EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Brussels, 4.3.2021
SWD(2021) 46 final

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Accompanying the

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

{COM(2021) 102 final}

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1. INTRODUCTION

This staff working document complements the Communication on the Action Plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights[1] by additional information.

It provides a summary of the broad consultation process carried out from 14 January to 30 November 2020 (section 2).

It then provides information on action taken to implement the Pillar since its proclamation by the European Parliament, Council and Commission in November 2017 at EU level, and with examples of national, regional and local action, including by social partners and relevant stakeholders (in section 3).

Finally, it gives background information on actions proposed to monitor progress in implementing the Action Plan, notably the targets for 2030 and the revised Social Scoreboard as set out in the Action Plan, and ongoing benchmarking exercises run by the Commission with the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee.

2. REPORT ON THE CONSULTATION

I. The consultation process

In its Communication on a Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions of 14 January 2020 the Commission committed to come forward in early 2021 with an Action Plan to turn the rights and principles enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights into reality.

Given the shared responsibility and competence for implementing the Pillar, the Commission invited all EU institutions and bodies, Member States, regions, municipalities, social partners, civil society organisations and think tanks at EU, national, regional and local level to present their views by November 2020 on further action needed and to pledge their own concrete commitments to implementing the Pillar.

The Commission collected written input via a web page[2] and organised dedicated consultation events in the Member States and with key stakeholders at EU level. The consultation was complemented by the strategic resolution of the European Parliament[3] and the opinions of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)[4] and the Committee of the Regions (CoR[5]).

In addition, the Commission ran a social media campaign and a Google ads campaign in October and November 2020 to drive submissions and pledges on the implementation of the Pillar and on its forthcoming Action Plan. The ads, covering all EU Member States,

[1] COM(2021) 102.

[2] http://ec.europa.eu/social/yoursay-socialeurope

[3] European Parliament (2020), Resolution on a Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions, P9_TA(2020)0371, Brussels, 17 December 2020 (hereinafter the 'European Parliament Resolution').

[4] European Economic and Social Committee (2020), Opinion on Industrial Transition Towards a Green and Digital European Economy: Regulatory Requirements and the Role of Social Partners and Civil Society, EESC-2020-03642, Brussels, 2 December 2020 (hereinafter the 'EESC Opinion').

[5] European Committee of the Regions (2020), Opinion on a Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions, COR 2020/02167, Brussels, 14 October 2020 (hereinafter the 'CoR Opinion').

featured statistical data from Member States with a call to action entitled 'You can change the statistic'. Overall, both campaigns generated over 202 million impressions and almost 1.8 million clicks on the campaign webpage.

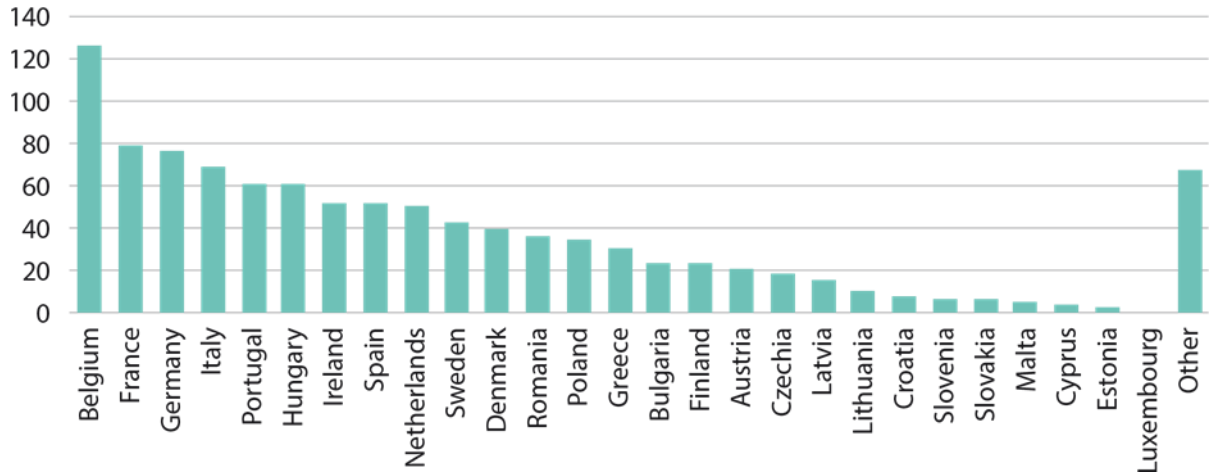
Have your Say web page

Via a dedicated web page, stakeholders and citizens were invited to submit written contributions (without pre-set questions). The Commission received 1 041 unique written contributions. 67.5% of submissions came from individual citizens. Some concrete proposals of citizens are reflected in this report. Many citizens took the opportunity to describe their personal situation, notably persons with disabilities, people experiencing poverty and women with care responsibilities.

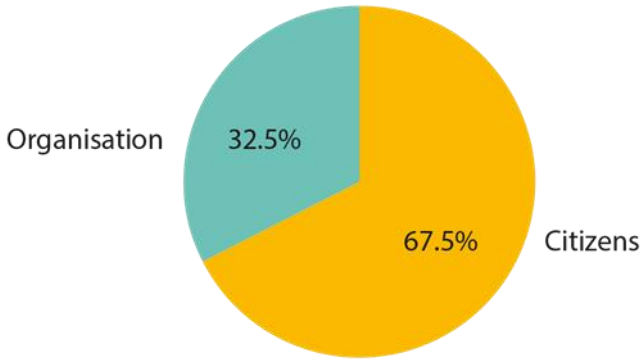
338 organisations (32.5% of total submissions) participated in the online consultation. Especially civil society groups (38.4% of organisations) and social partners (19% of organisations) took the opportunity to express their views. The majority of the participating organisations operate at EU level (41.7%) or national level (43.2%) and the rest at regional or local level.

In addition, the Commission received several pledges to take concrete actions to implement the Pillar, including from individual citizens, cities associated with the Eurocities network, the European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN) and the European Lean Managers Society (and its Italian affiliate). Some of these are reflected in Chapter 3 of this Staff Working Document.

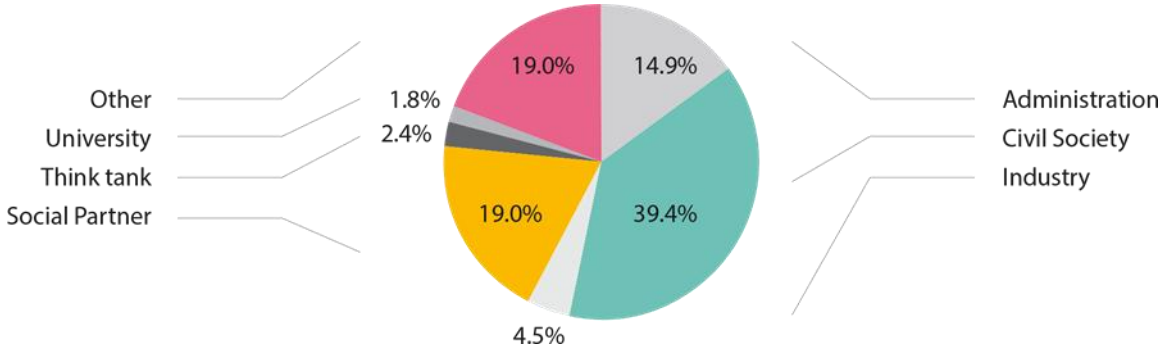
Contributions: Country of Origin (N=1041)



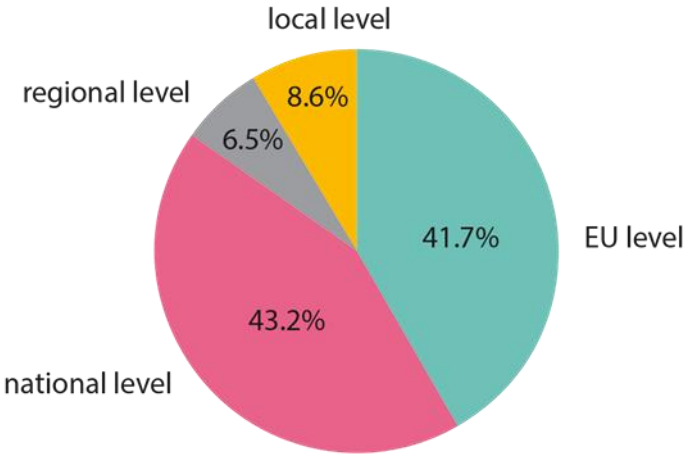
Distribution of contributions from citizens and organisations (N=1041)



Type of contributing Organisation (n=339)



Policy Level of Contributing Organisations (n=339)



Dedicated events

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the engagement process, which originally envisaged physical meetings at public events in various Member States, had to be adjusted. Virtual events became the standard practice.

The Commission organised **23 high-level webinars in EU Member States**, in cooperation with Commission Representations in these countries. The webinars were targeted at leading representatives of national, regional and local authorities, social partners, civil society organisations and think-tanks/academia. From the Commission side, these events involved Commissioner Schmit and senior staff from the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

On 8 June 2020, the Commission organised a **high-level hearing of EU social partners** with Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis and Commissioner Schmit. Existing regular meetings with EU social partners allowed for further exchanges. This concerns notably the Tripartite Social Summit (TSS), the Social Dialogue Committee (with EU and national cross-industry social partners), the Liaison Forum (with EU cross-industry and sectoral social partners) and the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees.

On 21 October 2020, the Commission held a **dedicated strategic dialogue meeting with representatives of EU civil society organisations**. An exchange with relevant EU agencies took place on 15 October 2020.

Inter-institutional process

In its resolution of 17 December 2020, the **European Parliament** *"[c]onsiders that the Porto agenda should take a double approach, i.e. it should focus on the social sustainability part of the EU's Sustainable Development 2030 Agenda, while at the same time paving the way for the materialisation of the [Pillar] principles through adopting an Action Plan as well as serving as a follow-up to the Lisbon strategy, setting ambitious and mandatory targets and instruments defining the road to social progress and sustainability; believes that this agenda could contain the strategic framework for a sustainable, fair and inclusive social Europe for 2030*[6]*".*

In addition, on 22 October 2020, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on employment and social policies of the euro area 2020. In that document, it calls on the Commission to *"develop a political strategy to replace Europe 2020 which aims to eradicate poverty, bringing together key instruments such as the European Green Deal, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Semester with a longer-term vision of an economy of well-being and the sustainability of our environment and social models, in line with the UN SDGs [Sustainable Development Goals]*[7]*".* Parliament also stressed the importance of implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights and achieving the UN SDGs, including in the context of NextGenerationEU, in order to ensure social fairness, social cohesion and prosperity for all.

The Commission raised the preparations for the Action Plan in several preparatory bodies of the **Council** in the social and employment field throughout 2020[8]. The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) of 3 December 2020 discussed the main conclusions of the consultation. 21 Member States submitted

[6] European Parliament Resolution.

[7] European Parliament (2020), Resolution on the employment and social policies of the euro area 2020, P9_TA(2020)0284, Strasbourg, 22 October 2020.

[8] Social Questions Working Party on 4 February 2020 , COREPER I on 14 February 2020, Social Protection Committee on 15 September 2020 and Employment Committee on 17 September 2020.

written contributions to the consultation, while most governments were heard as part of the dedicated webinars in the Member States.

Moreover, the Council conclusions on the 2020 Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy[9] and Joint Employment Report[10], adopted in April 2020, called on the Commission to "*develop, as a matter of priority a post-2020 strategy that includes clear and ambitious employment and social targets, based on the European Pillar of Social Rights and on the results of the Europe 2020 strategy, taking into account the 2019 joint EMCO-SPC assessment, and to involve EMCO and SPC in its development*[11]".

The Council conclusions of 23 November 2020 on the "2021 European Semester: employment and social aspects of the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021" highlighted "*that the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights should be implemented with due regard for respective competences and that Member States should make use of the significant EU funding available for the relevant reforms and investment, thereby mitigating the socio-economic impact of the crisis, accelerating the recovery and enhancing resilience"*, while *"taking note of the European Commission's intention to propose an Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights in early 2021*[12]*."*

At the request of the European Parliament, the **EESC** adopted an opinion on 2 December 2020. It states that *"[t]he EESC welcomes the action plan announced to implement the [Pillar]. The relevant EU labour law acquis should be reinforced to better support a just transition for workers. The action plan should set a minimum floor of rights at EU level, including: the right to health and safety covering all workers and new types of work; information, consultation, co-determination and participation rights not limited to transition situations; skills development rights; minimum standards for unemployment insurance; minimum wage; and collective bargaining*[13]".

The **CoR** adopted an opinion on a Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions on 12 October 2020, stressing *"the importance of a clear, coordinated and ambitious roadmap for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights*[14]".

II. Main findings from the consultation

<u>On the European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan in general</u>

A shared political commitment and responsibility

There is a strong consensus among most contributors to the consultation on the importance of harnessing the EU's social dimension. The values of the **social market**

[9] European Commission (2019), Communication from the Commission, 2020 Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy, COM/2019/650 final, Brussels, 17 December 2019.
[10] Joint Employment Report 2020 as adopted by the EPSCO Council on 8 April 2020.
[11] Council of the European Union (2020), Council Conclusions 7271/20 on the 2020 Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy and Joint Employment Report, 9 April 2020.
[12] Council of the European Union (2020), Council Conclusions 13246/20 on 2021 European Semester: employment and social aspects of the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021, 23 November 2020.
[13] EESC Opinion.
[14] CoR Opinion.

economy, embedded in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union, are what sets Europe apart in the world[15]. The European social model has shown its unique value in cushioning the harsh economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This model is embodied by the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

There is a broadly shared view that the **joint political commitment** to the Pillar, rooted in an interinstitutional proclamation[16], also entails a **shared responsibility for its implementation**[17]. Many Member States and organisations recall the European Council's Strategic Agenda 2019-2024, which calls for implementation of the Pillar "*at EU and Member State level, with due regard for respective competences*"[18]. The topic is also one of the priorities of the Portuguese EU Council Presidency of the first half of 2021, which will organise in May 2021 a European Social Summit in Porto[19].

The European Parliament recalls that *"initiatives originating from the European Pillar of Social Rights are a shared responsibility between the EU and the Member States*[20]*"*. It also calls for Treaty reforms, in particular *"the integration of the Pillar and a social progress protocol in the Treaties, protecting social rights at the same level as economic freedoms in the single market and the adoption of a Sustainable Development and Social Progress Pact making social and sustainable targets mandatory, in order to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*" and for an activation of the Treaty's passerelle clause in social policy[21].

While to a different extent across Member States, many powers relevant to the implementation of the Pillar are held by **regional and local authorities**[22]. As spelled out by the CoR *"a fair transition means recognising the key role of the local and regional level in delivering high-quality public services*[23]*"*. Eurocities has provided a substantial overview of key actions and pledges by its member cities to implement the Pillar and calls for a new pact between leaders of the EU and cities[24].

Social partners and civil society organisations also hold important levers for the implementation of the principles of the Pillar.

