skills truly transferable and diplomas of vocational training recognised across Europe by the end of this term? We have more competences than we have in higher education. Let's make a better result than we made for higher education.

1-0078-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you, honourable Member van den Berg. The skills portability was put in my mission letter for this exact reason that it cannot be 'business as usual', that there have been attempts, and we have had some stepping stones and some achievements, through the European Year of Skills, and we are having on the table the skills agenda.

But we need to talk more clearly about portability, and that is the essence and will be the essence or the angle through which I will approach this initiative in the next five years.

Do I want to deliver in five years? Obviously, my intention and my energy is committed to being as fast as possible, but this is the work that we deliver together with you and with the Member States and with the social partners as well. I would be glad also to have a very sectoral approach in terms of, okay, let's support that for certain specific areas in the beginning where there is increased need and where we can really show impact and inspire more action.

What I can say is that, as I mentioned in my opening speech, I want to make European vocational training a bit more stronger, and the European dimension and the degree recognition clearly puts that, let's say, in the front seat. This is the work that we will do together. I cannot commit on delivering by the end of the mandate, but can commit that this would be my ambition.

Obviously it is also important to note that we can stimulate better, let's say, intake or better uptake of the vocational education or training systems, not just through Erasmus but, again, through cohesion policy. We have the RRF. We are investing a lot of money so we can in exchange better, let's say, target our ambitions in terms of also skills portability.

Quality assurance will be of the essence guidance on the framework of diplomas. We can deliver that, just as we've delivered for higher education.

1-0079-0000

Giusi Princi (PPE). – Signora Commissaria designata Mînzatu, da già donna di scuola mi ritrovo con quanto da Lei affermato riguardo al ruolo strategico ma poco attrattivo degli insegnanti, essenziali invece per la competitività, la coesione sociale, la formazione del capitale umano europeo e la qualità dell'insegnamento.

Alla luce delle attuali carenze dell'insegnamento, però, dovute a una classe docente non adeguatamente formata e remunerata, Le chiedo di approfondire meglio come intende coinvolgere gli Stati membri per concretizzare l'agenda europea degli insegnanti e per migliorarne la credibilità sociale e la progressione di carriera.

Le chiedo anche: alla luce di un mondo del lavoro in continua e rapida evoluzione e trasformazione – si è parlato tanto di competenze – può specificare meglio come e se intende rendere centrale la formazione del personale docente, essenziale invece nello sviluppo delle competenze degli studenti?

1-0080-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you for this question, for it all starts with the teachers. Whatever we have discussed so far, it is fully dependent on how many teachers are available, if they are motivated, if the working conditions are right, if they remain in the job, and if they continue to train, to deliver with AI, with generative AI and so on and so forth. So the teacher's agenda, which is in my mission letter, shows the importance that we put on on this topic.

Obviously, looking at how we improve the salaries and the working conditions of teachers is something on which we work together with the Member States. We do have shortages of teachers in 24 Member States, so almost everywhere, with more problems on an ageing teachers generation, let's say, in many Member States.

The political commitment that we need to have together is one that is necessary if we want to discuss about competitiveness, about STEM, about better basic skills for our young generation, and about the adults that can reskill and upskill.

On the one hand, I think that it is important that we not only commit politically with Member States, but we as Commissioner, you can count on me from this side. Use the European Semester instrument. Use the instruments in which we look at how the policies of the Member States are aligning in terms of employment. Use the upward social convergence framework in order to also give recommendations and stimulate our Member States to invest where it is needed, and in the career of the teacher, it is needed.

True, we have through Erasmus also teachers, academies, tools, which we enhance the way that they are being prepared and motivate them supplemented. But we are talking here about systemic measures and for those systemic measures we need to be a bit more ambitious. So, important aspect that I will work on very closely with Member States and with you.

1-0081-0000

Nikos Papandreou (S&D). – So far, so good. I like what I've heard. You get an A+. I'm standing out of the room for a second. For me, we're in the same party, so I like your answers. You seem to know what's happening.

I want to continue from the previous questioner's line of thought about the teachers. Most of the focus has been on the those who are taught. But the important thing is the teachers, as you point out, and there we have lots of problems. You said there'll be more response to that. The working conditions are very important.

And let me add one more new thing over the last 15 years to the working conditions: the teachers, besides competing with bad infrastructure in the schools, besides the energy of young children, they have to compete with iPhones, with smartphones. Some countries are banning them in schools. I think that's something we need to consider – these ideas about how to deal with the new world.

1-0082-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Do you want the kids of Europe not to vote for us any more? None of us will ever see daylight. We are all addicted to technology – adults and young generations alike. We must acknowledge that.

But yes, I think that we have to flip the way that we look at AI in education. On the one hand, as we mentioned, it's about it being potentially addictive to young generations and them not paying attention to the classroom, but we can use it to make the classroom, to make the curricula, more attractive. That is our challenge.

Obviously, now we are discussing generative AI and how it generates content. And there are a lot of sensitivities, but we have the AI Act, which clearly states that it is high risk when we are discussing deploying technology in schools. With that in mind, we are taking care not to go overboard with using technology. I think we are forced to deploy technologies in education as well in terms of making education more attractive and the teaching career easier.

With the right checks and controls, with the right measures to ensure rights, to protect teachers, to protect intimacy, to protect confidentiality and all these aspects, we need not to avoid what technology could mean for our education. That is the balanced approach.

So this is the path that teachers can use also. And for them we have to deploy obviously financing and guidance – the guidance that is already provided by some experts in our services and the Commission in terms of trustworthy AI and education. We have to take AI on board and technology on board, but put in place safety and rules that protect. This is the only way forward.

1-0083-0000

Ελεονώρα Μελέτη (PPE). – Κυρία ορισθείσα Επίτροπε, θα ήθελα, σας παρακαλώ, να μου πείτε πώς σκοπεύετε να αντιμετωπίσετε τις σημερινές προκλήσεις του ανθρώπινου δυναμικού της υγειονομικής περιθαλψής στην Ευρώπη και τις επείγουσες ελλείψεις εργατικού δυναμικού σε επαγγέλματα υγείας. Δεσμεύεστε να συνεργαστείτε με τον ορισθέντα Επίτροπο για την Υγεία για την εκπόνηση ενός σχεδίου σε επίπεδο Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης για την κρίση του ανθρώπινου δυναμικού στον τομέα της υγείας, το οποίο θα περιλαμβάνει συγκεκριμένους στόχους, σημεία αναφοράς, μέτρα και χρηματοδότηση για την αντιμετώπιση του συγκεκριμένου προβλήματος αλλά και του brain drain; Και εφόσον, λοιπόν, το πρόβλημα του brain drain απευθύνεται κυρίως σε νέους, θα ήθελα να μου πείτε ποιες πολιτικές και ποιους πόρους θα μπορούσατε να χρησιμοποιήσετε για την τόνωση της απασχόλησης των νέων και αν αυτά τα μέτρα θα μπορούσαν να αφορούν και γυναίκες, από τη στιγμή που οι γυναίκες αποτελούν μεγάλο μέρος του δυναμικού του υγειονομικού προσωπικού.

