

Brussels, 4 December 2025
(OR. en)

16464/25

EMPL 544
SOC 830
SAN 812
ANTIDISCRIM 126
GENDER 211
TELECOM 460
CYBER 369
DIGIT 264
EDUC 490
MI 1019
COMPET 1307

COVER NOTE

From: Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director

date of receipt: 4 December 2025

To: Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

No. Cion doc.: COM(2025) 944 final

Subject: COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS
Quality Jobs Roadmap

Delegations will find attached document COM(2025) 944 final.

Encl.: COM(2025) 944 final



Brussels, 4.12.2025
COM(2025) 944 final

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

Quality Jobs Roadmap

1. BUILDING EUROPE'S COMPETITIVENESS THROUGH QUALITY JOBS

Today's geopolitical and geoeconomic upheavals, global competition, trade dependencies and the transformation of the European industrial base are weighing on growth and stability. As companies struggle to remain competitive, workers feel the impact of global crises, higher cost of living and rapid change affecting their lives and careers.

For decades, the EU's unique social market economy has delivered well on business opportunities and worker protection. It has shown resilience through major shocks - notably the COVID-19 pandemic, the energy crisis, inflation and the cost-of-living surge - protecting millions of businesses, people and jobs, and today employment rates are at record high. The EU must do what it takes to make sure it remains the best place to live, work, invest and do business.

Structural changes require structural solutions for a competitive and fair growth. Quality jobs are central to achieving this. As highlighted in the Draghi report on EU competitiveness ⁽¹⁾ higher productivity goes hand in hand with improved job quality and increased labour market participation. Access to quality jobs also strengthens territorial, economic and social cohesion, allowing individuals to enjoy a "right to stay" and thrive in their local communities and supporting long-term economic participation across regions.

The **Quality Jobs Roadmap** ('the Roadmap') is a renewed commitment to fostering quality jobs in a competitive economy. It outlines initiatives to align employment policy with the needs of a fast-evolving economy while remaining grounded in the principles of the European social market economy, social progress and full employment. Trade unions and employer organisations play a central role in this endeavour. As reaffirmed in the Pact for European Social Dialogue ⁽²⁾, signed on 5 March 2025, the Commission remains committed to strengthening social dialogue at all levels.

European Social Partner involvement in the preparation of the Quality Jobs Roadmap

Between April and June 2025, the Commission engaged in an unprecedented consultation process with social partners, both at European and national levels. In total, the consultation mobilised about 200 organisations across the EU, generated over 100 written inputs and involved beyond 50 discussions across Europe. ⁽³⁾

At the EU level, all 88 recognised European social partners were consulted through dedicated meetings, the cross-industry Social Dialogue Committee and the 44 EU Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees, resulting in 11 joint contributions and 32 unilateral ones.

At national level, dedicated consultations were organised in all 27 Member States.

⁽¹⁾ Draghi M. [The future of European competitiveness](#), September 2024

⁽²⁾ European Commission and European cross-industry social partners, [Pact for European Social Dialogue](#), 5 March 2025.

⁽³⁾ [EMPL - Library](#) to repository with inputs.

There is no one-size fits all approach to job quality. The complexity of the challenge is reflected in the Employment Committee (EMCO) opinion of June 2025⁽⁴⁾ covering multiple dimensions of the quality of jobs, including earnings, working conditions, collective bargaining coverage, up- and re- reskilling.

The Roadmap focuses on the areas where EU action is mostly needed: creating and maintaining quality jobs in the EU, modernisation and fairness in the world of work. It strives to support resilient productivity increase by fostering quality jobs that attract and maintain talent of all generations, particularly in the context of climate, technological and demographic transitions. In view of its important dimension for advancing quality jobs, supporting workers through transitions, and safeguarding Europe's resilient productivity, the Roadmap will support the Competitiveness Compass, acting as an enabler for Europe's competitiveness.

The Roadmap also emphasises key enabling factors in a business-friendly environment such as enforcement of existing social rights, quality services across regions, adequate funding and reinforced social dialogue and collective bargaining.

2. CREATING AND MAINTAINING QUALITY JOBS IN THE EU

Across industries, companies are facing accelerated transformations, compounded by a fragmented global landscape and unpredictable trade policies that threaten value chains. A strong and innovative industrial base – supported by a skilled, adaptable workforce and a commitment to buy European – is key to remain competitive and sovereign globally.