Both employers and trade unions stress the key role played by strong and autonomous social partners in designing employment and social policies, and hence in contributing

[15] European Parliament Resolution, Denmark, Minister for Labour and Social Affairs (webinar Germany).
[16] European Parliament, Council, European Commission (2017), Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights, 2017/C 428/09, 13 December 2017.
[17] Among others, European Parliament Resolution, Christa Schweng (President of the European Economic and Social Committee), Germany, Sweden, Romania, Basque Regional Government, BusinessEurope, SMEunited.
[18] European Council (2019), A new strategic agenda for the EU, 2019-2024, 20 June 2019; see among others, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Romania, Sweden, Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association (webinar Bulgaria), Confederation of Portuguese Business (webinar Portugal), CEC European Managers.
[19] Portugal.
[20] European Parliament Resolution.
[21] European Parliament Resolution; see also Land of Berlin; ACV-CSC, ABVV-FGTB, Austrian Chamber of Labour, FO and LO also call for a Treaty-based precedence of social rights over economic freedoms.
[22] European Parliament Resolution, EESC Opinion, Slovakia.
[23] CoR Opinion.
[24] Eurocities.

to the implementation of the Pillar and of social rights[25], even if employer confederations insist on the non-binding nature of the Pillar[26].

Multiple civil society organisations cite action taken by their members to implement the principles of the Pillar on the ground, notably by providing essential social support services to people[27].

Towards an Action Plan for a fair recovery and just transitions

Most contributors support the Commission's intention to come forward with an Action Plan to implement the Pillar. Two key objectives for the Action Plan transpire from the consultation.

First, it must anchor the Pillar at the heart of the **EU's recovery strategy**, supported in particular by REACT-EU and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)[28]. All over Europe, the pandemic has emphasised the vital importance of resilient social and health care systems and efficient public services[29].

Secondly, the Action Plan must enable people and the workforce to successfully navigate **the twin green and digital transformation** of societies and labour markets[30]. The COVID-19 pandemic has only accelerated existing trends[31]. In this perspective, everyone must be able to seize the new opportunities and enjoy appropriate protection against new risks[32].

Trade unions stress that the Action Plan must lead to an **enforceable minimum floor of rights** for all types of workers[33]. Civil society organisations call for a rights-based approach[34], which empowers citizens, gives them access to adequate income and quality services and holds governments to account[35].

In contrast, most employers express caution on the Commission's intention to come forward with an EU-level Action Plan. They are mostly of the opinion that the EU-level **coordination of national reforms** must be strengthened to improve the functioning of labour markets and to make sure Member States deliver on the reforms they already promised to take[36].

[25] Among others, ETUC, BusinessEurope, EK, CNEL, TCO, CEEMET.
[26] Dansk Erhverv, BDA, ZPP, VBO-FEB, BAVC, Gesamtmetall, Teknikföretagen, CEEMET.
[27] See in particular Caritas Europe, FEANTSA, EASPD, BAG WfbM.
[28] European Parliament Resolution, BusinessEurope, Confesercenti Nazionale, WEC.
[29] Croatia, France, ETUC, SGI Europe, AGE Platform, UGT, ACV-CSC, ABVV-FGTB, European Social Insurance Platform.
[30] European Parliament Resolution, EESC, Cyprus, Finland, Croatia, Mayor of Strasbourg (webinar France), ETUC.
[31] EKD, CNEL.
[32] EESC Opinion, ACV-CSC, ABVV-FGTB, TELA.
[33] ETUC.
[34] Social Platform; ee also European Parliament Resolution, Eurodiaconia, FO and the OHCHR Regional Office. EWL, ERGO, MMM, Housing Rights Watch, IHPG also make this point in their respective fields of expertise.
[35] Social Platform, ENIL, ENNHRI.
[36] BusinessEurope, BDA.

The need for a strategic approach

EU institutions and bodies, several Member States, trade unions and civil society organisations call for a **strategic orientation of the Action Plan**[37]. It should provide a successor to the Europe 2020 Strategy and set out the road towards the social sustainability objectives of the **2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda** and its **17 Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs**[38]**)**.

In particular, the European Parliament calls for a Porto Agenda, arguing that the "*EU Social Summit planned for May 2021 in Porto would be the perfect opportunity for adoption of this agenda at the highest political level by the leaders of the 27 Member States and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission.* [39]"

The Action Plan should be consistent with the objectives of the **European Green Deal** and the **Commission's Communication on Shaping Europe's digital future**, as key components of the Commission's growth strategy[40]. With regard to cushioning the social impact of the shift to climate-neutrality, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) recalls that delaying action on climate change would hit people in situations of vulnerability hardest[41]. The EESC calls for a new social contract while the ACT 4 SOCIAL EU coalition and the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) propose a 'Social Deal' based on EU-wide social minimum standards, with the Pillar as a compass for economic policy coordination[42].

The European Parliament, anti-poverty organisations and some trade unions call for the Action Plan to contain an **overarching strategy to eradicate poverty** by 2030[43].

To remedy the COVID-19 pandemic's already observed and foreseeable continued negative impact on inequalities, some Member States and stakeholders cite the increased urgency of living up to the basic premises of the Pillar, notably **promoting social cohesion and convergence** and responding to the **new opportunities and challenges** of our quickly developing societies and labour markets[44]. Several contributions illustrate the acceleration of pre-existing trends, for instance on the digitalisation of work, and warn about the risk of new divides and of widening

[37] European Parliament Resolution, Belgian Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, Czechia, ETUC, Social Platform.
[38] European Parliament Resolution, EESC Opinion, CoR Opinion, Sweden, Portugal, OHCHR, ETUC, Social Platform, German Association for Public and Private Welfare, Caritas Europe, AGE Platform, BAGFW, Eurodiaconia, ATD Fourth World (ATD).
[39] European Parliament Resolution.
[40] Latvia, Hungary, Mayor of Strasbourg (webinar France), European Platform for Rehabilitation, Housing Europe, BAGFW.
[41] WWF.
[42] EESC Opinion, DGB, ACT 4 SOCIAL EU, CESI.
[43] See for instance European Parliament Resolution, EAPN, Caritas Europa, Eurodiaconia, ETUC, CIN-NIC.
[44] Netherlands, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia, Spanish State Secretary for Social Rights (webinar Spain), MEDEF (webinar France), ETUC, ACV-CSC, ABVV-FGTB, 3F, DFK.

inequalities between groups of citizens within Member States and between different Member States and regions[45].

Employer organisations stress the importance of **economic competitiveness as a basis for social progress**[46]. In their view, the Action Plan should stimulate structural reforms and not hamper the ability of companies, in particular SMEs, to create jobs and hire people[47]. Some wish to see a structural competitiveness check before the Commission adopts any proposal for EU legislation[48]. Some Member States recall that social convergence is essential to combat social dumping[49].

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the European Network of Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) and Amnesty International highlight Member States' obligations under international human rights law and recommend linking the Action Plan with the revised European Social Charter, the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Commission's New Strategy for the Implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU[50]. The French organisations French General Confederation of Labour – Workers' Force (FO) and ATD Fourth World (ATD) call on the EU to ratify the revised European Social Charter[51].

Ensuring consistency with other policies

Most contributions focus on the role of employment and social policies in implementing the Pillar. Many also argue that such policies can only be successful if there is **consistency with wider economic, budgetary and fiscal policies**[52]. Eurocities calls on the Commission to perform a social impact assessment of all planned EU policies, especially in relation to its recovery strategy. They also stress the need to reinforce the social dimension of the Green Deal, including through action for affordable housing and against energy poverty under the Renovation Wave[53]. The ENNHRI, Amnesty International and EuroMed Rights call for systematic human rights impact assessments on all proposals by the EU and its Member States[54]. For the ENNHRI, national human rights institutions should have a consultative role in EU policy-making[55].

With regard to the planned update of the **new Industrial Strategy**, the EESC calls on the Commission to strengthen its social dimension[56], while the Federation of German

[45] CoR Opinion, Social Platform, AGE Platform.
[46] BAVC, Teknikföretagen, EFIC.
[47] EESC Opinion, SMEunited, EK, ZPP, VBO-FEB, Danks Erhverv.
[48] ECEG, EFCI.
[49] Belgian Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, Netherlands, Austria.
[50] OHCHR, ENNHRI; Amnesty International points out that other relevant UN Conventions include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
[51] FO, ATD.
[52] EESC Opinion, Hungary, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (webinar Finland), COFACE, ONCE.
[53] Eurocities; similar point made by Simon Communities of Ireland, Eurodiaconia, Housing Europe.
[54] ENNHRI, EuroMed Rights, Amnesty International.
[55] ENNHRI.
[56] EESC Opinion.

Employers' Associations in the Metal and Electrical Engineering Industries (M+E) calls for the introduction of a European moratorium on further burdens on employers[57].

Several citizens echo the demand of the EESC and of trade unions to ensure **fair corporate taxation**, in particular of large multinational tech corporations[58]. This demand encompasses a financial transaction tax, which would ensure that stock market investors pay their fair share to finance social protection systems[59]. The Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour calls for progress on establishing an EU-wide Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base[60]. The EESC welcomes the creation of the Platform on Sustainable Finance and anticipates an acceleration in social taxonomy development[61].

Some contributors[62] call for the **revision of the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP)**. Trade unions propose to develop benchmarks for government expenditure within the SGP to ensure necessary funding for universal, affordable and high-quality public services[63]. The DGB suggests to add an investment protocol to the Treaty or at least to further develop the existing investment clause[64]. The Social Platform argues that there are at least four areas of public social expenditure which are productive and should be considered for exemption from the corrective and preventive arm of the SGP: 1) early childhood education and care, 2) primary and secondary education, 3) lifelong learning, training and active labour market policies, and 4) services that support autonomy, independence ands affordable quality social housing[65]. The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR) advocates for keeping essential services, including health care, education, food, water, sanitation, transportation and energy outside of any market-based competition framework, including by stopping the use of public-private partnerships[66].

A few contributions point to the need to mainstream the Pillar in the **EU's external action, enlargement negotiations and the European Neighbourhood Policy**[67]. The Austrian Federal State of Vienna notably calls for action against human trafficking[68]. The Euclid Network mentions the potential of promoting the social enterprise model as a global standard[69].

The CoR is convinced of the EU's capacity to positively affect working conditions in non-EU countries, by concluding ambitious **trade agreements**[70]. In that context, it supports

[57] M+E.
[58] EESC Opinion, eTIC; see also GI-ESCR.
[59] EESC Opinion, Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (webinar Czechia); see also Belgian Anti-Poverty Network.
[60] Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour.
[61] EESC Opinion; see also ACT 4 SOCIAL EU.
[62] EESC Opinion; see also Social Platform.
[63] ETUC; see also Social Platform.
[64] DGB; see also EESC Opinion, BAGFW, State of Vienna, ACT 4 SOCIAL EU and Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour on so-called 'golden rule'.
[65] Social Platform; on social housing see also Eurocities.
[66] GI-ESCR.
[67] ILO, EuroMed Rights, EASPD.
[68] State of Vienna.
[69] Euclid Network
[70] See also CIN-NIC, LO, ACT 4 SOCIAL EU.

tasking the new Chief Trade Enforcement Officer (CTEO) with enforcing labour and environmental standards in trade agreements, in consultation with social partners[71]. Swedish trade unions demand that the ratification and compliance with the core Conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) should be a precondition for negotiations on trade agreements with the EU. Dispute settlement mechanisms must not restrict the right of states to take decisions, the autonomy of the social partners or trade union rights[72]. The German Federal Association of Non-statutory Welfare (BAGFW) cautions that future EU free trade agreements should exclude social and health services, in order to warrant access to essential services[73]. Autism-Europe asks the Commission to promote the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[74].

Setting targets

The European Parliament, the Council (in particular its Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs configuration), social partners and civil society organisations advocate setting a number of **employment and social targets** as part of a strategic post-2020 framework to strengthen cohesion and convergence and to meet the UN SDGs.

The European Parliament highlights that "*an ambitious political agenda with identifiable, feasible, sustainable, clear and mandatory targets and indicators of social sustainability must be designed*[75]*."* These targets and objectives, both qualitative and quantitative, and with a 2030 time horizon, should be reinforced through dedicated monitoring and mandatory enforceability and include the following:

- collective bargaining coverage of 90%;
- reduce long-term and youth unemployment by at least 50%;
- eliminate involuntary temporary and part-time employment;
- eliminate the practices of zero-hour contracts and bogus self-employment;
- 80% of jobs created being middle or high paying and concentrated in sustainable sectors;
- eliminate work-related deaths and reducing work-related illnesses;
- at least 80% of corporations covered by sustainable corporate governance agreements;
- a ratio of at least one labour inspector per 10 000 employed persons;
- every child in the EU must have full access to quality and free healthcare, education and childcare, is living in a decent house and receives an adequate nutrition;
- eliminate the gender pay gap - and pension gap - with a 0% target;
- eeach at least 40% representation of women in senior management positions;
- at least 30% of all newly built houses must constitute affordable housing for low and middle income groups;

[71] CoR Opinion.
[72] LO; the European Parliament insists on the ratification of ILO Conventions 81 (labour inspection) and 129 (labour inspection in the agricultural sector).
[73] BAGFW.
[74] Autism-Europe.
[75] European Parliament Resolution.

- eradicate homelessness;
- eliminate energy poverty.

According to the Social Platform *"the Action Plan must define ambitious and concrete targets and timelines for the realisation of each of the 20 principles"* [76]. Together with civil society organisations active in the fight against poverty, it calls for a 50% poverty-reduction target (including child poverty) and a commitment to ending extreme poverty and homelessness by 2030[77].

Social partners call for a revaluing of the Barcelona targets on childcare, notably by a gradual increase of the 33% target on enrolment of children under the age of 3 to 50%[78]. The European Platform for Rehabilitation asks for sub-targets to be added, including targets on employment and poverty of persons with disabilities[79]. For several organisations, the Action Plan should set a quantified target on the accessibility and quality of long-term care services, in particular home-care and community-based services[80].

Belgian employers support a cross-cutting employment rate target of 80%[81]. The European Youth Forum asks that Member States should invest at least 6% of their GDP in education and asks for a headline target of 50% reduction in the NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) rate among people aged 15-29. It also proposes a headline target of a 50% reduction of the proportion of workers on temporary contracts, with a corresponding sub-target for the age group 15-29[82]. The European Women's Lobby (EWL) asks targets for men's take-up of paternity, parental and care leave[83].

While the Council supports the setting of employment and social targets at EU level[84], some Member States stress the very different social performance of Member States and the need to make sure that the EU framework is **compatible with the different national contexts** and starting points[85].

Sweden argues for complementing EU targets with tailored national commitments[86]. Some civil society organisations point out that better performing Member States should have more ambitious targets[87].

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[76] Social Platform.
[77] EAPN, FEANTSA, Eurodiaconia, Eurochild; see also State of Vienna, SOSTE; the European Youth Forum asks for a sub-target of 50% for the age group 15-29.
[78] ETUC, Austrian Chamber of Labour, TCO, SGI Europe.
[79] European Platform for Rehabilitation.
[80] Eurocarers, EWL.
[81] VBO-FEB.
[82] European Youth Forum.
[83] EWL.
[84] Council of the European Union (2020), Council Conclusions 13246/20 on 2021 European Semester: employment and social aspects of the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021, 23 November 2020.
[85] Slovenia, Sweden, Minister of Labour and Pension System (webinar Croatia), Minister for Innovation and Technology (webinar Hungary), Minister for Labour and Social Policy (webinar Bulgaria), Federal Minister of Labour, Family and Youth (webinar Austria), President National Labour Council (webinar Belgium).
[86] Sweden.