1-0084-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you. In terms of preparedness, there are certain workforce sectors that are critical: healthcare, teachers, carers, and so the healthcare sector and the healthcare workers, I look at what we need to do for them, even from that perspective, that it is important and essential that we deliver.

We have to deliver on multiple levels: obviously, I will work with the Commissioner for Preparedness – because the preparedness side is of such importance, as COVID has shown to us – but in terms of strategic autonomy as well.

So we have to look in terms of how we help them have their diplomas, degrees, skills better recognised – although they are automatically on the automatic recognition procedure – but to support them in this aspect as well.

I think we have to invest in their training and again, European Social Fund Plus is investing in skills. In some countries – mine included, where I come from – we invested on an operational health programme deeply. ESF money for skills: we can do that, that is really essential.

Obviously, I think that we should use the concept of the European university alliances in order to somehow balance the brain drain – this for me is essential – in order that some of the alliances, some of universities could tackle closer the idea of training or our priorities for training in the health sector with all that technology can offer, with all the newest, you know, responses in terms of health.

With the university alliances, I think that we offer our potential healthcare workers the opportunity to train in the best universities, but still remain in those countries and work, or at any rate have a more balanced distribution of healthcare workers across the Member States. So beyond skills recognition and investment in these workers, I think the European university alliances targeted on medical could be an interesting point, and I will work on it.

1-0085-0000

Μαρία Ζαχαρία (NI). – Οι δείκτες της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης εξαρτώνται από τις επιδόσεις των κρατών μελών. Γι' αυτό η Επιτροπή, σε συνεργασία με το Ευρωκοινοβούλιο, θα πρέπει να καθιερώσει ομοιόμορφα πρότυπα μέσω κανονισμών. Η Ελλάδα έχει καταργήσει από το 2012 τις ελεύθερες συλλογικές διαπραγματεύσεις και ο κατώτατος μισθός καθορίζεται με απόφαση του υπουργού, παραβλέποντας την ευρωπαϊκή οδηγία για επαρκείς κατώτατους μισθούς. Ποια είναι η γνώμη σας για την ουσιαστική συμμετοχή των εργαζομένων και των αντιπροσώπων τους στις συλλογικές διαπραγματεύσεις, δεδομένου ότι το δικαίωμα τους στην ενημέρωση, διαβούλευση και συμμετοχή αναφέρεται στις απαντήσεις σας, αλλά δεν αναφέρεται ως προϋπόθεση η συναίνεσή τους στην υπογραφή της συλλογικής σύμβασης, και πώς θα παρέμβετε στην Ελλάδα που καταστρατηγεί την Ευρωπαϊκή οδηγία; Επιπλέον, η Ελλάδα έχει καταργήσει το οκτάωρο πενθήμερο και την Κυριακή αργία επιβάλλοντας 11ωρη εξαήμερη εργασία, με αποτέλεσμα οι εργαζόμενοι να στερούνται ελεύθερου χρόνου, ισορροπίας οικογενειακής και επαγγελματικής ζωής, ξεκούρασης με επιπτώσεις στην ευημερία τους. Τι θα κάνετε γι' αυτό;

1-0086-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Through the Minimum Wage Directive, the European Union offers alternatives, offers models of intervention that best suit the economic and labour market realities of each Member State. And while collective bargaining is obviously the goal that is clearly set in the directive in terms of offering the best support and the best resources to workers, the adequate minimum wage is also a very efficient tool that protects workers.

Through the directive, there are options and alternatives, an algorithm through which each Member State – depending on the productivity, the level of the medium income in the country, the situation of the economy – can establish and then adjust a formula for that minimum income.

That is the role of our directive, and that is the intervention that the Commission has provided in terms of offering options for Member States, but also making sure that those Member States protect their workers and protect their income.

So, in terms of the duration of work, we have legislation in place – legislation that stipulates how the workers are protected in terms of minimum duration. There is obviously a change in the world of work and many countries experiment with longer or shorter working weeks. They are all responses to the changing and shifting realities of the way in which we work and in which the generations now and the future generations wish to be engaged in the world of work.

The essence is that we have the right protections in place for the time that is worked in terms of working conditions, in terms of fair remuneration, and for that we have the adequate minimum wage income and other directives to ensure that.

1-0087-0000

Annamária Vicsek (PFE). – Madam Commissioner-designate, in your opening remarks you said that Erasmus+ is a key example of what Europe does best. Then, as an answer to your colleague's question, you said that you intend to do more and finance more the vulnerable. So my question is about a particular vulnerable group.

Due to the political disputes between the European Commission and the Hungarian government, a significant part of the Erasmus+ funds were blocked, resulting in more than 10 000 Hungarian university students being excluded from the programme. After Ms von der Leyen's speech in Strasbourg in connection with the Hungarian Presidency's programme we can clearly say that the debate between Brussels and Budapest is not professional, but of a political and ideological nature, whereas the European Commission seems to treat Hungarian students as collateral damage in this political blackmailing.

Applying the principle of collective culpability and discrimination on national grounds simply for being Hungarian raises serious concerns. How do you plan to solve this situation?

1-0088-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Europe wants its Hungarian students back on track. And for that I am pleading with Hungary and inviting you to solve those legal issues that have shown that you are not committed to all the European values that join us together in this Union.

We are financing and we are supporting and delivering policies throughout our Europe, but obviously it is of the essence that we commit and stay strong by our shared values. Academic freedom, academic independence, autonomy: that is essential.

So whether Hungary is able - it's on its doorstep - to solve the problems or the breach in which it is, concerning the public trust universities, let's say, and then allow the flow of money to return and the students to get this mobility opportunity – it is up to you. And I wish and I hope that the Hungarian Government really understands that.

Otherwise, I'm happy that Erasmus money for Hungary is in Hungary, and that the resources have been redirected to vocational and educational training according to the desires and the priorities of the Hungarian people.

But what is essential for us is that we stay strong by our common values. And if we stay strong, then no one will have to get hurt, especially not the young generation.

1-0089-0000

Alicia Homs Ginel (S&D). – Señora comisaria propuesta, quería empezar esta intervención agradeciendo a la Comisión Europea la urgencia con la que está tratando las solicitudes de ayuda hechas por parte del Gobierno de España por la terrible DANA que ha afectado a Valencia y a otras regiones y, por supuesto, mandar todo el cariño a todas las familias afectadas.

