

Context

16 January 2018

Jobs, jobs, jobs, jobs: the work continues!

My fellow citizens,

I wish you a happy 2018 and good health, happiness and success for you and your loved ones.

More than ever, our determination will be buoyed by enthusiasm for making a difference.

I would like to take this opportunity to review the journey we have made so far.

We made an unprecedented choice in 2014.

At every moment, we have denounced untruths. Step by step, as a team, we have assumed our responsibilities. We have spoken the truth, and held nothing back. We have demonstrated the relevance of our solutions.

We have firmly disqualified institutional issues for this legislature. And I personally see to it that they remain off the table. For the first time in several decades, a federal government is able to dedicate every second of its mandate to working on social, economic and security solutions.

What a contrast after the 541 days of institutional crisis that had completely paralyzed the country and tarnished its image on the international stage.

And the results can be seen!

Our economy has never been so dynamic. Never before has our social security protection been so robust. Our country has never been so strong.

In three years:

- The public deficit was divided by three (from 2.3% to 0.7% of the GDP);
- 176,500 jobs were created;
- Low and average wages have been increased by more than 100 Euros per month on average, the equivalent of a thirteenth month;
- The minimum pensions increased by 92 EUR per month for salaried employees and 160 EUR for the self-employed;
- The Government increased the social integration income by 92 EUR for single people, by 122 EUR for people with dependent family, and by 61 EUR for cohabitants;
- The cost of unemployment fell by 1.5 billion EUR while healthcare expenditure increased by 3 billion EUR.

For all of the main benchmarks, our country has regained its attractiveness and its rightful place on the

European and international stage. This should make us proud and encourage us to build up our strength.

This is a unique moment. Some people envisage a 2% growth rate. We must seize this opportunity.

Today, it is necessary to speed up the pace of reforms. Standing still is not an option. Everyone must benefit from growth. That is one of the goals of the broad reform of corporate taxation, which has just been passed by the House of Representatives.

This reform will amplify the economic strength of our companies, mainly the smaller ones. For the first time, the corporate tax rate has dropped from 33.99% to 29% and it will fall to 25% by 2020. For SMEs, the rate is now set at 20% for the first 100,000 Euros... A shot in the arm for all those who create jobs.

In 2018, our leitmotiv will be to expand our reforms. More purchasing power, more competitiveness, more social protection. Consolidating and boosting job creation are the government's DNA.

Jobs, jobs, jobs, jobs.

Our ambition is also to relaunch the investment policy in Belgium.

The aim is to bring together 60 billion Euros of public and private funding for targeted and strategic projects in three key areas: the digital agenda, mobility and energy.

Security of supply, affordable energy for families and businesses, and meeting our climate targets are the cornerstones of the energy pact to be concluded in 2018. The Nuclear Phase-Out Act was confirmed in 2015 and must be implemented.

Our vigilance with regard to security and combating terrorism has remained intact. Since January 2015, we have implemented unprecedented budgetary reforms and expended unprecedented funds to ensure the highest possible level of protection.

I salute the courage of our law enforcement agencies, our police officers and our military personnel, who make every effort to fight terror threats every day.

We will never compromise on our core values. We are constantly strengthening our actions.

Current events have also highlighted the complex issue of asylum and the migration policy. I want to clearly state my willingness to maintain a policy of protecting our borders and preventing a 'pull' of refugees. A firm yet humane policy based on the work of our government departments and respect for administrative and judicial decisions. No jungle of Calais in our country but respect for human dignity.

Concerning repatriations to Sudan, an investigation is currently under way, which will be submitted to Parliament. In the meantime, forced repatriations to that country have been suspended.

The choice we made three years ago is bearing fruit: a focus on social, economic and security issues. More purchasing power, more competitiveness and more solid social protection. Unemployment undermines social security. Our reforms ensure our system of solidarity remains affordable.

- we had promised a tax reform for low and medium wage levels, and this reform is now a fact;
- a 20% rate for SMEs has been introduced;
- the minimum pension for the self-employed at the same level as that of employees has been achieved;
- incarceration punishments for the most serious crimes are now there;

- pensioners allowed to work without wage restriction has also been achieved;
- and a great many other reforms.

Work continues. We still have more than 400 days to take action. We are going to step up our efforts. I will not let anyone else determine the government's schedule or agenda.

No untruth or polemic will cause us to deviate from our course. For employment, investment, social cohesion and security.

I am determined.

Persistence and keeping a cool head in all circumstances are our best assets for achieving our goals.

You can count on me.

I wish you a very happy 2018.

CHARLES MICHEL

Prime Minister

Source URL: <https://premier.fgov.be/en/jobs-jobs-jobs-jobs-work-continues>