

## MJR speaks at the Prague Social Europe Conference

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Maria João Rodrigues participated in the concluding panel of an international conference on 'How to reduce inequality and ensure balanced growth in diverse Europe', organised in Prague at the beginning of this autumn's political season. The event was opened by the Czech Prime Minister, Bohuslav Sobotka, addressed by former EU Commissioners László Andor and Vladimír Špidla, and brought together centre-left economists and politicians from several EU countries. MJR emphasised that: "If we want to overcome growing political divisions in Europe, we need to re-launch a European strategy for growth and jobs. That is not possible in the current situation without repairing and rebalancing the Eurozone: We need to re-build a win-win game between Member States."

She continued: "We must update the set of key social standards we need for economic prosperity and for reduced inequality. This includes universal access to quality healthcare, individual job-search support, good-quality childcare and education. We need stronger efforts for preventive social investments, e.g. in childcare and healthcare. But their realisation will of course depend on re-launching growth and investments at much higher level."

"With the new Commission settling in, Europe is slowly reviving its overall strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Of course growth must be based on solutions not for the past, but for the future - with greater resource efficiency and full use of digital technologies. The most important reforms are in education systems, innovation systems, energy efficiency – not labour market flexibilisation or privatisation. We also need to ensure stronger internal demand in order to support growth, which depends on decreasing social inequalities."

Currently there are clear gaps between European countries regarding their capacities to invest in a new, sustainable growth model. But with greater solidarity within and between countries, based on a strong common strategy, Europe can again start investing in a prosperous and more stable future."