On policy priorities and concrete proposals

The contributions received cover a vast array of topics. A number of core policy priorities can be identified, which the Action Plan should address in the context of the recovery and the green, digital and demographic transitions. Specific policy ideas and proposals are listed under each of these core policy priorities.

Education, training and skills

There is a consensus on the crucial role of skills to enable everyone to benefit from the new opportunities arising from the green and digital economy. Many contributors put a particular emphasis on closing the digital skills gap[88]. Some contributors highlight the role of soft skills, such as flexibility, the ability to work in a team, problem solving and other skills gaps[89]. Others emphasise entrepreneurial skills[90].

Skills should be acquired and kept up to date via access to universal, quality and affordable education, vocational education and training (VET) and lifelong learning[91]. This right should be warranted throughout the career and also be transferable between Member States[92]. Portugal would like to see EU support for national lifelong learning centres and common methodologies for lifelong learning guidance to individuals[93].

While the EESC, ILO, employers and several citizens stress that education and lifelong learning policies should be more geared towards labour market needs[94], some trade unions, civil society organisations and several citizens argue that the EU should take a broader perspective, targeting those with the lowest level of educational attainment, in adult literacy, and those from low income families or suffering from discrimination[95]. In this regard, the Zurich Insurance Group proposes to systematically include financial education into school curricula[96].

Several stakeholders highlight the indispensable role of EU funds, such as notably the European Social Fund plus (ESF+), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Erasmus+, the Just Transition Fund (JTF), the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme and InvestEU in investing in education and training, upskilling and reskilling[97]. Employers call on Member States to fully utilise financial resources, particularly those available through the RRF, to invest in digital skills provision and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) attainment. The national

[87] Belgian Anti-Poverty Network, NEXEM, Finnish Federation for Social Affairs and Health SOSTE (webinar Finland).
[88] Ministry of Education and Research (webinar Estonia), BusinessEurope, Eurocities, Inclusion Europe, UNIA (webinar Belgium), DigitalES (webinar Spain), Network Social Europe Baden-Württemberg.
[89] EUWIN, ACEFIR, AIM, EFEE, COMECE, MMM, Social Platform, DigitalES (webinar Spain), General Union confederation UGT (webinar Portugal).
[90] SMEunited, Euclid Network, European Microfinance Network and Microfinance Centre.
[91] SMEunited, Lifelong Learning Platform, EFEE.
[92] Belgian Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, ACEFIR.
[93] Portugal.
[94] EESC Opinion, ILO, BDA, DFK.
[95] ETUC, EAPN.
[96] Zurich Insurance Group; similar point made by Portugal.
[97] Autism-Europe, City of Utrecht, EuroHealthNet, TCO.

recovery and resilience plans should identify investments in skills as one of the priorities and be devised and implemented in cooperation with social partners[98].

Specific priorities and proposals were highlighted:

- There is widespread support for the Commission's **European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience**, including the proposed **Council Recommendation on vocational education and Training** and the **Pact for Skills**[99]**.** This also pertains to the Commission's announced proposals on **individual learning accounts**[100] and a **European approach to micro-credentials**[101]**.** The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) proposes to create a minimum training entitlement per worker per year and to measure companies' investments in employees' skills development[102]. Employers and trade unions from Denmark and Sweden express their concern about potential conflicts with already existing and tailor-made continued learning and competence development systems at national level, in particular when enshrined in collective agreements[103]. The European Youth Forum demands paid educational leave policies that allow young workers to attend training during work hours and at no personal cost[104].
- Italy and EU employer organisations call on the Commission to include in its Action Plan support to Member States to enhance the **quality and effectiveness of VET provision**, both initial and continuous, by involving employers in the timely updating of curricula and qualifications to better take into account changing labour market needs[105]. In this respect, the Sectoral Councils Alliance of Slovakia encourages the Commission to further support modern skills forecasting techniques and graduate tracking[106].
- The European Parliament, social partners and civil society organisations agree on the fundamental importance of inclusive **access to education and training**[107]. Portugal, the Austrian Chamber of Labour and several citizens call for accessible 'requalification schemes' offering all citizens the opportunity to re-orient their professional career[108]. The ILO, social partners and civil society organisations recall the importance of **basic skills** for social inclusion, and ask for targeted strategies for

[98] BusinessEurope, SGI Europe, AIM; similarly, the ILO, Belgian trade unions ACV-CSC and ABVV-FGTB, Mouvement international ATD Quart Monde consider that recovery plans should implement and be consistent with the Pillar.
[99] European Parliament Resolution, CoR Opinion, Germany, Czechia, Basque government, BusinessEurope.
[100] France, ETUC, France Stratégie, European Center for Social Welfare Policy and Research, CEC, Eurocadres; eTIC proposes to create an individual social rights account which would centralise rights to learning, but also pension or unemployment benefits.
[101] EASPD, EFIC.
[102] Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour, ETUC.
[103] Danks Erhverv, FH, TCO.
[104] European Youth Forum; see also CESI.
[105] Italy, BusinessEurope, SMEunited, SGI Europe, EFIC; see also CNOS-FAP and Puglia Region.
[106] Sectoral Councils Alliance of Slovakia.
[107] European Parliament Resolution, SMEunited, ETUC, BDA, ENSIE, ERGO, Autism-Europe.
[108] Austrian Chamber of Labour; see also Slovakian NGO People in Need.

groups in situations of vulnerability, in particular against the background of the green and digital transitions[109].

- As regards the education of **groups in situations of vulnerability and marginalisation**, the European Roma Grassroots Organisation (ERGO) and Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) stress i.a. the need for specific support structures to schools, free school meals and equipment[110] and a zero-tolerance policy against school segregation[111]. Romania highlights instruments such as an early warning mechanism for early school leaving, adapting integrated services to better serve disadvantaged children and a renewed focus on teacher education and on school infrastructure and equipment[112]. Autism-Europe calls for common European standards on the qualification of support teachers and assistants and guidelines on the prevention of abuse and bullying[113]. The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) and the European Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring (ECEBM) recall the importance of mentoring relationships and career guidance at an early age for successful long-term education outcomes[114].
- According to many contributors, particular attention should be paid to the **attainment of digital skills**, and the infrastructure that would facilitate online and blended learning[115]. Portugal supports a 'Digital Guarantee' to ensure inclusion throughout the lifecycle[116]. Like the European Parliament, a few citizens make the link between digitally accessible training pathways and social inclusion[117]. In this regard, Czechia stresses the link with the Commission's **Digital Education Action Plan**[118]. Estonia welcomes the particular focus of the proposed RRF on digital skills. It stresses: (1) digital skills in combination with self-directed digital learning pathways; (2) digital focus in lifelong learning; (3) green curricula and learning[119]. The Spanish association DigitalES highlights the need to modernise curricula in order to train specialists in digital occupations: cloud specialists, software developers, data analysts, etc. This cannot go without the promotion of more women in ICT sectors[120].
- The German DGB recommends to enhance the **European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships** by introducing more mandatory minimum standards, such as apprenticeship contracts, the determination of education goals, a remuneration for apprentices in companies and schools, the right to social

[109] EAPN, Eurodiaconia, Lifelong Learning Platform, ILO, ENSIE, LO, EFCI.
[110] Eurodiaconia, Interagency Institute, ERGO, FSG.
[111] ERGO, FSG; point also made by Eurochild and EASPD with regard to special schools for pupils with disabilities.
[112] Ministry of Education (webinar Romania); similar point made by Italy.
[113] Autism-Europe; similar point made by FENACERCI.
[114] EAEA, ECEBM; EMN and MFC also make this point with regard to the stimulation of entrepreneurship and business skills.
[115] ILO, BusinessEurope, M+E, Portugal, Inclusion Europe, Red de Políticas de Igualdad, AIM.
[116] Portugal.
[117] European Parliament Resolution.
[118] Czechia.
[119] Estonia and Estonian Ministry of Education and Research (webinar Estonia).
[120] DigitalES (webinar Spain).

protection, the right to career counselling and the inclusion of social partners in the design of the apprenticeship system[121].

- The ETUC, the Social Platform and its members stress the **validation of the non-formal acquisition of skills** in the workplace and in society, in particular regarding care competences[122]. The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) proposes that the Commission should have an EU-wide inventory of existing systems and procedures to validate non-formal education, training and life skills as the basis to elaborate recommendations to EU Member States with non-existing or underdeveloped validation systems[123]. To validate non-formal workplace, the EUWIN proposes a skills passport held by all workers to validate skills learnt on the job[124]. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) asks to further develop instruments like the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals and the Council of Europe's European Qualification Passport for Refugees, in order to simplify the recognition of third-country qualifications[125].
- Contributors from Portugal see an untapped potential in the **mobility of learners**[126]. France Stratégie puts forward far-reaching proposals for an enhanced mobility of students and learners: gradually, the validity of every higher education degree should be made conditional upon a six month period in another EU Member State. On top, there should be a European programme for mobility of 15-17 year old students and a European loan scheme for trainings in occupations in high demand[127].

Equal opportunities

Many citizens and organisations point out that the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected children, young people, women, older people, persons with disabilities, single parents, mobile workers, LGBTIQ people and groups in situations of vulnerability[128]. While existing inequalities are likely to deepen, the ongoing transformation of our labour market and society also bring opportunities to close the gaps, instead of further deepening them[129].

Civil society organisations recall that for equal opportunities to exist for everyone, discrimination on all grounds covered in Article 21 of the European Charter of

[121] DGB; a similar point is made by the ILO.
[122] Eurocarers, MMM, ETUC, Social Platform, EAPN, European Platform for Rehabilitation; see also EESC Opinion, State of Vienna, ACEFIR, Lifelong Learning Platform, MMM, EAEA, ENSIE, Catalan social action organisations.
[123] EAPN.
[124] EUWIN, Land of Berlin.
[125] ECRE.
[126] Portugal, CEC European Managers, DFK, Professor João Cerejeira (webinar Portugal); see also Social Platform, which considers that learning mobility of all kinds of learners (VET and adult education) should be more inclusive and better promoted.
[127] France Stratégie.
[128] European Parliament Resolution, SGI Europe, Maltese Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, CPME, Belgian Anti-Poverty Network, European Youth Forum, EWL, ILGA-Europe.
[129] Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (webinar Greece), Germany, BAGFW.

Fundamental Rights (and beyond)[130] and in all fields must be tackled and a new legislative initiative by the Commission is needed[131].

Eurocities, trade unions and civil society organisations at EU level call on the Commission to develop a systematic gender mainstreaming[132] and equality impact assessment and monitoring[133], to be enshrined in EU policies, monitoring and budgeting relevant to the implementation of the Pillar. Many contributions focus on the crucial role of accessible and affordable quality childcare for closing gender gaps[134]. The ETUC is in favour of new benchmarks for work-life balance, such as childcare facilities and days of work lost due to family care[135].

The European Disability Forum (EDF) and its members welcome the Commission's commitment to present a new Disability Rights Strategy in 2021. They recall that the obligations arising from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should be taken on board across all measures implementing the Pillar involving persons with disabilities and their representative organisations[136]. Several citizens with disabilities provide testimonies of their personal situation of social exclusion.

Organisations representing Roma confirm the need for a new EU Strategic Framework targeting Roma equality, inclusion and participation, that the Commission has presented in the meantime[137]. They encourage the Commission to engage more directly with Roma and their representative associations, often facing multiple discrimination and weak interaction with public authorities[138].

The Austrian Chamber of Labour sees the need to address possible systematic discrimination caused by the development and increased use of artificial intelligence based applications in companies' human resources policies[139].

Specific priorities and proposals were highlighted:

- Some Member States, the Social Platform and its members and some trade unions urge the EU to make progress in the adoption by the Council of the Commission's proposal for a h**orizontal Equal Treatment Directive**, which provides for equal treatment based on sexual orientation, age, disability and religion or belief in diverse areas[140]. Civil society organisations would welcome a new proposal for a

[130] ENSIE, ATD; the Belgian Combat Poverty, Insecurity and Social Exclusion Service suggests to add the social situation or social origin amongst discrimination grounds covered by EU legislation. ATD asks to entrust the EU Fundamental Rights Agency with a study on the matter.
[131] Social Platform, German Association for Public and Private Welfare, Eurodiaconia, Equinet.
[132] ETUC, Social Platform, Eurocities, EWL, Red de Políticas de Igualdad.
[133] Equinet.
[134] WorkEqual, DGB, DFK, ZDH, State of Vienna, EASPD.
[135] ETUC.
[136] EDF, Austrian Disability Council, European Platform for Rehabilitation, ONCE, EUD, Autism-Europe.
[137] A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation, COM(2020) 620 final, 7 October 2020.
[138] ERGO, 1 Hungary initiative, Amalipe Bulgaria.
[139] Austrian Chamber of Labour.
[140] Estonia, Italy, Social Platform, EURORDIS, Austrian Chamber of Labour, German Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, Inclusion Europe, Equinet, Autism-Europe, Eurocadres.

directive to implement the anti-discrimination principle for all citizens in matters of social protection, education and access to public goods and services, in line with relevant Treaty provisions[141].

- Some Member States and stakeholders explicitly ask the Commission to strengthen **gender mainstreaming** across policies[142]. The German trade union DGB specifies that this requires concrete goals for the implementation of gender-sensitive regulatory impact assessments and gender budgeting[143]. As discrimination based on sex is often combined with other factors, some civil society stakeholders insist on an **intersectional perspective**[144]. In relation to this, the EDF advocates for the full mainstreaming of the rights of women and girls in the new European Disability Rights Strategy[145]. Likewise, the Commission's EU Roma strategic framework, which the Commission presented in the meantime, should take into account that Roma women are subjected to multiple forms of discrimination[146]. Some citizens ask for increased attention for the increasing underperformance of young men in education and employment. The European Youth Forum asks for including age-based discrimination in the mandate of equality bodies under all relevant EU equality legislation[147].
- The **Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025**[148] is broadly welcomed[149]. Civil society organisations already call for ambitious measures to ensure its full implementation[150]. Promoting employment of women in male-dominated sectors and better-paid sectors, such as STEM receives a wide support[151]. The European Parliament, various Member States, stakeholders and citizens show their support to a **Pay Transparency Directive** including a set of flanking measures on pay equality[152], while employers express their opposition or scepticism[153]. The ILO invites the European Commission and its Member States to join the Equal Pay International Coalition[154]. In concrete terms, WorkEqual points out that companies should be obliged to submit mandatory reports on the gender pay gap with plans on

[141] German Association for Public and Private Welfare, BAGFW.
[142] Finland, Sweden, ETUC, Eurocities,TCO .
[143] Belgian Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue.
[144] NVR, ONCE, EDF.
[145] EDF.
[146] Social Platform.
[147] European Youth Forum.
[148] European Commission (2020), A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, COM(2020) 152 final, 5 March 2020.
[149] Denmark, Romania, Social Platform, Eurodiaconia, German Association for Public and Private Welfare, Caritas Europe, Land of Berlin.
[150] Social Platform, IFSW, REIF, EWL, TCO.
[151] Italy, National Commission for the Promotion of Equality of Malta (webinar Malta), Social Platform, BDA, CEMR.
[152] European Parliament Resolution, France, Portugal, Belgium, ETUC, Social Platform, CEMR, Lithuanian trade unions, STTK, Central Organisation of Finnish trade unions, DGB, Caritas Europe, National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (webinar Malta), EWL, NVR, Austrian Chamber of Labour, State of Vienna, Land of Berlin, Equinet.
[153] BDA, Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association, Austrian Economic Chambers.
[154] ILO.

how to reduce it[155]. One academic refers to the model implemented in Iceland, whereby companies only obtain their license if they undertake an audit in the field of gender equality and make it available to workers[156]. Beyond pay transparency measures, the European Parliament, some Member States and stakeholders call for unblocking negotiations on the Commission proposal to improve gender balance in **company boards**[157]**.** The Representation of the French Social Security Institutions to the EU (REIF) recommends to modernise Directive 79/7/EEC on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security. REIF considers that the Directive should cover the diversity of family situations and include survivors' pensions, family-benefits and collection of alimony payments and social assistance[158].

