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From:	Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director
date of receipt:	4 June 2025
To:	Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union
Subject:	Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States

Delegations will find attached document COM(2025) 230 final.

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2025/0154 (NLE)

Proposal for a

COUNCIL DECISION

on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union requires Member States to regard their economic policies and promoting employment as a matter of common concern and to coordinate their action within the Council. The Council is required to adopt employment guidelines (Article 148), which must be consistent with the broad economic policy guidelines (Article 121).

While the broad economic policy guidelines are valid on an ongoing basis, the employment guidelines need to be drawn up each year. Both sets of guidelines were adopted together ('integrated package') in 2010 and underpinned the Europe 2020 strategy. Revised integrated guidelines were adopted in 2015. For the employment guidelines, a practice has developed since 2018 of alternating between a full update (covering both recitals and guidelines proper) every other year, and a 'reconduction' (updating the recitals while keeping the guidelines proper unchanged) in the intermediate year. Following a reconduction in 2023, when the recitals were adjusted to reflect the new EU headline and national targets on employment, skills and poverty reduction and recent initiatives, a full update was carried out in 2024. The update entailed adding references to the 2030 national targets (in addition to the EU headline targets), putting greater focus on the impact of technological developments and AI, giving more emphasis to labour and skills shortages, and placing increased attention on legal migration from third countries in addition to harnessing talent within the EU. As in previous years, the 2024 text also reflected recent policy initiatives of particular relevance, such as platform work, the social economy and affordable housing. This year, the recitals are being updated to bring in more elements related to (i) changes in the geopolitical context (including trade policy tensions); (ii) the Union of Skills initiative; (iii) competitiveness in light of the Competitiveness Compass; and (iv) upward social convergence following the second year of implementation of the Social Convergence Framework, now fully embedded in the EU economic governance framework.

Along with the broad economic policy guidelines, the employment guidelines are presented as a Council Decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (Part II of the Integrated Guidelines) and provide the basis for country specific recommendations in the respective domains.

The revised "Employment Guidelines" are the following:

Guideline 5: Boosting the demand for labour

Guideline 6: Enhancing labour supply and improving access to employment, lifelong acquisition of skills and competences

Guideline 7: Enhancing the functioning of labour markets and the effectiveness of social dialogue

Guideline 8: Promoting equal opportunities for all, fostering social inclusion and fighting poverty

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THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 148(2) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament ⁽¹⁾,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee ⁽²⁾,

After consulting the Committee of the Regions,

Having regard to the opinion of the Employment Committee ⁽³⁾,

Whereas:

- (1) Member States and the Union are to work towards developing a coordinated strategy for employment and in particular for the promotion of a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce, as well as labour markets that are inclusive, resilient, future-oriented and responsive to economic change, with a view to achieving the objectives of full employment and social progress, balanced economic growth, a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment laid down in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). Member States are to regard promoting employment as a matter of common concern and to coordinate their action in that respect within the Council.
- (2) The Union is to combat social exclusion and discrimination, and to promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and the protection of the rights of the child as laid down in Article 3 TEU. In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union is to take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health as laid down in Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).
- (3) In accordance with the TFEU, the Union has developed and implemented policy coordination instruments for economic and employment policies. As part of those instruments, the guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (the 'Employment Guidelines') set out in the Annex to Council Decision (EU) 2024/3134

¹ Opinion of tbd DATE 2025 (not yet published in the Official Journal).

² Opinion of tbd DATE 2025 (not yet published in the Official Journal).

³ Opinion of tbd DATE 2025 (not yet published in the Official Journal).

(⁴), together with the broad guidelines for the economic policies of the Member States and of the Union set out in Council Recommendation (EU) 2015/1184 (⁵), form the Integrated Guidelines. The Employment Guidelines are to guide policy implementation in the Member States and in the Union, reflecting the interdependence between the Member States. The resulting set of coordinated Union and national policies and reforms constitutes an appropriate overall sustainable economic, employment and social policy mix, which should achieve positive spill-over effects for labour markets and society at large, strengthen economic and social resilience, and effectively respond to medium- and longer-term challenges, including the need to strengthen competitiveness, uncertainty about global trade policies, as well as effects related to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the broader geopolitical context.