Creating quality jobs requires an environment where businesses, including the self-employed, start-ups and small firms can innovate, grow, attract investment and talent. To stay competitive while upholding high labour standards, businesses need a regulatory framework that is clear, proportionate and innovation friendly. This includes reducing administrative burdens, improving access to information and support tools, while ensuring high social and employment standards. Social partners also play a key role in identifying practical solutions that respond to needs of companies across Europe.

In this spirit, the Commission has proposed to simplify EU rules and reduce administrative burdens, and it is exploring better support for micro-enterprises in enforcing EU law. It is also proposing action to help startups and scaleups access talent and create quality jobs⁽⁵⁾.

Industry of the future

The Clean Industrial Deal is geared towards transforming decarbonisation and circularity into a growth driver for European industries, including SMEs. In this context, the EU Strategic Dialogues with the steel, metal, chemical and automotive industries, have provided essential input by identifying structural challenges, including global overcapacity, unfair trade practices, and high energy costs.

⁽⁴⁾ Council of the European Union, note from the Employment Committee, [Opinion of the Employment Committee on the dimensions of job quality](#).

⁽⁵⁾ European Commission, [EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy](#), 28 October 2025

The EU is also working on measures to strengthen EU strategic capacities, including a Battery Booster package, an Industrial Accelerator Act, with a first "made in Europe" public procurement criterion and a Grids Package. Furthermore, the "Choose Europe" initiative aims to attract top scientists and innovators to the EU.

Skilled people to drive job transitions

Skills and quality jobs are key drivers of EU's growth. The recently adopted proposal for a Council Recommendation on Human Capital⁽⁶⁾ as part of the Semester Autumn Package explicitly highlights the crucial role of human capital and future-oriented education and skills in enhancing the Union's competitiveness and strategic autonomy, strengthening preparedness and supporting sustainable prosperity. It calls on Member States to 1) reverse the negative trends in basic skills, 2) prioritise science technology engineering and mathematics at all levels of education, and 3) invest in data to build better intelligence about labour market needs. In this context, it is essential to tap into the potential of the more than 50 million people in the EU who remain outside the workforce—most of whom are women. Fully unlocking this talent pool would help the EU maintain its competitiveness. The Union of Skills places a strong emphasis on gender equality, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields, and aims to bring 1 million female students into STEM programmes by 2030. Supporting older people to update their skills, stay in the labour market or pass on their experience can turn demographic change into a source of social cohesion and shared prosperity.

The Skills Guarantee will help workers in restructuring or at-risk sectors remain in employment by supporting them to transition into strategic growth areas. This initiative is eligible to receive support via the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) and piloted under the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand of the European Social Fund (ESF+).

There will be a growing need for a skilled workforce in economic activities related to sustainable product design, reuse, remanufacturing and recycling of materials, as well as in cleantech and bioeconomy. The New European Bauhaus Academy will accelerate up- and re-skilling across the construction ecosystem, equipping professionals with the skills needed for a carbon-neutral, circular and beautiful built environment.

It is also crucial to ensure more agility in the labour market through easier recognition of skills across borders. The Commission will propose a Skills Portability Initiative to simplify and facilitate the recognition of skills and qualifications, including via strengthened digitisation, also for third-country nationals. The EU will set up a Talent Pool and enhance Talent Partnerships to attract skilled third country nationals in shortage occupations. The upcoming EU Visa Policy Strategy will include measures to facilitate the arrival of top students, researchers, and skilled workers. Digital skills, including advanced digital skills, are essential for Europe's competitiveness and for creating quality jobs. The EU still faces a significant shortage of ICT specialists, with a persistent gender gap. To

⁽⁶⁾ European Commission, [Council Recommendation on Human Capital in the EU](#), 25 November 2025.

address this, the Commission has invested EUR 400 million through the Digital Europe Programme to expand specialised higher education programmes, short-term trainings, and Digital Skills Academies. In addition, in the period 2021–2027, digital skills are supported by Erasmus+ with a total investment that could exceed EUR 6 billion and of EUR 1.2 billion under the ESF+. Under the NextGenerationEU, digital skills are supported with an estimated EUR 28 billion.

Restructuring framework and collective engagement for trust and opportunities

Timely restructuring decisions combined with anticipation and mitigation measures allow companies to remain viable in evolving markets.

Better application of the EU Quality Framework for Anticipation of Change and Restructuring is needed. Under the Clean Industrial Deal, the Commission has committed to discuss with social partners a framework for fair transitions, anticipating change, quicker intervention, and implementing the information and consultation framework.

The Commission will conduct a study on corporate restructuring practices to assess whether and to what extent applicable rules allow startups, scaleups and innovative companies to adapt and innovate.