En relación con la estrategia europea de lucha contra la pobreza, su contribución al plan europeo de vivienda asequible y viendo los datos de Eurostat que muestran que los precios de la vivienda en

la Unión Europea han aumentado un 48 % de media en menos de diez años y más del 100 % en algunos Estados miembros, quería preguntarle qué iniciativas legislativas tiene previstas en relación con la estrategia contra la pobreza y el plan de vivienda y si contempla medidas específicas con respecto a las mujeres, a las personas jóvenes y a las personas en situaciones de vulnerabilidad en este contexto. También, ¿cómo va a abordar la necesidad de garantizar una vivienda digna para los hogares de ingresos bajos y medios y a erradicar el sinhogarismo?

Y, finalmente, en relación con la Garantía Infantil Europea —como sabe—, este Parlamento ha estado pidiendo un presupuesto específico de al menos veinte mil millones de euros y quería saber si tiene la intención de reforzarla mediante esta financiación.

1-0090-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – So just be aware that I've heard 80 % of the question in Spanish, and the translation did not work. What I want to take from your question, that is of the essence, and thank you for giving me this opportunity, is that we need to connect the first ever European affordable housing plan with our anti-poverty strategy, because there's a lot of discussion, and it is correct that we need to have an anti-poverty strategy that addresses the raise of the prices, the increase of prices, even for categories that are now at the extreme poverty.

But let's face it – for me at least, the important aspect will be to make sure that we offer solutions in terms of investment, in terms of, you know, funding, public, private, state aid and all kinds of models that we will put forward that, first of all, tackle the those that are more in need.

The young generation, for me, it's important we have to send this message that our affordable housing plan and our strategy against poverty will first and foremost look at the young generation, their need for housing. This is essential. We need to tackle homelessness. This is also of the essence. We need to tackle the needs of people with disabilities. So this interconnection is essential. So thank you for giving me this opportunity to send this message.

I will work with the Commissioner in charge of energy and housing in terms of the best tools, policies – I'm not calling them legislation. I think here is more about funding, but obviously there will be probably discussions about changing state aid rules, as you know, as it's been in the political guidelines of President von der Leyen. We need to do more in terms of housing.

In terms of Child Guarantee, we have some EUR 9 billion spent now. Some Member States who have the children poverty level above the European average do have to earmark 5 % of the ESF+ money. I want to strengthen the Child Guarantee. I will not commit now to an amount, but we need to get money from more resources, because having meals for children means resources from more places than just the ESF.

1-0091-0000

Sabine Verheyen (PPE). – Commissioner-designate Mînzatu, the promotion of our culture and cultural heritage is also part of your mission letter. Recent national media reports claim that after having been county councillor for the Braşov County and the day before you took office as deputy prefect of the same county, you bought a house that is a historical monument in the centre of Braşov. Later on, you extended the house, doubling the size without any of the legal permits required.

Can you confirm that you extended the house without the legally required building permits and authorisation from the Romanian Ministry of Culture, as the ministry confirmed, according to the media reports? With this in mind, how do you see your future role as Executive Vice-President of

the European Commission, also responsible for culture, which includes also the protection of our cultural heritage? How do you value the legislation and promotion of the protection of cultural heritage?

1-0092-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you for this question. These are the facts: I have bought a 60 m² house in which I was born, in which my family had lived as a tenant since 1974. So 50 years ago, my mother rented this social house, 60 m², a house that was owned by the State during the Communist regime, with no paperwork in order. A house that was never a historic monument. My mother is 90. The house was built during my mother's time.

I have, from the Ministry of Culture, official paperwork from 2011 and from this Monday, yesterday, attesting that the house is not a historic monument. It was built in 1949. Again, yes, we extended it because it was 60 m². I was sleeping with my mother. I slept with my mother in the same bed until I was 17 and my father in the in the kitchen. We did extend it after I bought it in 2009 because that's why we bought it. It wasn't a historic monument, but we bought it in order to modernise it, to have good conditions. We were talking about housing: we had a leaky roof, we didn't have hot water so obviously we did submit for permits in the City Hall, *certificat de urbanism*, as it is called in Romania. But, indeed, we only finished the procedure after the extended version of the house in 2011 was finished. We entered into full legality, we paid taxes, we are in the registry from 2013, it was in my declaration of assets always.

This is my statement on what the situation had been at that point. But just to make it very clear, this building is not a historic monument, it is a 60 m² house in which my family lived, and I lived until I was 32. Now it's 110 m². We have three bedrooms. And we have the paperwork from the Ministry of Culture that attests that it is not.

1-0093-0000

Benedetta Scuderi (Verts/ALE). – Signora Commissaria designata, ho ascoltato con piacere le Sue risposte sull'importanza del programma Erasmus, sulla necessità della transizione delle competenze e sul diritto di restare e, in generale, apprezzo molto la Sua volontà di mettere i giovani al centro di tutte le politiche del Suo portafoglio.

Dobbiamo però riconoscere che l'accesso al lavoro non è ugualmente garantito per tutti i giovani. Il 40 % dei tirocini nell'Unione europea non è retribuito, un numero che si alza notevolmente per gli Stati del Sud o alcuni dell'Est.

In un Paese come quello da cui provengo, l'Italia, i tirocini non retribuiti possono essere reiterati diverse volte, rendendo pressoché impossibile l'accesso al lavoro a chi non si può permettere di lavorare gratis.

Questo Parlamento ha richiesto di mettere fine a questa pratica: eppure la proposta formulata dalla precedente Commissione è stata insoddisfacente.

La mia domanda è: Lei è d'accordo sulla necessità di mettere fine ai tirocini non retribuiti a livello europeo, così da permettere uguali diritti e opportunità e garantire effettivamente il diritto di restare? Ha intenzione di lavorare su questo fronte? E, se sì, come pensa di farlo?

1-0094-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Yes, I intend to work with you on the quality traineeships proposal, and I'm looking forward to delivering together. Traineeships are, I think, one of the best ways for our younger generation to enter into the labour market, but they should not be abused and they should not be exploited in this sense.

So obviously, following the call that has been done by this House and your work – and I really appreciate it, now we have a proposal on the table. It is a proposal on which work is still being performed. I think we need to look carefully at the situation of different sectors in different Member States. These differences, this personalised approach, might be useful looking at public sector traineeships, private sector, different industries. But overall, we have to agree on common definitions, on common standards and on common guidance in what a traineeship is, what the effort by the trainee is put forward and how he is protected and how he is compensated for that work.

That being said, as mentioned, my desire is that we work together to deliver on the quality of traineeships. We have a proposal. It's our work. You define your mandate. Together with the Council, we will be able to deliver the protections that our young generations expect from us.