- (4) In order to enhance economic and social progress and upward convergence, to support the green and digital transitions, to strengthen the Union industrial base, productivity and competitiveness, to face the demographic challenges, and to achieve inclusive and resilient labour markets in the Union, Member States should address labour and skills shortages and promote quality jobs as well as quality and inclusive education and training for all, in line with the Union of Skills (⁶), with a particular focus on improving basic skills, based on the Action Plan on Basic Skills, as well as labour market relevant skills, including digital and green skills, especially among disadvantaged students and adults. Member States should also boost STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education and training, in line with the STEM Education Strategic Plan, strengthen future-oriented vocational education and training, and lifelong upskilling and reskilling, and striving for inclusive education systems, as well as ensure effective active labour market policies and improved working conditions and career opportunities, while respecting the role and autonomy of the social partners. As stated in the Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development, integrating the education and training dimension systematically into other policies related to the green transition in a lifelong perspective can support the implementation of those policies. Strengthening these elements is of particular relevance for the less developed, remote and outermost regions of the Union, where the needs are the greatest. Shortages can be further addressed by improving fair intra-EU mobility for workers and learners and attracting and retaining talent from outside the Union. In addition, the links between the education and training systems and the labour market should be strengthened, and skills, knowledge and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning should be validated and recognised.
- (5) The Employment Guidelines are consistent with the new economic governance framework of the Union, which entered into force on 30 April 2024 (⁷), and with

⁴ Council Decision (EU) 2024/3134 of 2 December 2024 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (OJ L, 2024/3134, 13.12.2024).

⁵ Council Recommendation (EU) 2015/1184 of 14 July 2015 on broad guidelines for the economic policies of the Member States and of the European Union (OJ L 192, 18.7.2015, p. 27).

⁶ Communication of the Commission of 5 March 2025, entitled 'The Union of Skills' (COM(2025) 90 final).

⁷ Regulation (EU) 2024/1263 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2024 on the effective coordination of economic policies and on multilateral budgetary surveillance and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1466/97 (OJ L, 2024/1263, 30.4.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1263/oj>).

existing Union legislation and various Union initiatives, including Council Recommendations of 14 June 2021 ⁽⁸⁾, 29 November 2021 ⁽⁹⁾, 5 April 2022 ⁽¹⁰⁾, 16 June 2022 ⁽¹¹⁾, 28 November 2022 ⁽¹²⁾, 8 December 2022 ⁽¹³⁾, 30 January 2023 ⁽¹⁴⁾, 12 June 2023 ⁽¹⁵⁾ and 27 November 2023 ⁽¹⁶⁾, Commission Recommendation (EU) 2021/402 ⁽¹⁷⁾, Council Resolution of 26 February 2021 ⁽¹⁸⁾, Commission Communications of 9 December 2021 on building an economy that works for people: an action plan for the social economy, of 30 September 2020 on the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027, of 3 March 2021 on Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, of 7 September 2022 on a European Care Strategy, of 1 February 2023 on A Green Deal Industrial Plan for the Net-Zero Age, of 25 January 2023 on strengthening social dialogue in the European Union, of 11 October 2023 demographic change in Europe: a toolbox for action, of 28 September 2022 on Better assessing the distributional impact of Member States' policies, of 20 March 2024 on labour and skills shortages in the EU: an action plan, and of 5 March 2025 on the Union of Skills, Decisions (EU) 2021/2316 ⁽¹⁹⁾ and (EU) 2023/936 ⁽²⁰⁾ of the European Parliament and of the Council, and Directives (EU) 2022/2041 ⁽²¹⁾, (EU) 2022/2381 ⁽²²⁾, (EU) 2023/970 ⁽²³⁾ and (EU) 2024/2831 ⁽²⁴⁾ of the European Parliament and of the Council.