Strong worker involvement at company level is the trademark of Europe’s democracy at work. It is key for fair change management and anticipation. Effective implementation of the EU legal framework ⁽⁷⁾ across all Member States is necessary. To assess their effectiveness in supporting workers and business through transitions, the Commission is gathering evidence on the implementation of the directives on information and consultation, collective redundancies and transfers of undertakings.

In addition, the Council endorsed key messages on the implementation of the 2022 Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality ⁽⁸⁾. The new European Fair Transition Observatory, to become operational at the beginning of 2026, will strengthen the evidence base and ensure active dialogue with key stakeholders on just transition aspects.

Reforms and investment conducive to quality jobs

Reforms and investment to promote quality employment require combined efforts by the EU and the Member States. On the basis of the June 2025 EMCO opinion on the dimensions of job quality, the Commission worked with the advisory committees of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council on an updated monitoring framework including indicators for each job quality dimension that has been implemented as of the ongoing 2025-2026 semester cycle. This monitoring framework

(7) [Directive 2002/14/EC](#), establishing a general framework for informing and consulting employees in the European Community, 11 March 2002; [Directive 98/59/EC](#) on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to collective redundancies, 20 July 1998; [Directive 2001/23/EC](#) on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the safeguarding of employees' rights in the event of transfers of undertakings, businesses or parts of undertakings or businesses, 12 March 2001; Directive 2009/38/EC, amended by Directive 2025/[awaiting publication] on a European Works Council.

(8) [Council Recommendation 2022/C 243/04](#), Ensuring a Fair Transition towards Climate Neutrality, 16 June 2022.

could support the development of a headline target to track progress in improving working conditions across the EU.

With public authorities spending around 15% of EU GDP, public procurement may be a powerful tool to support quality jobs and boost sustainable growth, while advancing strategic EU policy objectives. The 2014 Public Procurement Directives include the obligation to ensure compliance with social, labour, and environmental law in the performance of public contracts through a general clause. Contracting authorities may exclude an economic operator from participating in a public procurement procedure where the contracting authority can demonstrate that the economic operator has violated applicable environmental, social or labour obligations.

In addition, the Directives offer non-binding tools to support socially responsible public procurement, such as reserved contracts (e.g. for work integration social enterprises) or awarding points as part of the best price-quality ratio for meeting social criteria.

However, price-only remains a widespread award criterion within the EU. As part of the revision the EU procurement directives announced for 2026, the Commission will explore how to better promote socially responsible public procurement, including the wider use of the Best Price Quality Ratio and of collective bargaining.

State aid rules can provide better incentives for industry to create durable and quality jobs and invest in skills. As part of the on-going revision of the General Block Exemption Regulation, the Commission will assess if and how it should be updated, notably as regards the rules on aid for social enterprises, training and employment and recruitment of disadvantaged workers. The Commission will develop dedicated guidance to assist Member States when designing State aid measures for social support and social investment and aims to significantly reduce the administrative burden for both undertakings and Member States.

Companies, especially SMEs, startups and scaleups, need an innovation-friendly environment that allows them to grow and attract investment. To further minimise administrative burdens, a new SME and competitiveness check has become a stronger filter for new Commission initiatives. The check includes an assessment of the expected effects on cost differentials compared to international competitors.

Tax and pension reforms can contribute substantially to further enhance labour market participation and strengthen social protection. For example, supplementary pensions can improve retirement savings for workers, notably mobile ones and those in non-standard forms of work. The EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy seeks to improve the treatment of employee stock options, helping startups attract and retain top talent and foster high-quality jobs. At the same time, eliminating tax obstacles for remote cross-border employees is important to foster the growth of startups and scaleups, with work on a recommendation ongoing to that effect.

Facilitating transitions in a changing global economy

The European instrument for temporary **Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE)** – mobilised significant financial means to protect jobs and companies during the specific circumstances of the Covid 19 pandemic. In 2020, it supported around

32 million people and over 2.5 million firms, through short-time work schemes and similar measures, particularly for SMEs in the sectors most affected. It also allowed Member States to address sudden increases in employment-related spending expenditure for the preservation of employment with interest savings estimated at EUR 9 billion.

Under the next Multi-annual Financial Framework 2028-2034, the Commission proposed the introduction of a new **extraordinary and temporary mechanism** to respond to the consequences of severe crises, hardship or serious threats thereof affecting the Union or its Member States. A decision on the activation of this mechanism will be decided by the Council of the EU after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament. If activated, it will provide loans financed by EU borrowing and backed by an annual guarantee from the EU budget of up to 0.25% of EU GNI.