- ILGA-Europe stresses the importance of ensuring synergies with existing and future thematic strategies which fall under different Pillar principles, such as the **LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025** and of directly involving civil society and under-represented groups in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of EU policies and programmes that concern them[159]. Many contributors call on the EU to incentivise the equal distribution of **care and housekeeping tasks** between men and women.[160] Make Mothers Matter (MMM) notably proposes to review Council Regulation (EC) No 530/1999 concerning structural statistics on earnings and on labour costs to improve data collection on time-use[161]. Furthermore, several stakeholders recommend ensuring a strong link to accessible, affordable and quality long-term care and childcare services, to lift the unequal share of care responsibilities of women (see also sub-section on social protection, health and long-term care) [162]. Some contributors call for the introduction of care credits[163] or paid care leave for all citizens[164] and several citizens demand an EU-wide equal parental leave scheme for women and men. Several stakeholders welcome the **Work-Life Balance Directive**[165] and encourage adequate work-life balance policies[166], higher minimum rights[167] and EU-level recommendations on removing financial disincentives for second earners to work more[168]. The Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe (FAFCE) calls for a legal recognition of the

[155] WorkEqual.
[156] Associate Professor JosAnn Cutajar, University of Malta (webinar Malta).
[157] European Parliament Resolution, Belgian Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, France, ETUC, STTK, Austrian Chamber of Labour, Land of Berlin, Eurocadres, Equinet.
[158] REIF.
[159] ILGA-Europe
[160] Portugal, German Association for Public and Private Welfare, SS BOFOS, Caritas Europe.
[161] MMM.
[162] Greece, ETUC, BDA, Social Platform, Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association, WorkEqual, UNICEF (webinar Spain), Society Development Foundation (webinar Romania), Social Justice Ireland.
[163] EWL, Eurocarers, MMM.
[164] European Center for Social Welfare Policy and Research, CESI.
[165] Autism-Europe, Social Platform.
[166] Among others, EWL, Eurocarers, COFACE, REIF, MMM, Social Justice Ireland, ACT 4 SOCIAL EU coalition, Forum Terzo Settore, ZDH, FAFCE.
[167] Department for Industry and Employment Relations, Office of the Prime Minister (webinar Malta).
[168] REIF.

phenomenon of maternal mobbing in the workplace[169]. The EWL and MMM propose to revise the Maternity Leave Directive to extend the period of paid leave[170].

- Some respondents emphasise the need to combat **violence against women**[171]. From a legal perspective, civil society organisations and trade unions urge the EU to ratify the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence[172]. The EWL and its members also ask for a dedicated EU strategy and directive for its implementation[173]. As part of a comprehensive EU strategy, Social Platform proposes to appoint an EU coordinator on ending violence against women and girls, advocates for an adequate and systematic data collection on gender-based violence (including segregated data per age group) and combating gender stereotyping[174]. The Dutch Section of the International Commission of Jurists (NJCM) suggests legislation allowing the eviction of the violent partner[175], while the Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights (PpDM) states that services to protect victims of male violence against women should be considered essential[176].

- Apart from representative organisations of persons with disabilities, the European Parliament, some Member States regions and stakeholders also explicitly welcome the prospect of a new **European Disability Rights Strategy**[177]. Social Platform demands the inclusion of a strong gender dimension in the European Disability Rights Strategy[178], while the ETUC requests to consider the impact of the pandemic on persons with disabilities[179]. The EDF recalls that disability issues should be mainstreamed, including in the Youth Guarantee, the Child Guarantee, the European Gender Equality Strategy and the updated Skills Agenda.[180] The European Network on Independent Living (ENIL) stresses the need to take into account personal assistance expenses in all EU labour law initiatives aimed at promoting fair working conditions[181]. The NJCM proposes to establish a platform for exchange of best practices and to develop more guidance to Member States on the application and implementation of rights of persons with disabilities[182]. Autism-Europe

[169] FAFCE.
[170] EWL, MMM.
[171] ETUC, Social Platform, Eurodiaconia, CEMR, Eurocities, German Association for Public and Private Welfare, Land of Berlin, State of Vienna, BAGFW, Inclusion Europe.
[172] ETUC, Social Platform, CESI, Autism-Europe.
[173] EWL, PpDM, Autism-Europe.
[174] Social Platform.
[175] NJCM.
[176] PpDM.
[177] European Parliament Resolution, Germany, Denmark, France, Catalonia, Red Cross EU office German Association for Public and Private Welfare, EAPN Ireland, NJCM, DGUV.
[178] Social Platform.
[179] ETUC.
[180] EDF, EAPN in Ireland.
[181] ENIL.
[182] NJCM.

recommends going beyond, by harmonising assessment criteria for disability status recognition at national level[183].

- EDF, Social Platform and EAPN suggest establishing a **Disability Rights Guarantee**, to which Member States should commit, to ensure that all persons with disabilities who declare themselves able to and/or wanting to enter the labour market receive a good quality offer of employment, a traineeship, an apprenticeship or VET[184]. The Disability Rights Guarantee (and indeed all other EU initiatives for fostering employment) must be open to persons with disabilities receiving disability allowance[185]. The Belgian association of social profit enterprises Verso calls for mechanisms which oblige companies to hire a quota of persons with disabilities or, alternatively, to outsource certain tasks to organisations employing persons with disabilities[186]. The Finnish Pension Alliance (TELA) calls for more attention to medical and vocational rehabilitation services in order to prolong working lives, in particular of people with partial workability[187].

- Several contributors stress the opportunities technology provides to involve persons with disabilities and older persons in society, increase independence, and offer solutions for individuals in situations of vulnerability[188]. Some voices recall the need to further **improve accessibility** in different communication and information channels, in particular with services of general interest[189]. One Romanian citizen calls on authorities to make education material accessible to children with disabilities and has set up a website to distribute accessible school books[190].

- For several civil society respondents, it is important that the new **EU Roma strategic framework,** that the Commission has presented in the meantime, is linked to the implementation of the Pillar, but also the European Green Deal and the UN SDGs[191]. Social Platform welcomes the inclusion of the fight against antigypsyism and poverty and the promotion of the participation of Roma in political, social, economic and cultural life as horizontal objectives[192]. However, it regrets the lack of ambition of the commitments set in the area of education, health, housing, the fight against antigypsyism and discrimination and participation[193].

- Amnesty International argues that the Pillar should apply also to groups such as asylum seekers and undocumented migrants[194]. In this regard, the EWL calls for the

[183] Autism-Europe.
[184] EDF, Social Platform and EAPN.
[185] EDF, EAPN.
[186] Verso.
[187] TELA.
[188] Portugal, DigitalES (webinar Spain), Cyprus Paraplegic Organisation (webinar Cyprus).
[189] European Parliament Resolution, Paged Initiative, Catalan social action organisations, Iniciativa Social Integral Per Al Benestar, Austrian Disability Council.
[190] Cereunmanual.ro.
[191] ERGO, Social Platform; similar observation made by Mouvement international ATD Quart Monde
[192] The new Framework is also explicitly welcomed by Land of Berlin, which calls for adding a sanction mechanism.
[193] Social Platform.
[194] Amnesty International; a similar point is made by ATD.

EU and its Member States to accede to the UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families[195]. ECRE calls for a strong link with the Commission's **action plan on integration and inclusion**, its scoreboard and the **anti-racism action plan**[196]. On the latter, the EU should ensure that all Member States develop and adopt national action plans against racism and adopt common principles for their implementation, carrying out a series of measures: 1) proposing potential new legislation to address racism in law enforcement; 2) ensuring that EU policies benefit all and do not contribute to further racial inequalities; 3) improving racial diversity and representation within governments and EU institutions[197].

Quality jobs, fair working conditions and social dialogue

Thanks to the unprecedented efforts at all levels to preserve jobs and livelihoods of workers, notably via short-time work schemes, unemployment has only moderately increased in 2020 and is projected to increase further in 2021.

In this context, there is a strong consensus on the important role that the European instrument for temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks (SURE) has played and continues to play during the pandemic. The European Parliament asks to examine the introduction of a permanent instrument and notably demands to ensure the compliance of beneficiaries with fundamental values enshrined in the Treaties and a number of social conditions[198]. Some Member States and trade unions explicitly ask for an extension or its replacement by a permanent instrument to accompany workers through transitions[199]. However, the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH) insists on the short-term nature of the scheme[200]. SMEunited highlights the benefits of attaching training, upskilling and reskilling measures to short-time work schemes and of their extension to self-employed[201]. Italy adds that continued efforts remain necessary to effectively integrate long-term unemployed into the labour market, in synergy between public employment services and other social services[202].

Employers stress the need to focus on competitiveness, innovation, flexibility and productivity as a means to allow new job creation and social progress[203]. Open, flexible and mobile labour markets are needed to support new and more diverse career paths and smooth transitions between jobs, sectors and employment statuses[204]. The German Employers' Associations BDA and ZDH argue that flexible forms of employment are

[195] EWL.
[196] ECRE; point also made by Catalonia, Eurocadres, the city of Utrecht, the United Nations Human Rights Europe Regional Office, ERGO.
[197] Social Platform, NJCM.
[198] European Parliament Resolution.
[199] Belgian Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue; Portugal; ETUC; DGB; EKD; see also State of Vienna.
[200] ZDH.
[201] SMEunited.
[202] Italy; see also SMEunited. Additional comments and proposals on this pint are made by TCO, Makettt,
[203] SGI Europe, FFE, Association of Swedish Engineering Industries ("Teknikföretagen").
[204] BusinessEurope, Industriarbetsgiverna, M+E; Confederation of Portuguese Business (webinar Portugal), Department of Legal and Socio-labour Affairs.

wrongly vilified as precarious, as they prevent unemployment by making it easier to join or re-join the labour market and often support a better work-life balance of employees[205]. BusinessEurope and SMEunited call for European action to improve reform coordination in the area of active labour market policies. This improved coordination process should involve social partners[206].

There is widespread support for the reinforced Youth Guarantee[207]. The Initiative Diverse Young Leaders underlines that more needs to be done for young people with a migration background, including EU citizens, notably by ensuring equal access to internships (whose allowances are usually not adapted to the cost of life) and providing targeted transition programmes from education to work[208].

Several contributors draw the attention to the job creation potential and the inclusiveness of the social economy and welcome the prospect of a dedicated Commission Action Plan on the Social Economy in 2021[209]. According to the Euclid Network, it should focus on the visibility of social enterprises, access to skilled labour and business support, access to finance, access to (public) markets and the promotion of the model at global level[210].

In the light of the major transformation of the labour market, many contributions ask for a renewed focus on the quality of jobs, starting by fair remuneration. While employers and Nordic trade unions express concerns about the Commission's proposal for a legal instrument and the respect of the subsidiarity principle[211], the EESC, most trade unions and civil society organisations welcome the Commission's proposal for a Directive on adequate minimum wages in the European Union[212] as a means to support upwards convergence of wages and of the quality of social dialogue and collective bargaining in the EU[213]. Some trade unions see scope for further legal provisions, which should i.a. guarantee workers a minimum number of working hours[214], prevent the use of zero-hour contracts[215] and forbid derogations for categories like interns[216] or workers

[205] BDA, ZDH, similar point made by SMEunited; see also EFCI for a specific view on the industrial cleaning and facility services sector.
[206] BusinessEurope, SMEunited.
[207] Caritas Europe, Eurocities, Italy, France, Denmark, Slovenia, Ministry of Economy and Employment (webinar Finland), German Youth Forum, State of Vienna.
[208] Initiative Diverse Young Leaders; on people with a migration background see also NVR.
[209] France, Portugal, Catalonia, SGI Europe, Social Economy Europe, UDES, Caritas Europe, Portuguese Association of Mutualities, CECOP, Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (webinar Austria), Eurocities, CIN-NIC, CNEL.
[210] Euclid Network.
[211] Swedish Confederation of Transport Enterprises, Austrian Economic Chambers, ZDH, Dansk Erhverv, EFCI, LO.
[212] Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on adequate minimum wages in the European Union COM/2020/682 final: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020PC0682
[213] EESC Opinion, ACV-CSC, ABVV-FGTB, Austrian Chamber of Labour, STTK, Eurodiaconia, CNEL; see also France.
[214] CFDT.
[215] European Parliament Resolution, FH.
[216] Portugal, European Youth Forum.

in sheltered employment[217]. According to civil society organisations, minimum wages should be set at 60% of Member States' median wage[218] but concurrently adjusted to the actual cost of living including additional payments for access to social services, that may be determined by regular scientific research[219]. The European Parliament asks the Commission to carry out a study on a living wage index, which could serve as a reference tool for social partners[220].

In line with long-standing demands by social partners and the European Parliament, Sweden, Denmark and Belgium call on the European Commission to contribute to a stronger social dialogue at national level, inter alia by capacity building, promoting transparency and the exchange of best practice between Member States and by giving more attention to social dialogue in the European Semester and in the Commission's impact assessments[221]. Sweden and Denmark also advocate for giving social partners more margin for the implementation of European legislation, or even for the derogation thereof[222].

As regards social dialogue at company level, the European Parliament, the EESC and trade unions also call for a further development of the EU acquis on worker information, consultation and participation and on European Works Councils[223].