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- ⁸ Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee (OJ L 223, 22.6.2021, p. 14).
- ⁹ Council Recommendation of 29 November 2021 on blended learning approaches for high-quality and inclusive primary and secondary education (OJ C 504, 14.12.2021, p. 21).
- ¹⁰ Council Recommendation of 5 April 2022 on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation (OJ C 160, 13.4.2022, p.1).
- ¹¹ Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on learning for the green transition and sustainable development (OJ C 243, 27.6.2022, p. 1), Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability (OJ C 243, 27.6.2022, p. 10), Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on individual learning accounts (OJ C 243, 27.6.2022, p. 26) and Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality (OJ C 243, 27.6.2022, p. 35).
- ¹² Council Recommendation of 28 November 2022 on Pathways to School Success and replacing the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving (OJ C 469, 9.12.2022, p. 1).
- ¹³ Council Recommendation of 8 December 2022 on access to affordable high-quality long-term care (OJ C 476, 15.12.2022, p. 1) and Council Recommendation of 8 December 2022 on early childhood education and care: the Barcelona targets for 2030 (OJ C 484, 20.12.2022, p. 1).
- ¹⁴ Council Recommendation of 30 January 2023 on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion (OJ C 41, 3.2.2023, p.1).
- ¹⁵ Council Recommendation of 12 June 2023 on strengthening social dialogue in the European Union (OJ C, C/2023/1389, 6.12.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1389/oj>).
- ¹⁶ Council Recommendation of 27 November 2023 on developing social economy framework conditions (OJ C, C/2023/1344, 29.11.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1344/oj>).
- ¹⁷ Commission Recommendation (EU) 2021/402 of 4 March 2021 on an effective active support to employment following the COVID-19 crisis (EASE) (OJ L 80, 8.3.2021, p. 1).
- ¹⁸ Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030) (OJ C 66, 26.2.2021, p. 1).
- ¹⁹ Decision (EU) 2021/2316 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 December 2021 on a European Year of Youth (2022) (OJ L 462, 28.12.2021, p. 1).
- ²⁰ Decision (EU) 2023/936 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 on a European Year of Skills (OJ L 125, 11.5.2023, p. 1).
- ²¹ Directive (EU) 2022/2041 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on adequate minimum wages in the European Union (OJ L 275, 25.10.2022, p. 33).

- (6) The European Semester combines various instruments in an overarching framework for integrated multilateral coordination and surveillance of economic and employment policies within the Union. The Semester is aligned with the Competitiveness Compass which provides a framework to boost competitiveness by closing the innovation gap, decarbonising our economy, reducing excessive dependencies and increasing security, and sets out horizontal enablers that include skills, quality jobs and social fairness. The Semester integrates the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission in November 2017 ⁽²⁵⁾ (the ‘European Pillar of Social Rights’), and its monitoring tool, the Social Scoreboard, also allowing an analysis of risks and challenges to upward social convergence in the Union, and provides for strong engagement with social partners, civil society and other stakeholders. The European Semester also supports the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals set out by the United Nations. The economic and employment policies of the Union and the Member States should go hand in hand with the Union’s fair transition to a climate-neutral, environmentally sustainable and digital economy, improve competitiveness and productivity, ensure adequate working conditions, foster innovation, promote democracy at work, social dialogue, social justice, equal opportunities and upward socio-economic convergence, tackle inequalities and regional disparities, and fight poverty and social exclusion.
- (7) Climate change and other environment-related challenges, the need to ensure a fair green transition, energy independence and enhanced competitiveness of net-zero industries, technological sovereignty, and the need to increase defence spending and secure Europe’s open strategic autonomy, as well as demographic changes and the development of digitalisation, including artificial intelligence, algorithmic management, the platform economy and teleworking are deeply transforming economies and societies in the Union. The Union and its Member States are to work together to effectively and proactively address such structural developments and adapt existing systems as needed, recognising the close interdependence of the Member States’ economies and labour markets, and related policies. That requires coordinated, ambitious and effective policy action at both Union and national levels while recognising the role of social partners, in accordance with the TFEU and with the Union’s provisions on economic governance, taking into account the European Pillar of Social Rights. Such policy action should encompass a boost in sustainable investment across all Union regions, a renewed commitment to appropriately sequenced reforms and investments that enhance sustainable and inclusive economic growth, skills, the promotion of quality jobs, productivity, competitiveness, and fair working conditions, social and territorial cohesion, upward socio-economic convergence, resilience and the exercise of fiscal responsibility. Support should be provided from existing Union funding programmes, and in particular the Recovery and Resilience Facility established by Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European

²² Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council (EU) 2022/2381 of 23 November 2022 on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures (OJ L 315, 7.12.2022, p. 44).

²³ Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms (OJ L 132, 17.5.2023, p. 21).