A sustainable growth strategy requires mobilising public and private capital into productive investments, for the benefit of citizens, companies and a resilient economy. This entails for example increasing uptake of supplementary pensions to ensure adequate income after retirement. This can support the EU's economic growth and competitiveness, by mobilizing and channelling long-term capital into the economy.

3. MODERNISATION: PROMOTING QUALITY JOBS WHILE BOOSTING DIGITAL INNOVATION

Digitalisation is crucial for innovation and for EU competitiveness. It can boost labour productivity, improve health and safety at work, and help address labour shortages. Most Europeans view digital technologies, including AI, positively for their jobs and quality of life, including work-life-balance. As reported in the Apply AI Strategy ⁽⁹⁾, a majority of European workers (67%) believe that Artificial Intelligence (AI) helps them to perform their tasks faster. However, 84% call for careful management to protect privacy and ensure transparency, while 77% emphasise the need for worker and representativeness' involvement in the design and use of workplace technologies ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Responsible use of algorithmic management

Algorithmic management (AM) is commonly understood as the use of automated monitoring systems and automated decision-making systems powered by algorithms that replace functions that managers usually perform, such as allocating tasks, pricing individual assignments, determining working schedules, giving instructions, evaluating the work performed, providing incentives or applying adverse treatment.

AI and AM can enhance efficiency and job quality, allowing workers to focus on higher-value tasks, and improve safety at work. At the same time, effective protection from discrimination, data breaches or excessive surveillance and psychosocial risks is essential to ensure a trustful and widespread uptake of AI in the world of work.

⁽⁹⁾ [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council COM/2025/723 final](#), Apply AI Strategy, 8 October 2025.

⁽¹⁰⁾ European Commission, [Special Eurobarometer SP554: Artificial Intelligence and the future of work](#).

The AI Act⁽¹¹⁾ and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)⁽¹²⁾ provide a comprehensive framework for regulating digital technologies in the workplace. While not all AM systems are AI-based, the AI Act classifies as “high-risk” AI systems used in the context of recruitment or selection of natural persons, including AI systems making decisions affecting terms of work-related relationships, allocating tasks and monitoring and evaluating performance.

The Platform Work Directive enhances transparency, fairness, human oversight, safety and information and consultation in platform work; it also brings legal clarity for digital labour platforms organising work across the EU.

EU rules on worker information and consultation⁽¹³⁾ require involving workers’ representatives on decisions likely to lead to substantial changes in work organisation, including deployment of AM systems.

The way forward must be guided by two mutually reinforcing goals: to support and enable the take-up of AI tools at work and protect workers from potential risks arising from the use of AM. The AI Act and the GDPR provide essential and relevant horizontal frameworks, which must be implemented and enforced. Both acts do not preclude Member States or the Union from maintaining or introducing more favourable or specific rules on the use of such systems for the better protection of workers. In a number of Member States and sectors, social partners have adopted and applied specific rules in collective agreements.

Any EU action would focus on effective implementation and enforcement of existing EU protections for workers across all Member States, on providing further clarity on those protections and, where necessary, consider targeted complementary measures not covered by the current rules. This would need to guarantee clear added value, consistency with the legal framework, avoiding duplications and promote a level playing field across the EU. A further consideration would be simplification, as regards administrative burden on workers and companies.

Adapting the way we work to the digital reality - Right to disconnect and telework

Digital tools at work offer flexibility and contribute to job satisfaction but they can also foster an 'always-on' culture, where workers are encouraged or feel pressured to be constantly available at any time. Overall, work intensification and work-related stress can affect workers’ well-being, ultimately reducing productivity and increasing public spending⁽¹⁴⁾.

(11) [Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1689](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence.

(12) [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/679](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).

(13) [Directive 2002/14/EC](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2002 establishing a general framework for informing and consulting employees in the European Community.

(14) Fernandez Macias, E., Gonzalez Vazquez, I., Torrejon Perez, S. and Nurski, L., [Work in the Digital Era: How Technology is Transforming Work and Occupations](#), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2025.

In 2024, one in five Europeans were working from home at least partially. Preferences for teleworking are also rising, as a 2024 Eurofound survey showed that over 50% of respondents favour working from home multiple times a week, and 24% wish to work exclusively from home. Yet teleworkers often encounter a lack of clarity around the rules applicable and their working conditions while teleworking including in cross-border situations, regarding social security and taxation. Employers also struggle with managing dispersed teams.

