

EN
E-002070/2019
Answer given by Ms Thyssen
on behalf of the European Commission
(10.7.2019)

The Communication on more efficient decision-making in social policy¹ concerns the five social policy matters subject to unanimity voting in Council and special legislative procedures.

These matters are: non-discrimination²; social security and social protection of workers³; the protection of workers where their employment contract is terminated⁴; the representation and collective defence of the interests of workers and employers⁵; and conditions of employment for third-country nationals legally residing in the EU⁶.

From the perspective of the Commission, it would be important to consider the use of the general *passerelle* clause⁷ to facilitate decision-making on non-discrimination and the adoption of recommendations on social security and social protection of workers in the near future. For the other three areas mentioned above there seems to be no clear case at present for using the relevant *passerelle* clause, but the Commission remains open to review the situation in the future.

The Communication does not cover language and education policies, which are already subject to qualified majority voting and the ordinary legislative procedure. The potential activation of the *passerelle* clause in social policy does not therefore have any bearing on linguistic and cultural rights of EU citizens.

In the 2019-22 Work Plan for Culture adopted in 2018, the Council reiterated that cultural and linguistic diversity are key assets of the European Union and their protection and promotion are central to cultural policy at European level. One of the concrete initiatives included in the Work Plan is that the Commission will convene a Working Group of Member States experts on the topic of multilingualism and translation, to start work in 2020.

¹ COM(2019)186.

² Article 19(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)

³ Article 153(1)(c) TFEU

⁴ Article 153(1)(d) TFEU

⁵ Article 153(1)(f) TFEU

⁶ Article 153(1)(g) TFEU

⁷ Article 48(7) of the TFEU