Some Member States, the European Parliament and most trade unions call for EU regulatory action on new forms of work, in particular platform workers[224], ensuring the same working conditions, including access to collective bargaining[225], and social protection for workers on open-ended employment contracts and atypical workers[226]. They oppose the creation of a 'third statute' between self-employed and workers[227]. The EESC sees the need to define a legal status for labour in the digital platform economy[228]. Employers are against new EU legislation regulating the working conditions of platform workers, whether self-employed or employee, pointing at the protection under existing legal provisions[229]. The European Parliament asks a targeted revision of EU competition law, so as to allow collective price-setting for the precarious self-

[217] ONCE.
[218] ERGO, Autism-Europe; see also Land of Berlin, which adds a 50% of average wage threshold.
[219] Social Platform, EAPN.
[220] European Parliament Resolution.
[221] Belgian Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, VBO-FEB, Austrian Chamber of Labour, CFE-CGC.
[222] Denmark, Sweden. Point also made by Association of the Free Trade Unions of Slovenia.
[223] European Parliament Resolution, ETUC, DGB, EESC Opinion; for different reasons EFCI supports a flexibilisation of Council Directive 2001/23/EC.
[224] Latvia, France, Italy, Portugal, Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, Land of Berlin, STTK; see also ACT 4 SOCIAL EU, AEIP.
[225] Eurocadres, TCO.
[226] Austrian Chamber of Labour, COMECE, eTIC, CESI; the European Parliament calls for a Directive on decent working conditions and rights in the digital economy; Malta calls for prohibiting abuse of atypical contracts.
[227] ETUC, UGT, ACV-CSC, ABVV-FGTB.
[228] EESC Opinion.
[229] BusinessEurope, WEC.

employed, in order to ensure a better balance in bargaining power and a fairer internal market[230].

As several Member States, the European Parliament and the EESC, they recall the need to update the EU's legislative framework on Occupational Health and Safety and to address new risks related to the development of Artificial Intelligence in the workplace and the strong emergence of telework[231]. Malta stresses the importance of providing workers with fair and equal treatment regarding working conditions, while providing a legal framework so that they can avail themselves of more innovative forms of work, such as remote work, telework or flexible hours[232]. France calls for a stronger involvement of sectoral social partners at EU level[233]. The European Parliament, Portugal and Italy ask the Commission to propose a regulatory framework on the 'right to disconnect'[234]. However, in its resolution of 21 January 2021 with recommendations to the Commission on the right to disconnect recalls that the EU social partners' Framework Agreement on Digitalisation "provides for the social partners to take implementation measures within the next three years and that a legislative proposal before the end of that implementation period would disregard the role of social partners laid down in the TFEU" [235]. BusinessEurope opposes the latter, referring to the EU Social Partners' framework agreement on digitalisation and its provisions related to use of digital tools at the workplace (work organisation, working conditions), connecting and disconnecting[236]. The European Association of Mutual Benefit Societies (AIM) urges the Commission to propose a stronger regulation of endocrine disrupting chemicals.[237] Churches express their concern about the further devaluation of Sunday as a day of rest caused by digitalisation and propose to re-instate a right to a 24-hour uninterrupted rest period for all employees[238].

Specific priorities and proposals were highlighted:

- A strengthened **Youth Guarantee** should reach those experiencing multiple vulnerabilities (e.g. youth with disabilities)[239] and provide young people with access to long-term social security and decent working conditions[240]. Moreover, career guidance, mentorship programmes and clear labour market information on employment opportunities and wage levels provide young people with a better basis to choose and find a job and simplify transition periods between education

[230] European Parliament Resolution.
[231] Belgian Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue; France, Office of the Prime Minister (webinar Malta);,AIM, EUROFEDOP, European Parliament Resolution, EESC Opinion, NVR.
[232] Malta.
[233] France.
[234] European Parliament Resolution, Italy, Portugal, supported by trade unions and civil society; see also ACV-CSC, ABVV-FGTB, COFACE, COMECE, Eurocadres.
[235] European Parliament Resolution of 21 January 2021 with recommendations to the Commission on the right to disconnect, P9_TA-PROV(2021)0021, Brussels, 21 January 2021.
[236] BusinessEurope; the European Parliament asks the Commission to take this Framework Agreement into consideration.
[237] AIM.
[238] EKD, European Sunday Alliance, COMECE.
[239] EDF, EAPN Ireland.
[240] Social Platform, DGB, Inclusion NGO.

and employment[241]. Several organisations wish to see quality criteria attached to the offers received by young people under the Youth Guarantee instrument[242]. The European Parliament asks to make the Youth Guarantee binding for all Member States[243]. The German Land of Berlin stresses the added value of the European Voluntary Service, in particular when it comes to developing green skills[244]. One citizen proposes to establish a 'European Climate Workforce'.

- BusinessEurope calls for EU action to **support the reform of active labour market policies**, through three strands: "1) enhancing efficiency of Public Employment Services, notably by fostering progress towards better use of evidence based employment measures that leads to more employment and digital solutions supporting the operation and coordination of employment services offered to employers, the unemployed/inactive, and workers[245]; 2) Fostering cooperation-oriented partnerships between Public and Private Employment Services, building on their respective strengths[246]; 3) Supporting the development of innovative solutions, on top of short-time work schemes, and of traditional employment services, to strengthen the resilience of labour markets in responding to the challenges and new needs created by Covid-19[247]. The World Employment Confederation (WEC) stresses the underutilised potential of career management services, while civil society organisations call for more tailor-made employment support to groups in situations of vulnerability[248]. The European Cancer Patient Coalition (ECPC) calls for legislation to ensure cancer survivors' return to work, including a 'right to be forgotten' towards i.a. insurance companies[249].

- As part of its planned **Action Plan on the Social Economy**, the Commission should i.a. address the access to financial resources, the lack of a legal framework, the limited capacity to scale-up social entrepreneurship ecosystems, and the business management skills of social entrepreneurs. The European Parliament calls on the Commission to update its framework for the establishment and development of cooperatives and social economy enterprises[250]. Some social economy organisations would welcome a recognition of this business model in EU primary law and ask for a review of state aid rules, in particular regarding exemptions for social economy activities in the social services and care sector[251]. The Portuguese Association of Mutualities consider a European Mutuality Statute as essential to guarantee the expansion of the mutualist model, which promotes inclusion and guarantees social

[241] Catalan social action organisations; Professor Pedro Martins (webinar Portugal).
[242] European Youth Forum, Mladi plus, Belgian Combat Poverty, Insecurity and Social Exclusion Service, see also European Parliament Resolution.
[243] European Parliament Resolution.
[244] Land of Berlin.
[245] ILO; see also Fundación Secretariado Gitano and ERGO in relation to personalised support to Roma.
[246] See also WEC.
[247] BusinessEurope.
[248] WEC, EURORDIS.
[249] ECPC.
[250] European Parliament Resolution.
[251] Verso; see also Federal Working Group of Free Welfare Care, ONCE.

and territorial cohesion[252]. Others wish to see an acknowledgement of the role of the cooperative model as driver of social inclusion[253]. The EESC calls for an inter-sectoral strategy on social innovation[254]. The European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA) illustrates the heterogeneous social investment space in Europe and calls on the Commission to intensify non-financial support on capacity building and technical assistance in particular in Central and Eastern European Member States to incubate more social enterprises, as well as to provide financial support to set up more investment funds[255].

- Some trade unions and the Social Platform call for a common **European definition of a 'worker'**[256]**,** which on the other hand is explicitly opposed by employers and trade unions from Sweden and Denmark[257]. The associated minimum standards should include minimum labour law requirements (written contract, adequate remuneration, safety at work, regulated working hours and entitlement to paid leave) and access to social security (entitlement to unemployment insurance, continued payment of wages in case of sickness and accident insurance) with a special focus on young people's jobs[258]. In this regard, the ILO refers to its Recommendation No. 198 which provides criteria to determine whether an employment relationship exists in a given situation[259].

- Several civil society organisations, trade unions and citizens call for work at EU level to improve the **quality and the access to internships**[260]. The ETUC stresses that employers should be obliged to sign an internship contract at the start of an internship[261].

- In response to the **rise of telework**, some trade unions call for a European directive on privacy in the workplace that prohibits control mechanisms for teleworking and platform work (e.g. screenshots and registration of keyboard activity) [262]. The European Parliament urges the Commission to take legislative action to also address new risks related to telework, while others specify that this could take part as part of an overhaul of European legislation regarding occupational health and safety[263].

- The Austrian Chamber of Labour calls for new EU-wide legal minimum standards on protection of workers against involuntary job transfers and on the continuation of pay in cases of illness or care of close relatives[264]. In relation to **dismissal protection**

[252] ACT 4 SOCIAL EU, Portuguese Association of Mutualities; AIM calls for an EU-level interpretative Communication or Recommendation.
[253] CECOP, CONFECOOP.
[254] EESC Opinion.
[255] EVPA.
[256] CFDT (webinar France); AIM also calls for further work on revision and/or harmonisation of definitions.
[257] See notably M+E, TCO.
[258] DGB, ÖGB, Social Platform.
[259] ILO.
[260] European Youth Forum, Diverse Young Leaders, EAPN; see also State of Vienna.
[261] ETUC.
[262] CESI, VCP (webinar Netherlands), Croatian Trade Unions (webinar Croatia), supported by the Belgian Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue.
[263] European Parliament Resolution, Austrian Chamber of Labour, EESC Opinion.
[264] Austrian Chamber of Labour.

and the flexibilisation of labour markets, one citizen raises a concern about the significantly weaker entitlements to social protection in case of a voluntary termination of an employment contract.

- To strengthen **social dialogue at national level,** national and sectoral employers would welcome if the Commission could incentivise the formation of employer organisations at national level and to encourage already existing organisations to become more involved in European sectoral social dialogue structures and the implementation of the Pillar[265]. The ILO also argues that the Commission and Member States[266] should strive for the removal of obstacles to the freedom of association and the right of collective bargaining at national level[267]. Moreover, according to trade unions, collective bargaining at national level would benefit from conditionality attached to the participation in public procurement and the allocation of funds at EU level[268]. The European Parliament asks a revision of these Directives in order to establish a preferential treatment for companies complying with collective agreements. Furthermore, it asks to make all EU financial support to undertakings conditional on their compliance with obligations resulting from the relevant collective agreements[269]. Nordic trade unions see merit in an EU-level Ombudsman to monitor the development of social dialogue at national level[270].

- As regards **company-level social dialogue**, the ETUC proposes reinforced rights for workers in case of company restructuring related to technological or environmental transitions. This includes a right to training, and a package of active labour market policies and the right to information and consultation in case more than five workers are affected. In this regard, the European Parliament and the ETUC also ask for a revision of the European Works Councils Directive[271] and for a legislative initiative on information, consultation and participation, including legally-binding minimum standards on workers' board-level representation for European company forms to be also applied in case of cross-border company mobility in the EU Single Market[272]. The EESC believes that the European Commission should revise the EU Quality Framework for Anticipation of Change and Restructuring[273] and propose a legal basis for specific framework conditions concerning worker participation in view of managing the challenges of the Green Deal and the digital transformation[274]. The European Parliament calls on the Commission to promote employee share ownership. It also "*calls for a directive on binding human rights, due diligence and responsible business conduct, including workers' rights, (…) establishing mandatory*

[265] SGI Europe, SMEunited, HOSPEEM, EFEE, CEEMET, BDA, EFCI; similar point also made by Romania, FO, CFE-CGC, eTIC.
[266] See also European Parliament Resolution.
[267] ILO.
[268] Denmark, Sweden; see also ETUC, DGB, Hungarian trade union confederations (webinar Hungary).
[269] European Parliament Resolution.
[270] TCO, FH.
[271] See also CFE-CGC.
[272] European Parliament Resolution, ETUC, DGB, Austrian Chamber of Labour, Eurocadres, CESI; see also EESC Opinion.
[273] See also CFE-CGC.
[274] EESC Opinion; similar point made by Romania.

due diligence covering companies' activities and business relationships, including supply and subcontracting chains" [275].

- Several contributors call for the full implementation of the **Work-Life Balance Directive**[276]. Further actions proposed by stakeholders mainly focus on the implications of care work and involve (1) financial support, (2) the possibility for flexible working time arrangements, and (3) an adequate social service structure including childcare and long-term care[277]. The NJCM recommends that all fathers, including self-employed, should receive full pay during minimum two weeks of paternity leave[278]. Several citizens ask for equal and non-transferrable parental leave between parents. Work Equal proposes to introduce fully transferrable leaves for men and women, including maternity leave, in the first year after the birth of the baby. In addition, employers should be legally obligated to disclose their policies on maternity, paternity and parental leave, and associated supports[279]. The European Organisation for Rare Diseases (EURORDIS) calls on Member States to link flexible work and leave arrangements under the Work-Life Balance Directive to the obligation of employers to provide reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities in the workplace under the Employment Equality Directive[280].

- One organisation and several citizens call for a **reduction in (average) weekly working time** by one day, in order to improve work-life balance, combat unemployment and the precariousness of part-time work[281].

- Many contributors call for a new **Strategy on Occupational Health and Safety**[282]**.** The European Parliament and Sweden advocate for a 'vision zero approach' with regard to fatal accidents at work[283]. Special attention should be given to psychosocial risks (also in relation with telework)[284], carcinogens[285] and musculoskeletal disorders[286]. The ETUC proposes to develop a uniform standard methodology and a common information system in the EU on reporting occupational accidents, information on insurance systems for occupational accidents and diseases, and sharing of good practices[287]. The French Association interprofessionnelle des Centres Médicaux et Sociaux de Santé au Travail stresses

[275] European Parliament Resolution.
[276] Social Platform, European Social Insurance Platform.
[277] Social Platform, ETUC, Department for Industry and Employment Relations, Office of the Prime Minister (webinar Malta), German Association for Public and Private Welfare, Caritas Europe.
[278] NJCM; see also CESI.
[279] WorkEqual.
[280] EURORDIS.
[281] NVR.
[282] Belgian Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, Germany, Portugal, ETUC, STTK, Social Platform, Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions, Austrian Chamber of Labour, DSV.
[283] European Parliament Resolution, Sweden; see also DGUV.
[284] DGUV, Confederation of Trade and Services (webinar Portugal), eTIC.
[285] Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, Belgian Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, ETUC.
[286] Belgian Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, Czech Republic, Denmark, ETUC, Social Platform. See also European Parliament Resolution, which also calls for an ambitious Beating Cancer Action Plan.
[287] ETUC.

the need to strengthen occupational health and safety components in professional education and training[288]. Some governments and stakeholders argue that mental health issues have become more important. They support prevention programs at all levels of society and the development of an EU mental health strategy[289].

Social protection, health and long-term care

Reflecting on the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic, many contributions contain a notable emphasis on strengthening the resilience of health care and long-term care. Social partners and civil society organisations ask for actions to improve working conditions in the care and social sector (through funding, standards, mutual recognition) and to raise the attractiveness of these sectors, in which the majority of workers are women[290].

The European Parliament and EuroHealthNet point out the interconnection of people's health status, social situation and economic conditions. The implementation of the Pillar provides crucial opportunities to achieve access to quality health care for all[291]. The European Parliament therefore calls on the Commission to develop common indicators and methodologies to monitor health, as well as the performance and accessibility of healthcare systems, with a view to reducing inequalities, identifying and prioritising areas in need of improvement and obtaining increased funding[292]. The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) calls for a comprehensive action plan to effectively close health and social gaps between groups in situations of vulnerability and the general population[293].

The European Parliament and several organisations call for an EU quality framework for (long-term) care and a legislative initiative to tackle all related challenges related to quality, access, sustainability, workforce development and informal carers[294].

More broadly and in view of the proliferation of new and atypical forms of employment, access to social protection becomes an increasingly pressing priority, given the already considerable impact on the financial sustainability and the adequacy of social protection[295]. SMEunited calls for continued attention at EU level for the access to social protection for the self-employed[296].