1-0095-0000

Marlena Małag (ECR). – W tytule Pani portfolio znajdują się ludzie, a przewodnicząca von der Leyen wśród Pani zadań wymieniła solidarność międzypokoleniową. W związku z tym chciałabym zapytać, w jaki sposób zamierza Pani wspierać rodziny? Wiele problemów społecznych, takich jak samotność, wykluczenie czy problemy psychiczne młodych ludzi bierze swój początek w osłabieniu roli rodziny. Do tego dochodzą wyzwania materialne, takie jak rosnące koszty życia spowodowane zbyt ambitną polityką klimatyczną Unii Europejskiej. Zatem jakie przewiduje Pani działania zmierzające do wsparcia rodzin, wzmacniania więzi międzypokoleniowych, by przeciwstawić się także samotności w starości? Jak zamierza Pani współpracować w tym obszarze z komisarz Šuicą, gdyż wzmocnienie roli rodziny to niewątpliwie kluczowy element w przeciwdziałaniu negatywnym trendom demograficznym.

1-0096-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Yes, families are essential. I'm talking not only about maybe the families that we imagine but single mothers, they are also regarded by your question.

We need to look at how families can be supported. My angle is, first of all, in terms of the burden of care. It's not a burden. Sometimes it's a labour of love, but for many it is a burden in terms of intergenerational fairness – the younger generation taking care of their grandfathers or fathers, women that are especially working or supporting members of their family, doing a type of work that is unrecognised and not protected, unpaid, obviously.

So I think that the best angle or the best way to present our work – the work of the Commission – is that we will focus on the situation, the working conditions of those that are in the care sector, let's say.

I want us to have a European care deal, which means looking at who are the people who are taking care of those vulnerable? Are they paid? Are they protected? Do they have a pension in old age? Or for the years in which they are taking care of someone those years disappear and they are left with no protection? And we see what happens with old age poverty.

Talking about old age poverty, it's essential to again admit this gap between the pensions of women and the pensions of men. Almost 30 % poorer are the women receiving pensions than the men. Poverty is striking them ever more. So this is one aspect of work that I will focus on.

In terms of energy poverty, I want to tackle families and households through the Social Climate Fund. I mentioned earlier that we can use it to offer subsidies to those that are affected by poverty, and have them in the European anti-poverty strategy clearly individualised.

1-0097-0000

Христо Петров (Renew). – Уважаема г-жо Минзату, неформалните методи на обучение, чрез спорт или изкуства например, могат да бъдат много полезни за борбата с неравенствата, за демократичното образование, както и да научат децата какво представлява Европа.

Стълб 1 на Еразъм + и акредитацията за училищното образование са добро начало, но прекалено много млади хора са изправени пред бариери - финансови, информационни или дискриминация. Смятате ли, че тези методи на учене чрез спорт и изкуство могат да бъдат подпомогнати с повече проекти за международна мобилност за деца в училищна възраст?

1-0098-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Interesting question about mobilities for young children. We are talking a lot about Erasmus and what it is doing in terms of mobility, especially for students and the VET students. But also, as you have seen in my mission letter, I hope that we will work together on what is the European schools alliance. I have high hopes and high ambitions in terms of developing this model of cooperation and mobility between schools that is somehow inspired by what the European university alliances are already doing in terms of allowing children to access classrooms, teachers, resources, experience and gather skills, critical skills, horizontal skills – not necessarily talking here about curricular or sectorial – in other countries, in other regions. That's what creates, in the end, our Europe. That's what strengthens the European identity.

While we understand that when talking about schools in Member States, the national education system and the regions have their own rules in place, I think everyone wants to have the chance to have more Europe, a more European dimension in the education of children, because that means quality first and foremost.

So I think the European school alliance is the direction through which I would want to channel attention in terms of making a better offer for our young generation, showing them how the classroom can be and how the teaching experience can be in other parts of Europe and allowing them to come back enriched. I would be very happy to work with you on this topic.

1-0099-0000

Zsuzsanna Borvendég (ESN). – Írásbeli válaszában úgy fogalmazott, hogy fontosnak tartja Európa közös történelmének oktatását, amely az egységre törekedne a sokféleségben. Ennek kapcsán kérdezem, hogy mi a véleménye az Európai Parlament 2024 januárjában elfogadott állásfoglalásáról, amely a történelmi tudatról szól? Egyetért-e azzal, hogy a nemzeti történelem helyett az európai és a globális történelemre kerüljön át a hangsúly a tagállami történelemkönyvekben? Vagy úgy véli, hogy a nemzeti identitás megőrzése érdekében elengedhetetlenül fontos a nemzeti történelem alapos ismerete? Olyan Európát vizionál-e, amelyben a felnövekvő generációk patriotaként együttműködve intézik közös ügyeiket, vagy egy globalizált és uniformizált gondolkodású, homogén társadalmat szeretne kinevelni?

1-0100-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – I totally think that we need all dimensions. We are Europeans because we are Hungarian, because we are Belgian, because we are Romanian. This is essential to have in our schoolbooks and in our programmes. All the aspects of our diversity is essential. It is equally essential not to neglect our European identity in our teaching as it is important to have the national or regional dimension. Our identities are multifaceted, and that's what we should teach our children, in a spirit of tolerance and of inclusion and of understanding the other cultures, the other nations, their other specificities. That's how I think we should go about it.

But obviously we are here in Brussels, we are at the heart of Europe, we are trying to move forward the European project. And while each Member State designs the curricula in terms of history and geography, local or national, we here have to take care of explaining to all generations what it means to be European, what it meant in 1945, what it meant in the 1960s, what it meant to be a Romanian in Europe in the 1980s when I was born, what it means to be in France in 2000, and so on and so forth. So all of these dimensions interlock. We have to show this intertwining, and we have to enrich each other, let's say, and learn from our experience and find the European dimension that unites us. And through Erasmus, I think we are doing that very well, and we should continue to do that in the future.

1-0101-0000

Henrik Dahl (PPE). – Between 2017 and 2019, the Romanian Government, led by your party, the Social Democratic Party, introduced several legislative initiatives that were widely regarded as undermining the rule of law and the independence of Romania's judiciary, drawing substantial criticism from European institutions.

As a member of the Romanian Parliament's European Affairs Committee during this period, how did you assess these proposed laws with regard to respect for European values, such as the rule of law and independence of the judiciary?

What actions did you take to ensure that the proposed legislation respected EU values?

I also have a clarifying question concerning your house in Braşov that was referred to earlier. Can you confirm today that the media report referred to by my colleague, Ms Verheyen, was lying, and that the Romanian Minister of Culture, who was quoted in that media report, was lying?

1-0102-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – I would maybe answer the second question. Through official documents, one from 2011, one from yesterday issued by the Ministry of Culture, the building in which I have lived all my life is mentioned not to be a historic monument. It is in the historic centre of Braşov, but it is not a historic monument.