²⁴ Directive (EU) 2024/2831 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2024 on improving working conditions in platform work (OJ L, 2024/2831, 11.11.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/2831/oj>).

²⁵ Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights (OJ C 428, 13.12.2017, p. 10).

Parliament and of the Council ⁽²⁶⁾ and the cohesion policy funds, including the European Social Fund Plus established by Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council⁽²⁷⁾ and the European Regional Development Fund governed by Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽²⁸⁾, as well as the Social Climate Fund established by Regulation (EU) 2023/955 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽²⁹⁾ and the Just Transition Fund established by Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽³⁰⁾. Policy action should combine supply-side and demand-side measures, while taking into account the economic, environmental, employment and social impact of such measures.

- (8) The European Pillar of Social Rights sets out twenty principles and rights to support well-functioning and fair labour markets and welfare systems, structured around three categories: equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, and social protection and inclusion. Those principles and rights give strategic direction to the Union, ensuring that the transitions to climate-neutrality, environmental sustainability and digitalisation and the impact of demographic change are socially fair and just and preserve territorial cohesion. The European Pillar of Social Rights, with its accompanying Social Scoreboard, constitutes guidance to monitor the employment, skills and social performance of Member States, including upward social convergence in the Union, within the European Semester, to drive reforms and investments at national, regional and local levels and to reconcile the ‘social’ and the ‘market’ in today’s modern economy, including by promoting the social economy. On 4 March 2021, the Commission put forward an Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (the ‘Action Plan’), including ambitious yet realistic Union headline targets for 2030 on employment (that at least 78 % of the population aged 20-64 should be in employment), skills (that at least 60 % of all adults should participate in training every year) and poverty reduction (that at least 15 million fewer people should be at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including 5 million children) (the ‘Union headline targets for 2030’) and complementary sub-targets, as well as a revised Social Scoreboard.
- (9) As recognised by the Heads of State or Government at the Porto Social Summit on 8 May 2021, the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights will strengthen the Union’s drive towards a digital, green and fair transition and contribute to achieving upward social and economic convergence and addressing demographic challenges. The Heads of State or Government stressed that the social dimension, social dialogue and the active involvement of social partners are at the core of a highly competitive social market economy, and welcomed the new Union headline targets. They affirmed their determination, as established by the European Council’s Strategic Agenda 2019-2024, to continue deepening the implementation of the European Pillar

²⁶ Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility (OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, p. 17).

²⁷ Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013 (OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 21).

²⁸ Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund (OJ L 231 30.6.2021, p. 60).

²⁹ Regulation (EU) 2023/955 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 establishing a Social Climate Fund and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (OJ L 130, 16.5.2023, p. 1-51).

³⁰ Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the Just Transition Fund (OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 1).

of Social Rights at Union and national levels, with due regard for respective competences and the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. Lastly, they stressed the importance of closely following, including at the highest level, progress achieved towards the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Union headline targets for 2030.

- (10) The Union headline targets for 2030 were welcomed by the Heads of State or Government at the Porto Social Summit and by the June 2021 European Council. They help, together with the Social Scoreboard, in monitoring progress towards the implementation of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights as part of the policy coordination framework in the European Semester. In addition, the Porto Social Summit called on Member States to set ambitious national targets which, taking due account of the starting position of each Member State, should constitute an adequate contribution to the achievement of the Union headline targets for 2030. The implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and progress on the Union headline and national targets for 2030 is monitored in the Joint Employment Report adopted by the Council in March 2025 (the ‘Joint Employment Report 2025’), and is integrated into the monitoring tools for the European Semester. Since its 2024 edition, the Joint Employment Report contains a ‘first-stage country analysis’ on potential risks to upward social convergence in line with the Social Convergence Framework that identifies Member States which experience potential risks to be examined in a deeper ‘second-stage analysis’. In the Joint Employment Report 2025, 10 Member States were initially identified, and the conclusion of the deeper analysis showed that overall challenges were confirmed for three of them.
- (11) Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the European Council, in its conclusions of 24 February 2022, condemned Russia’s actions, which seek to undermine European and global security and stability, and expressed solidarity with the Ukrainian people, underlining Russia’s violation of international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter. In the current context, temporary protection, as granted by Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 ⁽³¹⁾ and extended by Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/1836 ⁽³²⁾, offers assistance in the Union to people displaced from Ukraine and allows them to enjoy minimum rights across the Union that offer an adequate level of protection. By participating in the Union’s labour markets, persons displaced from Ukraine can continue to contribute to strengthening the Union’s economy and help support their country and people at home. In the future, the experience and skills acquired can contribute to rebuilding Ukraine. For unaccompanied children and teenagers, temporary protection confers the right to legal guardianship and access to childhood education and care. Member States should continue to involve social partners in the design, implementation and evaluation of policy measures that aim to address the employment and skills challenges, including the recognition of qualifications of people displaced from Ukraine. Social partners play a key role in mitigating the impact of that war in terms of preserving employment and production.