Social partners: “The Right to Disconnect” guide developed by UNI Europa establishes best practices based on national rules on disconnection.

The digitalisation agreement of 2022 reached by social partners of central government administrations aims to ensure that digital transformation in the public sector is inclusive, human-centred, and respects workers’ rights.

In January 2021, the European Parliament adopted under Article 225 TFEU a resolution on the right to disconnect and telework, asking for EU legislative action. Following the unsuccessful negotiations by European cross sectoral social partners in 2022-2023 on a revised agreement in these areas, the Commission carried out a formal two-stage consultation with social partners in 2024-2025.

The full implementation by Member States of the Work-Life Balance Directive will ensure working conditions that facilitate the reconciliation of private, family and working lives for parents and carers.

4. FAIR, SAFE AND EQUAL: THE BACKBONE OF RESILIENT JOBS IN EUROPE

The EU’s strong labour and occupational safety and health standards protect workers and organised labour mobility to build trust, mobilise talent, promote equality, prevent discrimination and abuses. But the world of work is changing, and with it the pressures on our systems.

Promoting physical and mental health at work

Protecting workers from injuries, illnesses and deaths is central to job quality. Despite progress, every year in the EU over 170,000 people die from work-related illnesses, suffer around 3,300 fatal injuries, and over 220,000 serious non-fatal accidents that lead to an absence of more than three months or permanent incapacity to work ⁽¹⁵⁾. The protection of good health encompasses both physical and mental aspects, and entails a gender-sensitive approach.

Strong occupational safety and health (OSH) policies are a social and economic imperative. They reduce absenteeism, enable longer working lives and result in higher productivity ⁽¹⁶⁾. The societal cost of work-related injuries and diseases amounts to around

⁽¹⁵⁾ EU-OSHA (2023) Occupational safety and health in Europe: state and trends 2023, [Eurostat data](#), and [Eurostat data](#).

⁽¹⁶⁾ EU-OSHA, [Good OSH is good for business](#)

3.3% of EU GDP, while every euro invested in prevention yields a return of more than two euros ⁽¹⁷⁾.

It is important that the EU’s OSH legislation stay aligned with new realities. By mid-2026, the Commission will report on the implementation of the OSH Framework Directive and related directives. The Carcinogens, Mutagens, or Reprotoxic Substances Directive is undergoing its sixth revision. In consultation with social partners, the Commission will also review the Workplace and the Display Screen Equipment Directives ⁽¹⁸⁾ to update OSH protections in modern workplaces – including telework – and digital tools, and, in particular, to better address psychosocial and ergonomic risks, and to consider the risks affecting workers with disabilities.

One in three women in the EU have experienced sexual harassment at work, a figure that rises to 41.6% among women aged 18–29 years. There are ongoing initiatives such as the EU-OSHA Online Interactive Risk Assessment tool on sexual harassment and third-party violence. Social partners are also taking important action, including the 2025 update of the multi-sectoral Guidelines in this area.

Enhancing awareness and research on work-related risks leads to more informed policies that improve job quality. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) published in 2023 the guide “Heat at Work – Guidance for Workplaces” ⁽¹⁹⁾. In 2026-2028, it will carry out a Healthy Workplace campaign on mental health and psychosocial risks at work.

Adequate wages to protect workers, develop human capital and reduce labour shortages

Adequate wages benefit both workers and businesses. They support social fairness and a productive and inclusive economy. They help to protect workers’ purchasing power, reduce wage inequality and in-work poverty, support domestic demand and strengthen incentives to work. The Directive on adequate minimum wages in the EU has encouraged fairer wage-setting. Since its adoption, the gap between minimum and average wages has narrowed across Member States. Importantly, the Directive has also helped narrow the gap between the highest and lowest minimum wages between Member States contributing to greater wage convergence across Europe.

There is a **need to improve the situation young people** are facing on the labour market, notably with regards to precarious contracts, atypical forms of work and the informal economy. Quality jobs are essential for intergenerational fairness.

Still, in 2024, in-work poverty still affected almost one in twelve workers, and disproportionately the low-skilled, part-time, temporary workers, and single parents. In addition, it remains essential to tackle the undervaluation of jobs predominantly done by

⁽¹⁷⁾ ISSA, Calculating the international return on prevention for companies: Costs and benefits of investments in occupational safety and health, [Final report 2013](#).