I have the documents and I can obviously offer them. One of the documents, the 2011 document, is actually in the media report that was invoked, I think you can also see it there, but I have the other one, which is from yesterday.

I have indeed been a Member of Parliament in Romania between 2016 and 2020. My role there was to be a rapporteur and to support EU funding legislation, decisions and programmes in the area of industry and services. Then and now, my commitment to a rule of law is strong, is clear.

Obviously inside the same party, inside the same parliament, inside the same political group, you can have different opinions, you can have different positions. I was not in position to determine the direction of the whole party. I was responsible for my own votes and actions, obviously.

But I have always been a supporter of EU values and the rule of law is obviously one of the most important. We work with it every day in terms of EU funding. So it's part of, let's say, my mission letter even before coming here.

This is the short answer that I could offer. My track record obviously is for you to analyse in more depth if you wish so.

1-0103-0000

Özlem Demirel (The Left). – Ich hätte eine Anmerkung vorweg: Und zwar ist das historisch so das erste Mal, dass wir in der Institution EU keine Kommissarin für Arbeit und Soziales haben, aber einen Verteidigungskommissar. Im Portfolio von Frau von der Leyen steht sehr viel über die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit, die Interessen der Konzerne im Moment, aber wenig – auch in Ihren Reden – über soziale Belange und die Rechte der Arbeitnehmerinnen und Arbeitnehmer. Ich sage vorweg: Für uns als Linke ist das genau die entscheidende Frage!

Sie haben zu Recht gesagt, dass die Zeiten von Unsicherheit geprägt sind: Armut steigt, steigende Ungerechtigkeit. Sie sind für das Thema zuständig, sagen, dass Sie uns eine Armutsbekämpfungsstrategie vorlegen wollen. Ich möchte es aber ganz konkret wissen: Wollen Sie in dieser Legislaturperiode eine Richtlinie für ein Mindesteinkommen voranbringen? Denn tatsächlich wäre es etwas Konkretes, und wir sind der festen Überzeugung, dass wir starke soziale Sicherungssysteme brauchen, um Armut wirklich ernsthaft zu bekämpfen. Das einzige Instrument, das die EU hat, ist eine Richtlinie. Wird es von Ihnen kommen?

1-0104-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – It is clear that, at EU level, the solution of protecting through a minimum income is strongly considered because we have a recommendation on a minimum income, and we are looking and assessing how Member States are or are not implementing it. And while I'm looking, with the EU anti-poverty strategy, at all tools, minimum income combined with activation, with social services, I've tested them a lot with the European Social Fund Plus back in my home country. So the combination is always the key in terms of protecting certain vulnerable poor households or groups. We also need to think about legislation that will be approved and implemented on the ground.

So, we have a clear political signal about the commitment to deliver on a legislative level from how the recommendation is implemented. That's how I want to start. As I mentioned in the previous question, I look at the recommendation and I see the Member States that are slow performers, that are not using the minimum income tool. I discuss with them. We understand why yes, why not, how we can improve our approach here in Brussels, so that what we deliver in legislation or in another type of tool will really be enforceable, because otherwise we risk being very theoretical about what could be done, and that will not effectively be put in place. That is my response.

The minimum income is one option. I could not commit now to a directive, but since we have the recommendation in place and we have the tool to understand in each Member State what is done or not done, from there, we can really start a solid work, because the strategy on anti-poverty will include more tools than one to tackle poverty. But we have to be very, very efficient about how we go with this tool, so it can be a reality for those that need it, not just the discussion here on our hallways, in our meeting rooms.

1-0105-0000

Li Andersson, *Chair of the EMPL Committee*. – Thank you very much. And now I will give the floor to the invited committees, starting with Lina Gálvez, Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.

1-0106-0000

Lina Gálvez, *Chair of the FEMM Committee*. – Thank you Vice-President-designate for your presentation. I'm really very glad to hear that you said at the very beginning that gender equality will be at the core of your work. As you know, women are underrepresented in many well-paid and well-considered jobs, especially green and digital transitions. So which specific actions will you make to have more women in those sectors? Obviously it will be good also to have more men in care and education sectors in order to reduce gender labour segregation based on stereotypes.

You have mentioned social conditionality in funds. Will you include any gender conditionality? Also, what measures do you propose to close the remaining gender pay gap? How will you monitor the implementation of the pay transparency directive? And how you will include in new legislation, like the right to disconnect or artificial intelligence? And just the current strategy, if you could tell us how it's going to reduce gender inequality.

1-0107-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – And this is the correct question. The gender dimension is at home in many of our policies and my work will not only be about the quality jobs initiative and that's it, but ensuring that while we create jobs in the solar, in the renewables industry, we make sure that there are equal opportunities for men and women.

So we will have this gender dimension in all the policies that we deploy. This is my desire. This is the way to go forward. It's not only about the green job initiative. It's also in terms of looking at how the funding is deployed, the European Social Climate Fund for energy poverty for transport poverty. It will be very important to have a clear monitoring of how to programme the measures in order for them not to accentuate the gap between men and women.

We have a deficit of democracy, and that's the reality. We have to understand it. When women are less present in certain sectors, in certain jobs, in certain public positions and in certain authority positions. And this is the view that I have, and we have to stick by it. In terms of monitoring the legislation in place, the answer is the same that I offered before. I will work with Member States with all openness to understand why and how they are implementing the Transparency Pay Directive, all the legislation concerning paternal leave, let's say, the Work Balance Directive.

That's how we can progress and we might build on more ambitious, let's say, measures, by understanding how the Member States are deploying gender dimension policies in their territories. But the idea is that, obviously, the Care Deal is one that will mostly support and empower women workers because they are lowest paid in those sectors, that is for sure.

1-0108-0000

Marina Kaljurand, *Vice-Chair of the LIBE Committee*. – Good afternoon, Madam Vice-President and Commissioner-designate. As regards your task to guide the work to embed a new culture of preparedness in the Union, you explain in your reply to LIBE's written question that you will work closely with the Member States. What opportunities do you see for deepening operational and

coordination activities between different Member States' authorities in order to improve civilian preparedness at the EU level?

And my second question: your mission letter further requires you to contribute to the efforts on legal migration. What role do you see for legal migration in matching EU labour market needs, for example to address the challenges in the long-term care workforce? And what new tools and legal instruments do you envisage to facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications?

1-0109-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – In terms of preparedness, key is coordination and key is whole-of-society, whole-of-government, all-hazard approach. Those are the elements that we take from the initial report. They are reflected in my mission letter, with the EU union of preparedness. I will work on those with the Commissioner on preparedness, obviously.

But we are building clearly on what we have in place already in terms of pools of common resources that are offered by Member States, in need of civil protection, in terms of rescEU, which is one common joint tool financed by EU funds, where Member States voluntarily offer to access and to create the facilities for reactions to crises.