Furthermore, several Member States and stakeholders argue that the Action Plan needs to address the social and economic impact of demographic change on social protection

[288] Interprofessional Association of Medical and Social Centers for Occupational Health.
[289] Finland, Zurich Insurance Group, Social Platform, European Platform for Rehabilitation, TCO, Eurocadres; this point is supported by several citizens.
[290] Strategic Dialogue with EU civil society organisations, 21 October 2020; see also EFFE, EFSI, WorkEqual and CPME.
[291] European Parliament Resolution, EuroHealthNet; see also Hungarian Chamber of Doctors (webinar Hungary) and Verso.
[292] European Parliament Resolution.
[293] EPHA.
[294] European Parliament Resolution, Age Platform, REIF, Eurodiaconia, Eurocarers, Autism-Europe, AIM.
[295] European Parliament Resolution, CECOP, UGT, EAPN, CIN-NIC, COMECE.
[296] SMEunited, European Microfinance Network and Microfinance Centre, DSV.

systems, including in particular population ageing, which varies across regions[297]. The Council calls on the Commission to "*consider a separate chapter on older persons in the announced 2021 'Action Plan on the Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights' assessing how measures at EU-level can be designed to achieve and enhance the autonomy of older persons in times of digitalisation and promote the participation of older persons in active life and in shaping society, thus improving the well-being in older age*[298]*".* Slovakia calls for a mainstreaming of family policy across the Action Plan[299].

In this context, Czechia would welcome more work at EU level around the 'silver economy' and stresses the need to adapt the organisation of work to the individual capabilities of older people, for instance regarding targeted lifelong learning and physical adaptations[300].

The Services of General Interest Europe (SGI Europe) and several stakeholders ask the Commission to provide an impetus to the effective provision of services of general (economic) interest, social services and social protection[301]. Eurodiaconia asks for an overarching Communication on Social Services[302]. Social Services Europe (SSE) calls to improve the Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services[303]. EWL asks for a Strategy on Social Protection[304].

Specific priorities and proposals were highlighted:

- In the implementation of the **Council Recommendation on Access to Social Protection**, special attention should be given to coverage and adequacy of social protection benefits, irrespective of the form of employment (unemployed, temporary employed, short-term contracts, independent, self-employed, micro entrepreneurs etc.) [305]. European trade unions and civil society organisation state that an impact assessment should be carried out in 4 years' time to ascertain whether a directive is needed[306].
- Social protection benefits should be adequate and take into account part-time work throughout the whole or a large part of the working career (in particular of women) or self-employment with very low income for many years. Zurich Insurance Group recalls the recommendations of the **High-Level Expert Group on the Impact of the Digital Transformation**, with regard to portable benefits attached to the worker or establishing underemployment insurance systems for workers with fluctuating

[297] Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy (webinar Croatia), AGE Platform.
[298] Council of the European Union (2020), Council Conclusions 11717/2/20 on Human Rights, Participation and Well-Being of Older Persons in the Era of Digitalisation, 9 October 2020.
[299] Romania, Slovakia; similar point also supported by European Social Insurance Platform.
[300] Czechia, DVSV, Slovenian Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Family and Equal Opportunities (webinar Slovenia).
[301] SGI Europe, AEIP.
[302] Eurodiaconia; see also Federation of European Social Employers.
[303] SSE.
[304] EWL.
[305] Social Platform, CCP, FH, EAPN France Professor Olli Kangas, University of Turku (webinar Finland), European Social Insurance Platform.
[306] EAPN, Social Platform, ETUC; Portugal, EWL, CESI and CIN-NIC already call for legislative action.

income in the gig economy[307]. France Stratégie proposes the creation of personal activity accounts ensuring the portability of benefits, in the long run also at EU level.

- On top of a permanent **European Unemployment Benefit Re-insurance Scheme,**[308] Portugal, trade unions, civil society organisations and some citizens are in favour of creating **European minimum standards for unemployment insurance**, while safeguarding features of national systems[309]. For civil society organisations, people should also have direct access to minimum income support when their right to unemployment benefits have been exhausted[310].

- The European Parliament, several citizens, trade unions and civil society organisations express concern about the **adequacy of pensions and the pension gap** between men and women[311]. Some call on the Commission to think about creating EU standards for a 'minimum pension' and to ensure pension, life and health insurance portability[312]. Some argue against the automatic linking of pensionable age to life expectancy[313]. There is a need to study the impact of COVID-related financial vulnerabilities on pensions, especially for pensioners with lower pension entitlements[314]. The Social Platform states that baskets of goods and services should be developed at national level to assess whether the pension is adequate to cover the goods and services retired people need. The EU could put together recommendations as part of the Pension Adequacy Report[315]. The European Association of Paritarian Institutions (AEIP) recommends a stronger EU-level non-legislative support for take up of occupational pension schemes[316].

- The EESC welcomes the Commission's initiatives towards a **'European Health Union'**[317]. Civil society and trade unions call for a European infrastructure for medicines to improve the European response to health crises, with a common reporting system on the availability of medicinal products and a stockpiling system for essential medicines in order to prevent and better manage shortages[318]. One citizen proposes to create a standing European medical service in order to respond to shortages of staff in the case of a health emergency in a particular European region.

[307] Zurich Insurance Group.
[308] European Parliament Resolution, Catalonia, Autism-Europe, COMECE, CFE-CGC.
[309] ETUC, ÖGB, EAPN, Austrian Chamber of Labour, EWL, ATD and one citizen ask for a full individualisation of social protection benefits.
[310] Caritas Europe, Social Platform.
[311] European Parliament Resolution, Social Justice Ireland, Social Platform, EAPN Portugal, ETUC.
[312] European Senior Organisation (webinar Lithuania), CIN-NIC; DFK only on portability.
[313] Austrian Chamber of Labour, BAGFW, DSV, eTIC; Belgian Combat Poverty, Insecurity and Social Exclusion Service proposes to take into account life expectancy by social class.
[314] German Association for Public and Private Welfare, AGE Platform.
[315] Social Platform.
[316] AEIP.
[317] President of the EESC (webinar Austria); see also Austrian Economic Chambers, CIN-NIC, REIF, VYV and Solidaris, CEC European Managers, AEIP.
[318] DGB, Social Platform.

- The demographic change has increased the pressure on peoples' right to **affordable high-quality long-term care**, including home and community-based care[319]. Sweden, Romania and TELA explicitly call for deepening the reflection as part of the follow-up to the Commission **Green Paper on Ageing**[320]. For TELA, this reflection should notably be linked with labour mobility, migration and family policies[321]. The European Senior Organisation asks for an action programme against ageism[322]. Italy and Portugal stress active ageing policies as a means to foster inclusion and participation of older people[323]. Portugal calls for a European Strategy for longevity and active ageing with an 'Elderly Guarantee'[324]. For civil society organisations, there should be a tailored people-centred evaluation of care needs, embedded in a preventive approach[325]. The EU should introduce effective monitoring mechanisms of long-term care provision with concrete indicators and targets, which allow for benchmarking[326]. Active and healthy ageing measures should be included in recovery plans addressing the specificities of rural areas[327]. The residential model of social and health care for the older and people with disabilities should be transformed, **reinforcing the community-based nature of care**[328]. This should include better support to family caregivers[329]. Civil society calls to embrace opportunities to monitor and improve the quality of care through digital solutions, for instance through the development of a regulatory framework on a **'European health data space'** and the creation of a coordinating body supervising the application of quality standards[330].

- According to civil society actors the EU should create an **adequate framework to guarantee the right to universal, affordable, quality health and social care services for all**, guaranteeing non-discriminatory access[331] and covering all essential health and care services and goods (including prevention, primary, community, hospital and specialist care, dental, mental health, social and long-term care, reproductive health care and the cost of medicines)[332]. Belgian and French health insurances (mutualities) call for a new directive on social services of general interest, stress the need to invest in health literacy and see the need for an ambitious EU Pharmaceuticals Strategy[333]. Portugal calls for an EU initiative on health literacy[334].

[319] Slovakia, Red Cross EU office.
[320] Sweden, Romania; see also Land of Berlin, Catalonia.
[321] TELA.
[322] European Senior Organisation; a similar call is included in the European Parliament Resolution.
[323] Italy, Portugal.
[324] Portugal.
[325] German Association for Public and Private Welfare, Social Platform.
[326] Social Platform.
[327] ESIP, Network Social Europe Baden-Württemberg; the ENIL calls for a separate Commission Communication on the topic.
[328] Eurochild, Autism-Europe, EASPD, European Social Network, ERGO; see also European Parliament Resolution.
[329] Basque Government.
[330] Social Platform, REIF, AEIP.
[331] See in particular ERGO, ILGA-Europe, Autism-Europe.
[332] EAPN, Social Platform, AIM, DVSV, Eurochild, CNEL, State of Vienna.
[333] CIN-NIC, VYV and Solidaris; similar point made by AIM; on fair pricing of medical innovations and medicines, see also CPME, DSV.

Poverty and social exclusion are major social determinants of health inequalities which leads to long-term social and economic costs. According to the EAPN, a study must be made of the COVID-19 impact on health inequalities and lack of access to health and care services due to poverty[335]. ILGA-Europe stresses the need to reduce stigma and discrimination among healthcare services and providers. In particular in times of crisis, LGBTIQ people should have equal and non-discriminatory access to testing, treatment, and care, including with regard to HIV-related medications, ongoing hormone treatments and other vital care[336].

- To trigger upward convergence of health care systems the Hungarian Chamber of Doctors argues that the EU should take an initiative on a minimum content of health care in the European Union[337]. The ETUC calls for a 'EURight2Care programme', backed by national action plans[338]. EURORDIS stresses that the continuity of health care should be warranted in crisis situations, by investing in the medical workforce and equipment, adopting concrete protocols for the provision of emergency healthcare and facilitating virtual and home-based (health) care[339].

- For several respondents, there is a lack of **adequate care leaves or systems to support informal carers, often women**[340]. Women's rights organisations, the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) and Eurocarers call for a 'care deal' for Europe setting minimum standards and quality guidelines for service provision, workforce development, innovation and integrated care approaches[341]. More specifically, Social Platform and Caritas Europe are in favour of time credits for care work, contributing to the accumulation of pension rights, and of broadening the definition of 'relative' in EU law to reflect the diversity of families in Europe[342]. Eurocarers and the EWL also wish to see the introduction of an individualised care leave[343]. MMM advocates for an EU framework on family leave schemes, including the extension of the rights under the Work-Life Balance Directive to parents of children until the age of 18[344]. One citizen brings up legal arrangements in case of short-term care for sick children.

- Some respondents point out that due to poor working conditions and low wages, many health care and long-term care workers have left the sector, leading to understaffing. Especially in rural areas, medical practitioners have left to larger cities or abroad and created 'medical deserts'[345]. For trade unions and social service providers, carers need to be able to easily obtain official certificates granting them

[334] Portugal.
[335] EAPN.
[336] ILGA-Europe
[337] Chamber of Doctors (webinar Hungary).
[338] ETUC.
[339] EURORDIS.
[340] Social Platform, COFACE, Associate Professor, University of Ljubljana (webinar Slovenia).
[341] EWL, NVR, PpDM, Eurocarers, EASPD, Societal Impact of Pain, REIF; in a similar vein the ESN proposes a European Care Guarantee for all.
[342] Caritas Europe, Social Platform.
[343] Eurocarers, EWL.
[344] MMM.
[345] COMECE.

access to fair working conditions and social protection, in order to combat the wide prevalence of undeclared work in the sector[346]. For France, Portugal and many stakeholders, improved policy and funding frameworks for health, social care and support workers are needed at EU level to address workforce shortages, to improve the **sectors' attractiveness** for young professionals, training of workforce and working conditions[347]. As part of a legislative package in this regard, the Austrian Chamber of Labour suggests a European directive for health professionals and one for live-in-carers[348]. The CPME emphasises the need to review existing EU legislation on health professionals' working conditions, including on occupational health and safety[349].

Poverty and social inclusion

According to civil society organisations active in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, the Action Plan should bring about a rights-based, person-centred integrated strategy to fight poverty and exclusion, for all groups, through the life course. This multidimensional strategy should link the different individual rights under the Pillar with the overarching goal to end poverty in all its forms (SDG 1), building on the Europe 2020 goal and targets. The strategy should prioritise (1) quality jobs/fair wages, (2) income support and social protection for those who cannot work or access decent jobs and (3) access to quality universal services, guaranteeing the right to affordable, quality housing, universal quality education/training and lifelong learning, child, health and social care, affordable energy/water and transport[350].

Some respondents add that an overarching strategy against poverty should be centered around a European Framework Directive on Minimum Income[351] and should link up with thematic strategies for key target groups: (1) children, with a Child Guarantee, (2) homeless people, supporting a framework for national strategies, (3) older people, people with disabilities, migrants, Roma, LGBTIQ people, and other vulnerable and/or marginalised groups[352]. There is a general concern about the 'feminisation' of poverty and social exclusion due to gender-based inequalities[353].

In relation to minimum income, employers indicate that the Council conclusions of 12 October 2020 on "Strengthening Minimum Income Protection in the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond" state that it is for Member States to design and implement national provisions ensuring minimum income protection. They would see a merit in strengthening the ongoing work as part of the European Semester process, including

[346] EFFE, EFSI, ETUC, Caritas Europa.
[347] France, Portugal, SGI Europe, EUROFEDOP, European Platform for Rehabilitation, CPME, VYV and Solidaris, EASPD.
[348] Austrian Chamber of Labour.
[349] CPME.
[350] Portugal, Social Platform, EAPN, State of Vienna.
[351] See also Germany, AGE Platform, Belgian Anti-Poverty Network.
[352] EAPN, FEANTSA, AGE Platform, Inclusion Europe, ILGA-Europe, EAPN Spain, Caritas Europe, Land of Berlin.
[353] Eurocities, German Association for Public and Private Welfare, Caritas Czech Republic (webinar Czechia).

further elaboration of the EU benchmarking framework[354]. Germany supports an EU framework to support and to complement the activities of the Member States in this field[355].

Many contributors and citizens focus on the central role of (social) housing policies in the fight against poverty and the synergies with the EU's action on the energy efficiency of buildings under the European Green Deal[356]. Several civil society organisations call for a European impetus to end homelessness in the EU[357].

The challenge of increasing territorial inequalities transpires strongly from the dedicated webinars in many Member States and from several citizens' contributions. This concerns mainly the increased risk of social exclusion of populations in rural and remote areas, such as the outermost regions[358]. However, Eurocities also points at the specific concentration of inequalities in many cities across Europe[359]. There is a particular inclusion challenge with regard to persons with a migratory background, including EU citizens[360].

Specific priorities and proposals were highlighted:

- The European Parliament, many civil society organisations, trade unions and citizens support the idea of a **European framework directive for minimum income,** which would guarantee adequate, accessible and enabling minimum income support[361]. Several citizens call for the introduction of an **unconditional basic income**. According to Eurocities, the lessons learned from recent pilot projects in Finland, Spain and Scotland should be taken into account[362]. On the other hand, employers warn against raising unrealistic expectations on EU action regarding minimum income, also in view of limited EU competences in this field. They stress that measures are mainly needed at national level[363].