⁽¹⁸⁾ [Directive 89/654/EEC](#) concerning the minimum safety and health requirements for the workplace, 30 November 1989; [Directive 90/270/EEC](#) on the minimum safety and health requirements for work with display screen equipment, 29 May 1990.

⁽¹⁹⁾ OSH-Wiki, [Heat at work – guidance for workplaces](#), 1 June 2023.

women and advancing pay transparency to close the gender pay gap, through the timely implementation of the Pay Transparency Directive.

To ensure that improvements in wage adequacy go hand in hand with competitiveness, boosting productivity is essential.

Social partners: The SIDE-CIC project, implemented jointly by the EU social partners in construction, promotes the use of social ID cards to improve transparency, monitor workers' rights and qualifications, and explore ways to better connect these tools across companies and countries.

However, over the last decade, many EU countries have faced persistently weak labour productivity growth, limiting the potential for higher wages, with the average real compensation of employees increasing only by about 0.5% annually. Looking ahead, economic transformation, notably the digital transition, represents an opportunity to boost innovation and productivity, so as to give more

room for wage growth and decent living standards across generations.

Well-functioning collective bargaining ensures that all workers benefit from adequate wages and can encourage the take-up of supplementary pension schemes. The Commission will continue to support wage adequacy and social dialogue across the EU. This includes monitoring the correct transposition of the Directive, including its requirement that Member States with coverage below 80% establish an enabling framework for collective bargaining and an action plan to strengthen it.

Tackling labour exploitation

As highlighted in the Letta report, the EU should tackle those **subcontracting** or labour intermediation practices which may **lead to exploitation and abuse of workers** ⁽²⁰⁾. Subcontracting is a legitimate business model. Through subcontracting, companies have access to specialised expertise and can quickly adapt to meet changing business needs and stay competitive. However, despite the EU's strong protective framework some workers still face abuse. Sectors such as construction, transport, agriculture and domestic services are more exposed.

Better and more coordinated efforts remain essential. Strengthening enforcement efforts of relevant legislation, enhancing transparency in national systems (pre-qualification system, national registers or certification system) without imposing unnecessary additional burden, and assessing systems for liability of employers for failure to comply with workers' rights, is necessary to tackle abuses effectively. In addition, the European Labour Authority (ELA), can further support exchanges of national practices, studies and enforcement action.

The reliability of subcontractors may be checked in the context of public procurement. The 2014 Public Procurement Directives contain provisions for preventing or mitigating adverse social impacts during the performance of the contract. The Commission has announced a review of the directives in 2026 and, in preparation, published an evaluation in October 2025. This will consider among other elements the issue

⁽²⁰⁾ Letta E., [Much more than a market report](#), 2024.

of subcontracting, including the responsibilities and qualifications of contractors, and transparency in supply chains. **There is also a need to improve detection and prevention of labour exploitation** particularly in relation to non-EU workers, including trafficking in human beings. The **Employers' Sanctions and the Seasonal Workers Directives** introduced clear rules on liability and sanctions, including how to step up enforcement and better protect the rights of third country nationals who may be particularly exposed to abusive working conditions often because of their illegal status, in particular in sectors such as construction, transport, domestic services and agriculture.

The upcoming **revision of the ELA mandate** could help by further addressing the challenges related to abuses of working conditions of third country nationals. ELA and national inspectorates could also strengthen efforts against undeclared work, boosting collaboration with law enforcement.

Fostering fair labour mobility

Several highly mobile sectors face particular challenges. This is for example relevant for transport workers. Implementing the EU road transport Mobility Package I will ensure both the social protection of drivers and the freedom of operators to provide cross-border transport services. The Commission report on suitable rest facilities and safe and secure parking areas for drivers looks at how to increase their availability ⁽²¹⁾. The Commission is looking into ways to modernise the rules related to the qualification and training of bus and lorry drivers with a view to making the training more relevant and more attractive.

The review of the Air Services Regulation will focus on the good functioning of the internal market for aviation services, while addressing challenges in enforcing labour laws for mobile aircrews.

In the cultural and creative sectors, artists and other highly mobile professionals linked to those activities often face precarious working and social conditions. The Commission published a Culture Compass for Europe ⁽²²⁾ that announced a future EU Artists Charter to set out fundamental principles, guidance and commitments for fair working conditions in the sector.

To strengthen R&D investment and foster the circulation of knowledge and talent, the Commission will present a European Research Area Act, to consolidate the EU's fifth freedom for research and innovation, improve researchers' careers and working conditions, and boost the EU as an attractive environment.