We need also to have in mind – and that's why I mentioned preparedness in a wider sense in my opening speech – that we need to develop preparedness in a wider sense, societal and individual. We need to also think about skills for preparedness, about the competences of every individual in terms of being able to react, but also about those critical competences in health, let's say, or even teaching, which are critical for us to face more complex crises. We are not just talking about climate; we're talking about cyber, hybrid. We're talking about critical infrastructures, and so on and so forth.

So what the EU needs to do more is to better connect the dots. While Member States have their own systems in place, we need to make sure that the European Union institutions, its capacities, are resilient and prepared in the face of crises. We need also to be able to deliver on an individual level in terms of the skills for preparedness.

As concerns legal migration, I've mentioned the EU Talent Pool, which is a managed tool that will match third-country nationals looking for a job with the demand side of the employers – a good tool to support our labour markets and those that are coming to work in Europe.

1-0110-0000

Nela Riehl, *Chair of the CULT Committee*. – We'll now start our final round of questions. I will give the floor to the political groups in reverse order, starting by Ms Zsuzsanna Borvendég, ESN.

1-0111-0000

Zsuzsanna Borvendég (ESN). – Vicsek Annamáriának adott válaszával kapcsolatban szeretném ezt a témát kiegészíteni azzal, hogy nem csak az Erasmusból hagyják ki a magyarokat, hanem a Horizont programból is. A magyar kutatók nem tudnak nemzetközi projektekbe bekapcsolódni, holott ez a vita igazából a Bizottság és a magyar kormány között zajlik, és mégis a diákokat és a kutatókat büntetik emiatt. Én ellenzéki magyar politikusként is elfogadhatatlannak tartom, hogy politikai fegyverként használják az egyetemistákat a magyar kormány ellen. Nem gondolja, hogy válaszában inkább arra kellett volna helyezni a hangsúlyt, hogy a hallgatók diszkriminálása nélkül próbálják rendezni a politikai vitáikat? Biztos benne, hogy ez az út a legmegfelelőbb?

1-0112-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Together in the European Union we respect our legislation, our regulations, for example our financial regulations, which stipulate very clearly under which conditions the programmes that are funded by EU taxpayers' money are deployed in a certain Member State. And those rules and those values are very clearly known and stipulated by each beneficiary Member State. It's the responsibility of each Member State to simply respect those rules and those values in order to continue to benefit from the programmes and from the resources that, again, are being fuelled by EU taxpayers' money.

First and foremost, as I've mentioned, we are a Union of values. If we compromise on one value just for a minute, then we compromise on everything. So while as Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness, my wish and desire is that throughout the EU we have as many beneficiaries and as strongly supported by all our instruments Erasmus, Horizon and all others.

The essence, however, is that the Union that we share is a strong one and is one of strong democratic values. And this is where the ball is, again, inside the courtyard of the Hungarian Government. And I'm sure it can be, you know, swiftly resolved if they just remember where they are inside this European Union.

1-0113-0000

João Oliveira (The Left). – Cara Senhora Comissária indigitada Mînzatu, fez várias referências concretas à educação e formação dos trabalhadores, qualificações profissionais, mobilidade laboral. A pergunta que lhe faço é: e a melhoria das condições de vida dos trabalhadores nos seus países? Que compromissos concretos assume com o apoio a políticas nacionais de aumento geral dos salários, e não apenas de aumento do salário mínimo, de valorização das carreiras e profissões, de valorização da contratação coletiva?

Falou-nos também do direito a desligar. Esta questão é muitas vezes tratada como se fosse uma realidade nova, como se não existissem já hoje regras sobre a organização do tempo de trabalho e com limites aos horários de trabalho semanais e diários. A pergunta que lhe faço é: que medidas vai tomar para apoiar políticas de regulação dos horários de trabalho e de controlo e fiscalização das regras que já hoje existem?

Sobre a pobreza, pergunto-lhe se vai manter a meta do Plano de Ação do Pilar Europeu dos Direitos Sociais de 2021, que deixa pelo menos 78 milhões de pessoas na pobreza.

1-0114-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you. In terms of how the EU is supporting the working conditions of workers, let's just look at the Directive for Platform Workers where what has been delivered is fantastic. The protections for those that were not protected, those that were considered self-employed, and so on and so forth, are very important. And this is an example of what we are already doing.

And my job will also be to guard the EU legislation implementation to make sure that the EU Adequate Minimum Wage Directive, and that the Platform Workers Directive, for example, are adequately implemented in due time in all Member States. That is how we can translate our work here, the directives in this case, into concrete protections for our workers.

I also have the role to look at how the models of work are changing, and in terms of duration of work, if the current directives regulating the work duration are still relevant and what we need to do more or better in order to adjust to the new models. But again, let us not think that because we've

adopted a work-life balance, directive, or gender transparency pay directive, an adequate minimum wage directive, the problem has been solved. It has not. It has to be transposed into national legislation, and then the citizens feel the concrete results of our work.

In terms of our Porto goals for the European Pillar of Social Rights, on poverty, we are doing the worst. And that is the reality. Growing employment but decreasing worse on poverty. What does that mean? Maybe in-work poverty, first of all, something that we need to tackle. That's why we do the anti-poverty strategy. We need to resource, to target more money towards fighting poverty and homelessness. This is how we need to react.

1-0115-0000

Katrin Langensiepen (Verts/ALE). – Madam Commissioner-designate, my group is proud to have put the end homelessness by 2030 goal on the map, and here I have three questions. Will you ensure that homelessness will be a specific priority in the anti-poverty strategy, and will the MFF earmark funding to take action in relation to it?

Second, how will the European Platform on Combating homelessness be included in the new action plan to deliver on the European pillar of social rights, and will it have a dedicated budget?

And last question, will you guarantee that some of the investments planned under the affordable housing plan will go towards housing homeless people, for example, by scaling up the housing first principle in Europe?

1-0116-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, Ms Langensiepen. So, for some questions I cannot commit, so I will start with what I will support with all my dedication: that in the new European affordable housing plan, which is steered by my colleague, the Commissioner for Energy and Housing, we will have a dedicated and strong chapter on homelessness – because I've mentioned it and I think it's a complex phenomenon, but still, I think that we can conquer it. We have this ambitious target to eradicate by 2030. Very ambitious, I know, but it's a fight, and it's a battle that I want us to fight with all our energies.

I will be also a strong promoter in the next MFF and in all the resources that we have to support measures that tackle homelessness. I will use all resources already put in place, and the platform for homelessness, I think, is a tremendous example of a mechanism where we gather together organisations and resources and expertise and connect network in order to be able to have, really, an impact in fighting this phenomenon, to work with cities, with regions.