- According to civil society organisations, **minimum income benefits** should be provided proactively to tackle the high non-take-up and to ensure that the transition to other types of benefits happens without delay[364]. There should be no negative conditionality linked to total (or partial) cuts in adequate minimum income

[354] BusinessEurope
[355] Germany.
[356] Housing Europe, State of Vienna.
[357] FEANTSA, Social Platform, EAPN, Eurocities, Simon Communities of Ireland.
[358] European Parliament Resolution, Le Biklab.
[359] See also European Parliament Resolution.
[360] Eurocities; see also Caritas Europe, EDF.
[361] European Parliament Resolution, Social Platform, German Association for Public and Private Welfare, EKD, Eurodiaconia, EWL, ERGO, EAPN, AGE Platform, DGB, Bulgarian Confederation of Independent Trade Unions, EAPN Portugal, EAPN Spain, Network Social Europe Baden-Württemberg, BAGFW, MMM, COFACE, European Senior Organisation (webinar Lithuania), Jusos Brüssel, ENIL, Austrian Chamber of Labour, supported Portugal, ENNHRI and Catalonia; Italy rather sees room for a Recommendation on this subject.
[362] Eurocities.
[363] BDA, BusinessHungary (webinar Hungary).
[364] Social Platform; the broader issue of non-take-up of social rights and services is mentioned by the Belgian Combat Poverty, Insecurity and Social Exclusion Service, ATD, COFACE and FOREM, among others.

support[365] and benefits could be provided through a system of 'digital cash' directly aimed at the lower-income groups[366]. The instrument should be based on common definitions including adequacy linked to at least 60% of the median equivalised disposable income after social transfers (poverty threshold) and underpinned by national reference budgets[367]. Some contributors ask for increased minimum income levels for people with disabilities or chronic diseases, who systematically incur higher health care expenditure.[368] However, the discussion should not be held in solely monetary terms, but also take into account broader social support measures for self-sufficiency[369].

- The European Parliament, several Member States, regional and local governments and civil society organisations strongly support the Commission's intention to propose a **Child Guarantee**[370]. According to the CoR, "*the Child Guarantee should ensure children's access to basic services, healthcare, early years education and school until they reach adulthood, and provide them with decent housing and nutrition*". At least 5% of total ESF+ expenditure should be used to help children out of poverty[371]. Most civil society organisations expect the Child Guarantee to be based on the three pillars of the 2013 Commission Recommendation on Investing in Children (access to adequate resources, affordable quality services and children's right to participate) [372]. They ask for multiannual national and subnational strategies including targets, indicators, an earmarked budget and a monitoring mechanism[373]. For Greece, children should be considered as independent holders of social rights, in particular when it comes to affordable and accessible education and care (incl. early childhood education and care), as investments in children are the most effective long-term investments[374]. Estonia and Italy see the need for an integrated approach to children with complex problems and call for a new strategy on the rights of children prioritising ending violence against children and providing safe environment for children[375].

- For the European Parliament, civil society organisations and several citizens, the **availability and affordability of housing** should be addressed from a human rights and citizen-centred perspective, instead of solely from a financial point of view[376]. The right to housing should be enforced regardless of residence status, to ensure

[365] FOREM, Social Platform.
[366] Anti-Poverty Forum.
[367] EAPN, EAPN Portugal, EAPN Spain, ERGO.
[368] Gemeentelijke Werkgroep Toegankelijkheid Medemblik.
[369] Sweden, German Working Group of Young Socialists Brussels.
[370] European Parliament Resolution, Latvia, France, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, EAPN, Social Platform, Eurocities, Basque government, EURORDIS, Belgian Anti-Poverty Network, City of Utrecht, ERGO, Red Cross EU office, Inclusion Europe, COFACE, COMECE.
[371] CoR Opinion.
[372] REIF, ESN, Eurodiaconia, Belgian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion.
[373] Eurochild, REIF, Joint contribution Hope and Homes for Children, Lumos and Save the Children, EU Alliance for Investing in Children, MMM, ATD; FSG asks for a specific focus on extreme child poverty.
[374] Greek Ministry for Welfare and Social Solidarity (webinar Greece); see also MMM.
[375] Estonia, Italy; FAFCE flags the issue of a safe online environment for children.
[376] European Parliament Resolution, Centre for Housing law, rights and policy of NUI Galway Ireland, Caritas Europa, Belgian Anti-Poverty Network; supported by Portugal and OCHCR.

access to housing for migrants, homeless people and other excluded persons[377]. The Commission's Renovation Wave, the national recovery and resilience plans and the future EU funds, including the new JTF, should have a strong focus on affordable housing[378]. According to the Association of Dutch Social Housing Corporations (AEDES) and the Swedish Union of Tenants, the Services of General Economic Interest Decision should be revised to include in its scope a much broader range of income groups whose housing needs cannot be met at market conditions[379]. BuildEurope argues however that this might lead to unfair competition in different housing markets in Europe. Several trade unions and civil society organisations call for the EU and Member States to intervene more actively in the private housing market through building permits, rent controls, tax on second properties and support to sustainable housing providers in order to prevent speculation[380]. EU funds should support the growth of new housing provision including local/regional social housing cooperatives owned by people themselves[381].

- In line with the European Parliament's call for an EU framework on national homelessness strategies[382], some civil society organisations ask for the establishment of a **European Collaboration Platform on Homelessness**[383]. The Platform should monitor homelessness and homelessness policies, support the development of national homelessness strategies, provide mutual learning, transnational exchange, research, challenge the criminalisation of homelessness and mobilise the EU budget, in particular for cities[384], to end homelessness by 2030[385]. Likewise, France calls for the establishment of a European homelessness observatory and, together with the European Parliament and several civil society organisations, expresses support for promoting the 'housing first' approach.[386] ERGO asks for a legal framework on effective protection against unlawful evictions[387].

- In particular rural areas and remote European regions, such as the outermost regions, have poor **access to essential services**.[388] Some contributors insist that EU

[377] ECRE, EAPN, EAPN France.
[378] Eurocities, Housing Europe; see also SGI Europe.
[379] AEDES, Swedish Union of Tenants; see also Eurocities.
[380] ETUC, EAPN, DGB; see State of Vienna for detailed suggestions at urban level; the Swedish Union of Tenants and Public Housing Sweden are opposed to any EU-level intervention.
[381] EAPN, Union Sociale pour l'Habitat, Network Social Europe Baden-Württemberg.
[382] European Parliament Resolution.
[383] Housing Rights Watch, IHPG.
[384] Barcelona City Council, State of Vienna.
[385] Social Platform, FEANTSA, Eurodiaconia, Hellenic Network for the Right to Housing and Residence, Simon Communities of Ireland.
[386] European Parliament Resolution, France, Portugal, Land of Berlin, Verso, Housing Europe, Simon Communities of Ireland, Belgian Anti-Poverty Network, Eurochild, Housing First Europe Hub, IHPG; Belgian Combat Poverty, Insecurity and Social Exclusion Service, Swedish City Missions, Social Service of Catholic Women e.V. Berlin. Due to the lack of data, ILGA-Europe calls for disaggregated homelessness data collection on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.
[387] ERGO.
[388] Le Biklab.

legislation should guarantee the universal free right to internet for families living in situations of vulnerability, poor students and ensure digital inclusion for all[389]. Restos du cœur regrets that access to food has not been included as a principle of the Pillar[390]. Several citizens request free essential services such as housing, transport, health, food, education and internet. Romania explicitly supports the addition of access to the internet as part of the indicators on severe material deprivation, material deprivation and subsequent risk of poverty and social exclusion (AROPE) [391].

- Finance Watch and the Centre d'Appui des Services de Médiation de dettes of the Brussels Capital Region highlight the need to improve **access to basic financial services** for groups in situations of vulnerability: a payment account, access to cash, a savings account, a safe third pillar pension product, a motor insurance, a health insurance, a home (fire) insurance, and personal liability insurance. Technological progress offers opportunities, but also represents risks in terms of accessibility at reasonable costs of the most common financial and insurance products.[392] Finance Watch calls for the EU to address the legal requirements for selling credit through amending the Consumer Credit Directive[393]. The Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE) asks for EU minimum standards for private insolvency[394].

- According to anti-poverty organisations, in the context of the fight against energy poverty, the European Green Deal must assert the **right to affordable, clean energy for all** and there should be binding guidelines for national plans related to climate and energy based on three pillars (adequate income, energy efficiency and fair prices) [395]. The phasing out of regulated prices in the energy sector for domestic households should be stopped and social tariffs for customers in situations of vulnerability should be supported[396]. Portugal would like to see an EU programme for support to renewable energy cooperatives[397]. Ireland mentions that the planned revision of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive could further advance the implementation of Pillar principle 20[398].

[389] City Council of Barcelona, With Company, Eurodiaconia, ERGO, eTIC; Portugal also supports action on this point.
[390] Restos du Cœur (webinar France); in a similar vein, France requests to integrate the fight against food deprivation in the implementation of the Pillar.
[391] Romania.
[392] Finance Watch, Centre d'Appui des Services de Médiation de dettes de la Région Bruxelles-Capitale; point also raised by COFACE, EAPN Sweden, ERGO.
[393] Finance Watch; see also Charita (webinar Slovakia).
[394] COFACE.
[395] EAPN France; see also Austrian Chamber of Labour.
[396] EAPN.
[397] Portugal.
[398] Ireland; ERGO points at the overall lack of water, sanitation and electricity in Roma communities, and the obstacles to identity registration, which is a point also made by ATD.

Fair labour mobility

The freedom of movement for workers is widely regarded a one of the key achievements of the European Union[399]. A few citizens indicate that moving from one EU country to another remains too cumbersome in administrative terms. The European Parliament, some Member States and some trade unions explicitly welcome the recent legislative developments at EU level on fair labour mobility. However, they recall that further steps are needed, including the completion of the ongoing revision of the Regulation on the coordination of social security systems[400].

Employer organisations generally argue that global competition, growing digitalisation and new business models require greater labour mobility[401]. Bulgarian employer organisations reiterate their demand to revise the recently adopted Posting of Workers Directive and the Mobility Package for road transport[402].

There is a need to address the negative demographic and economic externalities of brain drain from less developed European regions to other parts of Europe[403]. While some stakeholders focus on the need to spark upward convergence of working conditions for all types of workers within the EU, others notably suggest promoting an easier access of qualified third country nationals to the EU labour market[404].

Specific priorities and proposals were highlighted:

- A number of respondents call for strengthening the mandate of the **European Labour Authority (ELA)**, allowing for a truly cross-border approach to labour inspections[405]. Belgium notably suggests initiatives to regulate the powers of inspectors in other countries, binding rules on the provision of information, electronic charge sheets, and the EU-wide enforceability of sanctions (including fines) [406]. The European Parliament calls for considering the inclusion of further EU legislation in the activity scope of ELA as part of its review planned in 2024[407].
- Germany, alongside a number of national trade unions, stress the importance of a full application of EU law on working conditions of **seasonal workers and other cross-border workers in situations of vulnerability**, including to address particular shortcomings in the area of occupational health and safety[408]. Some contributors ask the ELA to urgently take forward the provision of comprehensible information to

[399] Czech Republic, Denmark, European Parliament Resolution, Network Social Europe Baden-Württemberg.
[400] European Parliament Resolution, ABV.
[401] IKEM, BI, TMF.
[402] Association of the Organisations of the Bulgarian Employers, Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association (webinar Bulgaria).
[403] Professor at the School of Economics and Management (EEG) of Minho University (webinar Portugal).
[404] Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association (webinar Bulgaria), Investors' Forum (webinar Lithuania), European Parliament Resolution.
[405] European Parliament Resolution, Belgian Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, FLAI CGIL, DGB, CFE-CGC, Professor Graça Enes, Porto University (webinar Portugal).
[406] Belgian Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, see also Austrian Chamber of Labour.
[407] European Parliament Resolution.
[408] Germany, Bulgarian Confederation of Independent Trade Unions, FLAI CGIL, CNEL.

mobile workers, in particular young workers[409]. The European Parliament asks the Commission and Member States to ensure minimum standards for quality housing for cross-border and seasonal workers, decoupled from their remuneration[410].

- While opposed notably by the WEC, which argues that the Directive still sets an appropriate balance between promoting flexible and adaptable forms of work, and ensuring the protection of temporary agency workers based on equal treatment[411], the European Parliament calls on the Commission to **revise the Temporary Agency Work Directive** to ensure decent working conditions and equal treatment for intra-EU seasonal workers and mobile workers on fixed-term contracts with temporary work agencies or any other type of labour market intermediary, including recruiting agencies. This legal framework could include a ban on labour market intermediaries who do not comply with the Directive, a guaranteed minimum wage, a guaranteed minimum number of hours per week/month, no deductions from wages in the case of part-time contracts, guaranteed equal treatment for any person who, in the Member State concerned, is protected as a worker working in the same company/sector, a European registry with a listing and certification requirement for all temporary work agencies operating in the single market, sanctions on companies using fraudulent recruitment practices and trafficking people for labour exploitation, and access to information on employment contracts and labour rights in a language that the worker can understand[412].

- The European Parliament calls on the Commission and Member States to take **legislative measures to end abusive subcontracting**, and to ensure general joint and several liability throughout the whole subcontracting chain in order to protect workers' rights and their claims[413].

- Some contributions argue that the further **digitisation of procedures** would greatly support fair labour mobility[414] and call on the Commission to put forward a proposal for a unique European social security number[415]. Denmark encourages the Commission to also explore the merits of a **physical ID card** for mobile and posted workers on top of the digital infrastructure around a single **European social security number**[416].

- As regards **third-country nationals**, the European Parliament asks the Commission to conduct an extensive investigation into the trends characterising posted third-country nationals with regard to their working conditions, and emphasises the need for possible policy measures at EU or national level based on the outcome of the investigation. It also calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure compliance with applicable laws and rules on employment conditions when dealing

[409] Workers Without Borders, DFK, FLAI CGIL.
[410] European Parliament Resolution.
[411] WEC
[412] European Parliament Resolution.
[413] European Parliament Resolution.
[414] ABV, European Social Insurance Platform.
[415] DGB, STTK, DGUV, European Parliament Resolution, ESIP; Portugal calls for a 'personal labour account'.
[416] Denmark, REIF.

with third-country nationals, in order to eliminate abuses[417].

On instruments and cross-cutting engagement for implementation

Type of instruments

Many contributors call for a use of the different instruments the EU has at its disposal (legislation, policy coordination, funding) [418]. They also see a need to better **engage the national, regional and local level, social partners and civil society** in implementing the Pillar.

In line with many other trade unions and civil society organisations, the Central Organisation of Finnish trade unions stresses that the Action Plan should be a **legislative programme**[419]. Some trade unions moreover express the hope that the Action Plan might trigger a new momentum for bipartite negotiations by cross-industry social partners at EU level[420].

However, some Member States express reservations about the use of legislation at EU level at this point in time.[421] Many Member States stress the combination of the **European Semester, the Open Method of Coordination and EU funding instruments** as the key channels for the implementation of the Pillar at EU level[422].

Employers are generally opposed to further legislative action at EU level in the field of social policy[423]. Belgian employers add that the level of detail of recent EU legislation does not fit the different starting points of Member States[424]. BusinessEurope and its members see the European Semester as the right tool to implement the Pillar[425]. The Action Plan should be focussed on improving the functioning of the labour market by promoting more resilience, flexibility and hence security[426]. According to the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the Pillar should rather constitute a frame of reference based on benchmarks, similar to the UN SDGs[427].