Furthermore, the Commission will publish a Fair Labour Mobility Package in 2026. The package will modernise and simplify the EU rules and procedures on social security coordination, making use of the potential of digitalisation, including to make it easier to temporarily provide services cross-border, while protecting workers' rights. It will strengthen ELA and digitalise procedures under social security coordination with the European Social Security Pass. The Commission will also explore ways to facilitate and

⁽²¹⁾ [EUR-Lex - 52025DC0703 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

⁽²²⁾ [European Commission, Culture Compass for Europe.](#)

accelerate the recognition of qualifications for EU and for third country nationals to increase the attractiveness of the EU for global talent.

In the context of intra-EU labour mobility, enforcement challenges emerge from the increasing posting of third country nationals and from cross-border provision of services by temporary work agencies and recruitment intermediaries, including in long and complex sub-contracting chains. Also, as a follow-up to the 2024 report on posting of workers ⁽²³⁾, ELA and the Commission are looking into these challenges to enhance cross-border cooperation and support national measures.

Ensuring fairness and flexibility for the self-employed

Quality jobs among the self-employed are vital for inclusive economic growth. Self-employed and non-standard workers should have access to adequate social benefits, information, training, and healthcare under comparable conditions as employees. This can be achieved by duly implementing the guidance provided to Member States by the 2019 and 2003 Council Recommendations on social protection and on health and safety at work for self-employed. Moreover, as recommended by the Commission ⁽²⁴⁾, self-employed and non-standard workers should be granted equivalent opportunities and benefits as those for employees to opt into supplementary pension schemes in the context of auto-enrolment.

Collective bargaining for self-employed workers can help improve their working conditions and economic security. The Guidelines on the application of EU competition law to collective agreements regarding the working conditions of solo self-employed people, adopted in 2022, clarify the conditions under which they can engage in collective bargaining without breaching EU antitrust rules.

5. ENABLING FACTORS: TO MAINTAIN AND PROMOTE QUALITY JOBS

By fostering a competitive labour market that upholds labour rights and promotes social dialogue and collective bargaining, the EU can attract and retain talent, unlock new opportunities, and ensure that workers and companies fully benefit from the single market. Adequate funding and quality public services are also essential to create and sustain quality jobs.

Effective enforcement of EU legislation

Upholding workers' rights is a central element of fair and competitive labour markets and part of the EU acquis. Enforcement remains uneven across Member States. Improving the enforcement of workers' rights requires monitoring correct transposition, addressing complaints effectively, and maintaining a continuous dialogue with national authorities and social partners.

Initiatives are needed to ensure EU social rights are a reality on the ground. Developing tools and guidance on EU labour rights can strengthen enforcement, raise

⁽²³⁾ [Directive \(EU\) 2018/957](#) of 28 June 2018 amending Directive 96/71/EC concerning the posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services

⁽²⁴⁾ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=PI_COM:C\(2025\)9300](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=PI_COM:C(2025)9300)

awareness and build administrative capacity so the Commission will work closely with EU agencies, including ELA and EU-OSHA to develop them, building on good examples, such as EU-OSHA's Online Interactive Risk Assessment tools. Labour inspections help deter unlawful practices, and new technologies such as AI will be explored to make them more targeted and effective.

It is also crucial to monitor job quality across the EU. Tracking progress is a joint effort between the Commission, Member States and the EU social partners. The tools and data provided by EU Agencies offer valuable insights. In parallel, through the EMCO's Joint Assessment Framework and the European Semester, trend monitoring, including through robust demographic and territorial data, will guide evidence-based policymaking.

The EU's commitment to social dialogue, our collective strength and competitive edge

Social dialogue, including collective bargaining, are essential for quality of jobs. They ensure that workplace policies can adapt to evolving economic, technological and social realities and help keep European companies competitive.

In many Member States social dialogue and collective bargaining are under pressure. Collective bargaining coverage has declined in 19 out of 27 Member States, dropping from about 77% in 2005 to 66% in 2024 ⁽²⁵⁾. While 80% of EU employees have access to some form of collective representation to express their views, many lack formal participation channels. Significant sectoral disparities persist, with 56% of agricultural workers lacking representation, compared to 11% or less in public administration, education, and financial services ⁽²⁶⁾. The Commission will continue to support social dialogue and collective bargaining through EU legislation, policy, administrative and financial means. It is supporting EMCO in its work to improve data collection on social dialogue and sharing best practice to encourage mutual learning, contributing to the implementation of the 2023 Council Recommendation on Strengthening Social Dialogue in the European Union. Collective bargaining, when promoted through social conditionalities in public funding, allows workers to benefit from the support provided to industry.