³¹ Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection (OJ L 71, 4.3.2022, p. 1).

³² Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/1836 of 25 June 2024 extending temporary protection as introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 (OJ L, 2024/1836, 3.7.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/20234/1836/oj).

- (12) Reforms to the labour market, including national wage-setting mechanisms, should observe national practices of social dialogue and collective bargaining, as well as the autonomy of the social partners, with a view to providing fair wages that enable a decent standard of living, including in retirement, sustainable growth and upward socio-economic convergence. Such reforms should allow for a broad consideration of socio-economic factors, including improvements in sustainability, competitiveness, innovation, the promotion of quality jobs, fair working conditions, democracy at work, gender equality, prevention and reduction of in-work poverty, quality education, training, and skills, public health, social protection and inclusion, demographic change and the promotion of supplementary pensions, as well as real incomes. The importance of social dialogue in tackling challenges in the world of work, including labour and skills shortages, was reaffirmed at the 2024 Val Duchesse Summit and in the Pact for European Social Dialogue signed in March 2025.
- (13) The Recovery and Resilience Facility and other Union funds are supporting Member States in implementing reforms and investments that are in line with the Union's priorities, making economies and societies in the Union more sustainable and resilient and better prepared for the green and digital transitions. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has further aggravated pre-existing socio-economic challenges including energy poverty through higher energy prices, while uncertainties in global trade and more widely from the geo-political context endanger growth. Member States and the Union should continue to ensure that the social, employment and economic impacts are mitigated and that transitions are socially fair and just, also in light of the fact that increased open strategic autonomy and an accelerated green transition will help reduce the dependence on imports of energy and other strategic products and technologies. Strengthening resilience and pursuing an inclusive society in which people are protected and empowered to anticipate and manage change, and in which they can actively participate in society and the economy, are essential.
- (14) A coherent set of active labour market policies, consisting of temporary and targeted hiring and transition incentives, skills policies, including learning for the green transition and sustainable development, flexible retirement paths, and targeted, effective and adaptable employment services, is needed to support labour market transitions and make full use of untapped labour market potential, also in line with the active inclusion approach and in light of the green and digital transformations, as highlighted inter alia in the 2024 La Hulpe Declaration on the Future of the European Pillar of Social Rights ⁽³³⁾. Adequate working conditions and occupational health and safety, including both the physical and mental health of workers, should be ensured.
- (15) Discrimination in all its forms should be tackled, gender equality ensured and the employment of groups that are under-represented in the labour market supported. Equal access and opportunities for all should be ensured and poverty and social exclusion, in particular that of children, persons with disabilities and the Roma people, should be reduced, in particular by ensuring an effective functioning of labour markets and adequate and inclusive social protection systems, as set out in the Council Recommendations of 8 November 2019 ⁽³⁴⁾ and of 30 January 2023 ⁽³⁵⁾. In addition,

³³ Signed by the Kingdom of Belgium on behalf of 25 Member States.

³⁴ Council Recommendation of 8 November 2019 on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed (OJ C 387, 15.11.2019, p. 1).