My ambition on homelessness is to go beyond discussion with Member States, to discuss with with local authorities, with regional authorities, where the phenomenon can best be tackled. I will obviously be part of the Commission that will design the next MFF. It's a work that we will do together. We will legislate on it, obviously, and as I've mentioned, it's first 'what do we want to achieve?' and then establish the allocations and the resources and the money. But the housing first principle, accompanied by social services, obviously, is the way to go in tackling homelessness.

1-0117-0000

Irena Joveva (Renew). – Dear Commissioner-designate, a very few concrete questions. Some of them are maybe repeating a little bit, but they are important.

In your written answers, you've stressed we need to tackle the root causes of poverty, but there was little to no tangible proposals. So I would like to know how exactly do you plan to tackle it within the EU anti-poverty strategy?

Following that, a good instrument for eradication of poverty would be an adequate minimum income on which the Council recommendation has been adopted two years ago. Will you commit to proposing a binding EU instrument to ensure adequate minimum income levels?

Additionally, the cost of living crisis keeps affecting our citizens, making it increasingly harder to have a quality life while pushing more and more people at the risk of poverty. What will you propose to offset this trend? Could you propose or support establishing an EU-wide obligation to adjust wages to inflation?

1-0118-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – In terms of how exactly we will, let's say, push forward our strategy on anti-poverty, I will give two examples.

First of all, on the quality jobs initiative, I want us to look very closely at in-work poverty. At the moment, statistics would say that it's one out of ten Europeans that work that are in risk of poverty. But, you know, we have to go deeper than that, I think. So this is one concrete, let's say, type of initiative that will have this aspect clearly marked.

Then it's the European Child Guarantee, which I've mentioned. It's about fighting the vulnerability, the poverty of children, which is connected to the household and their parents. I mentioned that I want to make it even stronger. So, this is another tool that I want to clearly link to our new anti-poverty strategy.

In terms of the minimum income, the answer is similar to what I've mentioned before. We need to look at a combination of measures that are having enough political support to become legislation and to be enforced. This is what the most vulnerable expect from us.

That's why I want to talk to Member States and understand how they implement the recommendation, why they do it, why they don't do it, what is the barrier, and then see how our EU level of ambition can offer more.

In terms of cost of living – I'm not sure if I followed your question until the end – but again, the Social Climate Fund is one example where we will be able to intervene with transfers, if the Member States want, to the households that are affected by energy poverty. This is the type of example to which we can support it.

But the European tools such as the European Semester and the social convergence framework can help us recommend policies and stimulate policies in Member States in better fighting poverty.

1-0119-0000

Ивайло Вълчев (ЕСР). – Г-жо Мънзату, когато говорим за достъп до програми като Еразъм+, аз разбирам достъпа като възможност всички да участват равноправно, без да се създават изкуствени бариери. Според мен истинският процес на приобщаване не може да бъде постигнат чрез налагане на квоти, които всъщност могат да ограничат достъпа на определени групи и да не отговарят на нуждите на всички социални и географски общности. Квотите звучат като връщане в миналото и в комунизма, съгласна ли сте?

С оглед на това, че във вашето портфолио попада предложението за новата програма Еразъм +, а в портфолиото на Валдис Домбровскис предложението за изпълнение и опростяване на регулации, какви конкретни мерки в общо сътрудничество може да предприемете за лесен и равноправен достъп за всеки европейски гражданин без бюрократични пречки?

1-0120-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Working with my College Commissioners, I hope to put my expertise in cohesion policy in place in order to help make life simpler for European companies and for European citizens. In Erasmus, we have an example: the accreditation of schools, which makes the entire application process easier. In the European Social Fund Plus, we have an example: the simplified cost options, which are making life easier for the authorities using those money.

In terms of discussing how we can make Erasmus more accessible to learners, obviously I've mentioned some examples of what we can do. We can do it by synergies or topping up with other types of EU instruments. Quotas are obviously a back-and-forth tool because you need to be dynamic. You need to be connected with the response of the beneficiaries when you reserve a certain allocation, when you say that you will earmark this for that. This is a very delicate decision in which you have to factor many, many aspects.

Erasmus in itself is such a generous programme. It supports VET, it supports pupils, sports, youth, higher education, cooperation and mobility alike. So I think we need to keep it flexible and agile in order to be able to really get the impact that we want from it. We – and this is a personal opinion – don't want to make it more rigid and to complicate in a way its implementation.

But we should be open again to see that if we haven't been able to become more ambitious on a certain target, like vulnerable beneficiaries, what has not worked has to be changed. With this I agree.

1-0121-0000

Juan Carlos Girauta Vidal (PFE). – Señora Mînzatu, me gustaría agradecerle su presencia aquí, porque usted es el ejemplo perfecto de lo que denunciamos desde hace meses. Populares y socialistas son lo mismo, votan lo mismo, creen en lo mismo y seleccionan a las mismas personas. Usted no iba a ser la comisaria europea responsable de empleo. Su compañero Victor Negrescu, socialista, era el elegido; pero populares y socialistas llegaron a un acuerdo para eliminarle. Y todo porque él no era una mujer.

Dejémonos de hipocresías. No es nada personal, pero, señora Mînzatu, populares y socialistas la eligen a usted por cuota. Y tendrá que explicar por qué alguien obtiene un puesto tal, un trabajo tal, mediante una cuota. ¿Sabe usted que en España uno de cada tres jóvenes no encuentra trabajo? Tendrá que explicar esa cuota.

¿Puedo seguir hablando?

1-0122-0000

Li Andersson, *Chair of the EMPL Committee*. – (In response to Mr Girauta Vidal) No. The time is up. I'm sorry, there was one minute for the question, so we have two minutes for the answer.

(Mr Girauta Vidal left the meeting room)

1-0123-0000

Roxana Mînzatu (S&D). – Half of our society are women, half are men. In school, women and men perform equally well, in universities as well. Once they are in the labour market, once we are discussing about public positions, the women disappear. They simply disappear. In spite of the fact that they are half of the population of wonderful academic outcomes, they somehow disappear from our public arena. And when they disappear, the mentalities of societies say 'oh, but women should not lead'. They are maybe victims, and then domestic violence emerges.

My point is that although not all solutions are, you know, the perfect ones, when you see historically that half of the population is not represented, you must, first of all, acknowledge that you have a problem and that is the essence, because that is a deficit of democracy, having women absent from the public representation of authority. When women are absent from public representation of authority, we do not have functional democracies. And democracy is the founding principle of the European Union. And I for one, not talking about myself, definitely support competent men, women – everyone competent, but a balanced gender approach is one that really strengthens our democracies. Without it, it's just a fake democracy and we all need to do our part.