Guaranteeing the autonomy and contractual freedom of the social partners is essential. EU financial means will remain available for European, national, and candidate country social partners to strengthen their capacity for meaningful engagement and agreements, notably through the EU budget.

From policy to practice: EU funds for job quality

EU funding plays a crucial role in translating policies into tangible results. With a budget of EUR 141.3 billion for 2021-2027, ESF+ is the EU's main funding instrument for investing in people. The Social Investment and Skills Window of the InvestEU programme supports social investments notably in microenterprises, education, and social infrastructure through budget guarantees. NextGenerationEU supports direct investments in skills, alongside structural labour-market reforms that enhance access to quality jobs, with Member States allocating EUR 40.6 billion to these efforts. The European Regional

⁽²⁵⁾ OECD/AIAS ICTWSS database, [Policy brief, statistical annex \(September 2025\)](#)

⁽²⁶⁾ Eurofound, [Self-employment in the EU: Job quality and developments in social protection](#), 30 January 2024.

Development Fund (ERDF) and the Talent Booster Mechanism support vulnerable workers in disadvantaged areas, digitalisation, and a fair transition via the Just Transition Fund.

The proposed National and Regional Partnership Plans in the next Multi-annual Financial Framework are designed to steer significant investment supporting quality employment, for example skills' development, health protection and digital enablers. The Commission proposes that, as a minimum, 14% of the funds of any National and Regional Partnership Plan (excluding ringfenced amounts for agriculture and Social Climate Fund) will be dedicated to social objectives, with a view to keeping a high level of ambition in financing ESF type of actions. In addition, the European Competitiveness Fund will support skills' development investment in particular in strategic sectors.

Sector specific instruments are also enablers of quality jobs. Agriculture and fisheries face workforce challenges such as attracting young farmers and fishers, ensuring fair working conditions, and addressing gender gaps. The Commission adopted a Vision for Agriculture and Food and proposed a simpler, targeted CAP post-2027 with measures that include social conditionality to support good working conditions and support for farm relief services. The Ocean Pact's Vision 2040 for Fisheries and Aquaculture and the Blue Generational Renewal Strategy promote a thriving blue economy and support the well-being of people living in coastal areas.

Quality services for all and across regions

Quality services are a key enabler for employment and labour market transitions. By providing accessible early childhood education and care, long-term care, and healthcare, these services empower millions of workers – especially women – to engage in paid work and career advancement. Robust health systems with relevantly staffed health workforce play a critical role in ensuring the health and well-being of communities.

The health and care sector enables millions of people, parents, caregivers and workers across all industries to fully participate in the labour market. The Commission is working towards a more coherent framework for addressing long-term care workforce challenges and aims to present a European Care Deal in 2027. Furthermore, through EU4Health, the EU strengthens health system resilience by supporting workforce planning, nurse retention, digital transformation.

Regions and local communities are central to quality jobs. Of the 26–27 million people working in the public sector, around 17–19 million are employed at local and regional level⁽²⁷⁾. These roles span administration, education and vocational training, public services, healthcare, social care, transport and emergency services. Promoting quality jobs in these areas supports regional attractiveness and development.

⁽²⁷⁾ OECD, [Subnational Public Employment in OECD and EU Countries \(November 2024\)](#).

6. NEXT STEPS

Quality jobs build on numerous policy actions. They are a strong building block of the European Social Model and of the European Pillar of Social Rights, and key for attracting and maintaining talent in Europe. As announced by President von der Leyen in the State of the Union address in September 2025, **the Commission will propose a Quality Jobs Act** to complement the actions in the Roadmap and strengthen their impact.

In line with Article 154 (2) TFEU, the Commission is launching the **first-stage consultation of European social partners** to obtain their views on the possible direction of EU action to further improve quality jobs. This will complement the two-stage consultation on the right to disconnect and telework, finalised in October 2025. The Quality Jobs Act may be accompanied by non-legislative initiatives and will take into account the diversity of national systems. This will allow sufficient space for social partners' implementation and respect their autonomy and contractual freedom, minimising administrative burden on companies in an effort of consolidation and simplification.

The Quality Jobs Act, alongside with the rest of the EU social acquis, will ensure that the world of work keeps pace with the modern economy. The growth of the EU economy requires a modern labour market that ensures at the same time talent, mobility, flexible but robust skills' foundations, and a trusted environment where workers feel protected and reach their best possible potential, contributing in this way to the EU's resilience and competitiveness.