³⁵ Council Recommendation of 30 January 2023 on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion (OJ C 41, 3.2.2023, p. 1).

barriers to inclusive and future-oriented high-quality education and training, lifelong learning and labour-market participation should be removed. Member States should invest in early childhood education and care, in line with the European Child Guarantee and the Recommendation on the ‘Barcelona targets for 2030’, in making vocational education and training more attractive and inclusive, in line with the Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 ⁽³⁶⁾, and in digital and green skills, in line with the Digital Education Action Plan and the Recommendations on learning for the green transition and sustainable development and on Pathways to School Success. Access to affordable and adequate housing, including through social housing, is a necessary condition for ensuring equal opportunities. Homelessness should be tackled, specifically with prevention measures and by promoting access to permanent housing and the provision of enabling support services. Timely and equal access to affordable high-quality long-term care, in line with the Council Recommendation of 8 December 2022 ⁽³⁷⁾, and healthcare services, including prevention and health promotion, are particularly relevant, in light of potential future health risks and in a context of ageing societies. The potential of persons with disabilities to contribute to economic growth and social development should be further realised, in line with the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which invited Member States to set up employment and adult learning targets for persons with disabilities. The EU Roma Strategic Framework ⁽³⁸⁾ highlights the capacity within the marginalised Roma communities to reduce labour and skills shortages and aims to cut the employment gap between Roma and the general population by at least half. New technologies and evolving workplaces throughout the Union allow for more flexible working arrangements as well as improved productivity and work-life balance, whilst contributing to the Union’s green commitments. Those developments also bring new challenges to labour markets, affecting working conditions, health and safety at work and effective access to adequate social protection for workers and the self-employed. Member States, in collaboration with the social partners, should ensure that new forms of work organisation translate into quality jobs and adequate healthy and safe workplaces and working conditions, as well as work-life balance, active and healthy ageing, maintaining established labour and social rights, and strengthening the European social model.

- (16) The Integrated Guidelines should serve as a basis for the country-specific recommendations that the Council addresses to Member States. Member States should make full use of the European Social Fund Plus, the European Regional Development Fund, the Recovery and Resilience Facility and other Union funds, including the Social Climate Fund, the Just Transition Fund and InvestEU established by Regulation (EU) 2021/523 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽³⁹⁾, as well as the Technical Support Instrument, to foster quality employment and social investments, to

³⁶ Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (OJ C 417, 2.12.2020, p. 1).

³⁷ Council Recommendation of 8 December 2022 on access to affordable high-quality long-term care (OJ C 476, 15.12.2022, p. 1).

³⁸ Communication of the Commission of 7 October 2020, entitled ‘A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation’ (COM(2020) 620 final), and Council Recommendation of 12 March 2021 on Roma equality, inclusion and participation (OJ C 93, 19.3.2021, p. 1).

³⁹ Regulation (EU) 2021/523 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 March 2021 establishing the InvestEU Programme and amending Regulation (EU) 2015/1017 (OJ L 107, 26.3.2021, p. 30).

fight poverty and social exclusion, to combat discrimination, to ensure accessibility and inclusion, and to promote upskilling and reskilling opportunities for the workforce, lifelong learning and high-quality education and training for all, including digital literacy and skills in order to empower citizens with the knowledge and qualifications required for a digital, green and competitive economy. The amendments introduced by Regulation (EU) 2024/795 establishing a Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) and the recent Commission Communication on the modernised Cohesion policy: Mid-term review aim at aligning the support provided to new strategic priorities, including to address the shortage of skills in certain sectors, such as for the development and manufacturing of critical technologies, defence industry and sectors affected by decarbonisation and the green and digital transitions. Member States should also make full use of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers established by Regulation (EU) 2021/691 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽⁴⁰⁾ to support workers made redundant as a result of major restructuring events, such as socio-economic transformations that are the result of global trends and technological and environmental changes. While the Integrated Guidelines are addressed to Member States and the Union, they should be implemented in partnership with all national, regional and local authorities, closely involving parliaments, as well as the social partners and representatives of civil society.

- (17) The Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee should monitor how the relevant policies are implemented in light of the Employment Guidelines, in line with their respective mandates under the TFEU. Those committees and the Council preparatory bodies involved in the coordination of economic and social policies should work closely together. Policy dialogue between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission should be maintained, in particular as regards the Employment Guidelines.

- (18) The Social Protection Committee was consulted,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

The Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States, as set out in the Annex to Decision (EU) 2024/3134, are maintained for 2025 and shall be taken into account by the Member States in their employment policies and reform programmes.

Article 2

This Decision is addressed to the Member States.

Done at Brussels,

For the Council
The President

⁴⁰ Regulation (EU) 2021/691 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 on the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers (EGF) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1309/2013 (OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, p. 48).