That being said, the essence, I think, is that competence and professionalism must prevail, and I hope that they always will, and it's your job also to make sure that the competent prevail.

1-0124-0000

Hannes Heide (S&D). – Geschätzte Frau designierte Kommissarin! Bildung ist die Grundlage für den Erwerb von Fähigkeiten, Fertigkeiten und Kompetenzen. Gerade in der Situation, in der sich die Europäische Union befindet, kommt der Bildung eine große Bedeutung zu, und sie muss ein Schwerpunkt sein. Es wäre unverständlich, ja inakzeptabel, wenn der Begriff Bildung nicht im Portfolio vorkommen würde.

Wir haben von vielen Zielen gehört: Chancengleichheit, Zugang zu Bildungsangeboten, Sprachen, digitale Kompetenzen; die politische Bildung wurde noch nicht ausreichend gewürdigt; Berufsbildungen, die Übertragbarkeit und Anerkennung von Qualifikationen und Abschlüssen. Ein großer Faktor in diesem Zusammenhang wird es auch sein, den Europäischen Bildungsraum umsetzen zu können. Bildung ist ja nationale Kompetenz, in Ländern wie Österreich und Deutschland sogar innerhalb der Bundesländer, und es wird einer Kraftanstrengung auch mit den Mitgliedstaaten bedürfen. Welche konkreten Maßnahmen setzen Sie, dass alle diese Ziele des Europäischen Bildungsraums auch Realität werden können?

1-0125-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – The European education area is the acknowledgement and the political commitment from Member States and the like that we can obtain more through the European dimension, and that beyond what is already done inside the Member States' competences, we need also the European dimension. We need the fruits of cooperation, of mobility, the skills that are produced, the exposure, the learning for democracy. So obviously, the role to take forward the European Education Area starts from here, from a common commitment with the Member States.

That having been said, we already have strong tools that can help us move forward. I have mentioned the European University Alliances because I think that they are the blueprint for the education of the future. They are the kind of experience that a student in Europe, no matter that he is in Poland or he is in Sweden or Finland or in Belgium or Italy, will be able to have from his own home, from his own campus, the ability to access campuses, teachers, professors, libraries, curricula and training programmes inside the concept of a European university.

This is done in in steps – steps that mean that we have to take on board institutions, quality framework for education in each Member State, discussing with all the academic institutions as well. We are financing, we are supporting them through Erasmus. We are guiding the work in terms of designing the standards for a joint degree. This is the kind of work that needs to be done to enhance our European education area.

I think that the Union of skills will only strengthen the European education area, because we will go beyond diplomas and qualifications. We break it down into skills, into concrete abilities of people that need to be recognised and portable in the internal market.

1-0126-0000

Zoltán Tarr (PPE). – Madam Commissioner-designate, the relief is close. I think I'm the last one to ask a question.

You have highlighted initiatives like the skills portability initiative and the 2024 Council Recommendation on Quality Assurance and Recognition. But I would also like to ask what specific steps will you take to address the uneven progress among Member States?

Additionally, why do you emphasise STEM education? How do you view the role of STEM in enhancing Europe's innovative power? In these times of social challenges how can the arts contribute to creativity, resilience and human-centred thinking?

1-0127-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, Commissioner-designate. – We need to speed up the proposals put forward in the Council recommendation in terms of mutual recognition of diplomas. Again, I've looked at the situation of each Member State and my approach will be one by one, and even looking at sectors and specifically because we have technical universities, we have arts universities, we have different types of education and we have different types of recognition of quality. We need to look at the European level models of recognising quality in order to be able to provide more in terms of recognition of documents.

The portability of skills is an initiative where I want Member States on board, again, to go to more concrete abilities of workers, of students, of VET students, in order for them to be first validated, although they were acquired outside an education institution, maybe informally, and then recognised and used. This is of the essence.

In terms of – and it is critical – not leaving the arts somewhere in the shadows: we are talking so much about STEM these days because we need we have this shortage in the labour market. But I've mentioned, I think, we need that inside the curricula that is being recommended, designed – and we have again the skills academies, we have all these tools – we need to pilot and to recommend a synergy between STEM and the arts in a way that allows them to be delivered in a package. Because without critical thinking, without the ability to function socially and to have the general culture that is necessary, you cannot really make the best use of your own talents, potential or even knowledge. So I'm going to support that approach in our working in the Commission.

1-0128-0000

Li Andersson, Chair of the EMPL Committee. – Dear colleagues, as this confirmation hearing is now coming to an end, I would like to invite the Executive Vice-President-designate to make a brief closing statement of no more than five minutes before the conclusion of the meeting.

1-0129-0000

Roxana Mînzatu, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you, Chair, and thank you, honourable Members, for your patience. I can imagine that it is an unusual hearing, having so many topics inside the same hearing. I feel you. I hear you. It's not easy to allocate enough time to debate social rights, quality jobs, education, mobility, preparedness. I understand that.

But as I've mentioned in the beginning, there are some power concepts to which I really commit to work with my full energy. Quality jobs, first of all, because they encompass all the concerns that were raised here, starting from stress and mental health, to AI at work, to a right to train. These are all issues that I will consider with the social partners in deploying the quality jobs roadmap and initiatives in this aspect.

Also preparedness is such an important element. I hope that you have heard the connection that I've made with education, and I hope for us to work together in terms of putting education even higher up on our priority list, beyond the role of supporting a function that we have for the Member States.

What I can say is that I've been a Member of Parliament in Romania. I've shortly been or I am your colleague now. If confirmed – that is obviously up to you and I'm looking forward to seeing your decision – you can count on me to be present, to discuss, to take up on your initiatives, for me to brief you with the intentions, especially where there are sensitive aspects, where there are complex issues, where the answer is not black and white, for working for people and for rights is never black and white.

We are in a competition and in this competition the Commission needs to strike a very, very delicate yet strong balance between being innovative, having strong industries, cutting red tape for SMEs, making life simpler for authorities, but also making sure that our Europeans don't get poorer, that our Europeans can have a decent life from their wage, that our young generation finds their path in life in Europe – start their unicorn, start their dream job, have their flexible type of work life pathway.

With this commitment, I really, really tell you that I've enjoyed our dialogue, and I'm hoping that, if confirmed, we will have a tremendous work together.

1-0130-0000

Nela Riehl, *Chair of the CULT Committee*. – Thank you very much, Ms Mînzatu, for this exchange. Thank you to all the Members and to the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the invited committees for the questions, and thank you also to the staff who actually made this hearing possible today. We will proceed now to the evaluation of the Commissioner-designate, and I will ask the coordinators to meet *in camera* without delay.

1-0131-0000

Li Andersson, *Chair of the EMPL Committee*. – Thank you. The confirmation hearing is now closed.

1-0132-0000

(The hearing closed at 17:38:28)