[417] European Parliament Resolution.
[418] REIF, ILGA-Europe, SOSTE.
[419] Central Organisation of Finnish trade unions SAK (webinar Finland), supported by i.a. Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (webinar Czechia), ÖGB (webinar Austria), Austrian Chamber of Labour, EKD, CESI.
[420] High-level hearing of EU Social Partners, 8 June 2020.
[421] Sweden, Hungary, Estonia, Austria.
[422] Czechia, Denmark, Malta; point also made by EAPN Sweden and WEC.
[423] ZPP, M+E, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, CEEMET, ECEG; see also LO, DGUV.
[424] VBO-FEB; a similar argument is made by BAVC and KL.
[425] VNO-NCW, MKB Nederland, BDA, Austrian Economic Chambers, EK.
[426] High-level hearing of EU Social Partners, 8 June 2020.
[427] CEMR.

Implementation, enforcement and awareness of EU social/employment law

There is a strong agreement among all contributors that the implementation of the Pillar needs to build on a better **implementation, enforcement and awareness** of existing EU employment and social legislation and policies[428].

While trade unions and civil society mainly highlight the negative impact of **implementation and enforcement gaps** on the enjoyment of rights, some Member States and employers also note the negative impact on the level playing field in the EU single market. The NJCM sees the need for more preventive and proactive enforcement measures with regards to labour market discrimination, including recommendations on sanctions and policy measures[429].

Several citizens express regret about the low **awareness** about the Pillar and, more broadly, the EU's social legislation and policies among Europeans.[430] Some also encourage the Commission to explore innovative ways of awareness raising, in cooperation with the private sector, the audiovisual industry and civil society. Moreover, the EU should continue to improve the **transparency** of its decision-making[431].

The role of the European Semester, monitoring and indicators

Many contributors stress the need to further develop the governance framework of the Pillar, notably by refining the monitoring and strengthening the policy coordination on all 20 principles of the Pillar[432]. There is a strong preference to keep the **Pillar strongly anchored at the core of the European Semester** and of its country-specific reporting and recommendations[433].

In order to improve monitoring as part of the Semester, the European Parliament, some Member States and many stakeholders call for an update of the **Social Scoreboard**. The European Parliament refers to economic, social and environmental wellbeing indicators, covering decent work, social justice and equal opportunities, robust social welfare systems and fair mobility, linked with a set of quantitative and qualitative targets[434].

Civil society organisations underline the importance of adding more indicators that must cover all 20 Social Pillar principles and aligning it to new targets[435]. They also see the need to disaggregate data by other characteristics in addition to sex, aiming at measuring the impact of policies on specific marginalised and/or vulnerable groups,

[428] European Parliament Resolution, Finland, Hungary, Romania, Austria, Netherlands, Federal Ministry of Labour, Family and Youth (webinar Austria), BusinessEurope, ECEG, VBO-FEB, EK, Confederation of Industry (webinar Czechia).
[429] NJCM; see also Inclusion Europe.
[430] CESI, Itinerari per il lavoro.
[431] See also Society Development Foundation (webinar Romania) and Initiative for Competitiveness Association.
[432] EESC Opinion, TELA, Austrian Chamber of Labour; similar point made by Italy.
[433] BusinessEurope, SMEunited, Strategic Dialogue with EU civil society, 21 October 2021; see also Finland, Sweden, Estonia, EAEA.
[434] European Parliament Resolution.
[435] Strategic Dialogue with EU civil society, 21 October 2021, SOSTE (webinar Finland), UNIPSO-UNISOC-BRUXEO, REIF, ENNHRI.

such as Roma, persons with disabilities, migrants, LGBTIQ, older people or children[436]. The EESC, ENNHRI and Latvia ask in addition to make sure that progress on the UN SDGs is tracked within the European Semester[437]. The Austrian State of Vienna asks for refining the analysis at sub-regional level via an 'Urban Scoreboard'[438].

Social housing providers suggest to add housing indicators, such as on affordable rental (and other) housing and on residual income after housing expenditure[439]. The EAPN states that an indicator is needed to measure homelessness, as defined by the ETHOS framework[440], while ATD asks for additional indicators on extreme poverty, institutional and social abuse[441]. Several organisations ask to develop indicators and statistics on the inclusion of persons with disabilities and to include indicators on access to social services[442]. The ENIL calls for indicators on personal assistance and community-based support[443].

COFACE asks to measure the number of hours spent by children in childcare, on top of enrolment in childcare, while Eurochild suggests i.a. indicators on early childhood development[444]. COFACE also argues in favour of complementary (sub)indicators on work-life balance based on comprehensive data provided by the European Parliament, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), and Eurofound[445]. AEIP and REIF wish to see indicators on long-term care, (gender gaps in) pensions and the quality of health care[446].

The DGB proposes to include additional indicators related to social dialogue, such as collective agreement coverage rates and the number of companies with co-determination. It also proposes to create a set of new indicators to underpin the development of the European Health Union[447]. Eurocadres suggests a set of sub-indicators on the quality of jobs, among which decent wages, workers on standard employment contracts[448], access to social protection, lifelong learning opportunities, decent working conditions in safe and healthy workplaces[449], reasonable working hours with a good work-life balance, and trade union representation and bargaining rights[450].

[436] EDF, European Blind Union, Austrian Disability Council, ESN, Autism-Europe, Inclusion Europe, ILGA-Europe, OHCHR, ONCE, Eurochild, ERGO.
[437] EESC Opinion, ENNHRI, Latvia.
[438] State of Vienna.
[439] Housing Europe, AEDES; see also State of Vienna, Red Cross EU office, SGI Europe.
[440] EAPN; a similar request is made by SOSTE and European Youth Forum.
[441] ATD.
[442] EASPD, European Platform for Rehabilitation, European Youth Forum, Autism-Europe; GI-ESCR asks to report on the accessibility, acceptability and quality of public services.
[443] ENIL, Eurochild.
[444] COFACE, Eurochild.
[445] COFACE.
[446] AEIP, REIF; REIF also proposes indicators on informal care and public investment in work-life balance.
[447] DGB.
[448] Similar point made by the European Youth Forum, which suggests a sub-indicator related to the reduction of the proportion of young workers on temporary contracts.
[449] See also REIF.
[450] Eurocadres, Eurodiaconia.

Swedish employers would support additional indicators measuring conditions for entrepreneurship and the efficiency of public administration[451].

Several contributors from civil society and local authorities argue that a **reinforced monitoring framework** within the EU's macro-economic governance set-up should also be the basis to strengthen the accountability of Member States, regions and local authorities to pursue social investments and the implementation of the Pillar[452]. This should involve clear benchmarks and a timetable[453]. National Red Cross Societies propose to establish a monitoring authority to follow closely the implementation of the Pillar and the national recovery plans[454].

The Croatian institute for Public Finances proposes that the Social Scoreboard should enable the triggering of a 'social imbalances procedure' mirroring the existing macro-economic imbalances procedure[455]. In the same vein, some civil society stakeholders call for sanctions in case of insufficient progress by Member States on the implementation of the Pillar[456].

France Stratégie proposes that every Member State should adopt a strategy for upward social convergence of all Social Scoreboard indicators, agreed with the European Commission and the European Parliament[457].

Most Member States see the benefit of an improved monitoring by the Commission, but warn that this should not further burden Member States nor duplicate existing processes[458]. The CEMR warns that there should not be a reporting obligation on regions and municipalities because of the bureaucratic implications[459].

Social partners agree that the implementation of the Pillar at national, but also at sectoral and company level requires a **stronger involvement of national social partners in the European Semester**[460]. Employer organisations call for a tripartite approach to the preparation and the implementation of the Action Plan[461]. Eurocadres suggests dedicated EU legislation to warrant the involvement of social partners, possibly via a new Directive or via amendments to Council Regulation (EC) No 1466/1997[462].

Civil society organisations ask to be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the Pillar at all stages of the process. According to some of them, it should be an **open, transparent and regular civil dialogue at EU, national and regional level**, accompanied

[451] Confederation of Swedish Enterprise.
[452] Strategic Dialogue with EU civil society, 21 October 2021: Social Platform; city of Ghent (webinar Belgium), Latvian Samaritan Organisation, Land Berlin, Eurochild.
[453] EuroMed Rights, European Youth Forum, EAPN.
[454] Red Cross EU office.
[455] Institute for Public Finance (webinar Croatia); see also DGB.
[456] EAPN, Amalipe Centre Bulgaria (webinar Bulgaria), Finnish Central Organisation of Unemployed.
[457] France Stratégie.
[458] Finland, Ireland, Slovakia.
[459] CEMR.
[460] SMEunited, Institute for Public Finance (webinar Croatia), Cyprus Federation of Employers and Industrialists OEB (webinar Cyprus).
[461] BusinessEurope, ECEG, VBO-FEB, BAVC, ZDH, Hellenic Federation of Enterprises SEV (webinar Greece).
[462] Eurocadres.

by measures strengthening the EESC and civil society organisations' capacity to independently measure progress[463]. This would strengthen legitimacy, accountability and efficiency of policy-making[464]. The OHCHR asks for an involvement of independent national human rights institutions[465]. Furthermore, Eurodiaconia asks for the organisation of a **European Social Summit** every two years[466].

EU funding

The European Council conclusions of 21 July 2020 state that *"[t]he role of the EU budget in supporting the effective implementation of EU wide policy objectives should be further enhanced, notably by strengthening the link between the EU budget and the European Semester, including facilitating the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, as well as in the areas of migration, environment and climate change and equality between women and men as well as rights and equal opportunities for all."*[467]

Many contributors highlight this crucial link between the implementation of the Pillar, the **European Semester, the NextGenerationEU and the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2021-2027** in their contribution[468].

While employers welcome the RRF proposed by the Commission in May 2020[469], the European Parliament demands an implementation of the Pillar by means of the RRF at the same level as the Green Deal and the digital transition. It calls for *"the upcoming reforms linked to the recovery package to include upward social convergence as one of the main objectives of the national reform programmes, including through financial support"* [470].

Similarly, civil society organisations criticise that the social dimension is insufficiently present in the priorities of the RRF. Social Platform and its members therefore call for the inclusion of a 25% **earmarking** for social investment[471]. Eurodiaconia specifies that at least 5% of the RRF should be allocated to reforms in social service provision. The ESF allocation under REACT-EU's should contain an earmarked 25% for social inclusion measures[472].

With reference to the establishment of **SURE**, the European Parliament calls for a **permanent EU Unemployment Benefit Re-insurance Scheme**[473]. This is explicitly opposed by German employer confederations, citing concerns of subsidiarity and questioning the contribution to a sustainable social policy[474]. Moreover, in line with

[463] Verso, Belgian Anti-Poverty Network, Eurochild, ACT 4 SOCIAL EU.
[464] Social Platform, Institut de la protection sociale européenne IPSE (webinar France).
[465] OHCHR.
[466] Eurodiaconia.
[467] European Council (2020), Conclusions adopted at the special meeting of the European Council on 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 July 2020, EUCO 10/20, 21 July 2020.
[468] Finland, Germany, Slovakia, ILO.
[469] SMEunited, MEDEF (webinar France).
[470] European Parliament Resolution.
[471] Social Platform, European Platform for Rehabilitation, EASPD.
[472] Eurodiaconia.
[473] European Parliament Resolution.
[474] BDA, M+E

many contributors to the dedicated webinars in Member States, the European Parliament stresses the importance of a strong **Just Transition Fund** and a revised **European Globalisation Adjustment Fund** as part of the EU's means to support just transitions towards climate-neutral economies[475].

When it comes to the **ESF+**, the European Parliament echoes the support of several anti-poverty organisations to the Commission's proposal to earmark at least 5% of shared management resources to combatting child poverty[476]. As the CoR and Eurocities, it also advocates for allocating at least 15% of these resources to combat youth unemployment[477]. Moreover, it also calls for allocating at least 3% to tackle food and material deprivation, and supporting the social inclusion of the most deprived[478]. The EDF and the ENIL stress that the Commission must ensure that EU funds are never used to further the institutionalisation of persons with disabilities and are actively invested in community- and family-based services[479]. ERGO asks for specific guidance to make sure the funds reach marginalised Roma populations[480]. Some civil society organisations recall the need to further reduce administrative burden, by an increased use of simplified cost options and a radical simplification of the ESF + indicators[481]. SSE proposes the establishment of a support centre for access to EU funds[482].

Trade unions express their concern about a "double cut" to the ESF+, as a result of a lower allocation and of the removal of the ESF+ minimum share in Cohesion Policy funding[483]. Alongside the SGI Europe, the ETUC also advocates for earmarking ESF+ resources via a dedicated EU fund or budget line for social partner capacity building[484]. When it comes to the RRF, the Action Plan on the implementation of the Pillar should be integrated into it, so that the recovery measures consistently respect and implement the Pillar[485].

The Lithuanian trade unions propose that only companies, which are committed to international labour standards and have collective agreements, and which are not evading taxes, should be allowed to benefit from EU financial instruments[486].

Social partners, civil society and local authorities urge Member States to fully apply the **partnership principle** to involve social partners and cities in the development of recovery and resilience plans, and in investment priorities for cohesion policy and the

[475] European Parliament Resolution, European Movement France.
[476] European Parliament Resolution, Social Platform, High Commissioner's Office for Child Poverty (webinar Spain); NEXEM asks for an earmarking of resources for personnel in the social sector.
[477] CoR Opinion, Eurocities.
[478] European Parliament Resolution; see also Restos du Cœur (webinar France).
[479] EDF, ENIL.
[480] ERGO.
[481] BAGFW, Eurodiaconia; Social Economy Europe makes this point with regard to several EU funds.
[482] SSE.
[483] Land of Berlin, ETUC, BAGFW, CFE-CGC.
[484] SGI Europe, ETUC; see also LO, TCO; CESI stresses the need to target smaller and independent trade unions, both in terms of capacity building and in terms of involvement in policy consultations.
[485] ETUC, Mouvement international ATD Quart Monde. Also France and Finland support a link between the Pillar and the RRF.
[486] Representatives of Lithuanian trade unions (webinar Lithuania).

JTF[487]. It also suggests maintaining the flexibility in state aid rules by keeping spending for social infrastructure and social services outside of the budget deficit calculation[488].

The EVPA highly supports the Commission proposal on InvestEU, and the synergies between Invest EU and notably the ESF+ with InvestEU's Social Investment and Skills Window. It recommends better communication about funding opportunities at EU level. For that purpose, it suggests to use showcasing of investment success stories to practitioners at the national level. Moreover, EVPA stresses the strong need within the social investment ecosystem to receive technical assistance, capacity building, support on data collection, impact measurement and evaluation[489].

The European Microfinance Network (EMN) and Microfinance Centre (MFC) strongly insist that microfinance should be considered a transversal tool that contributes directly or indirectly to almost all Pillar principles. EMN and MFC recommend organising an Inclusive Entrepreneurship Policy Dialogue amongst Member States[490].

On top of the existing funding instruments, With Company proposes to create a separate EU financial instrument for inclusion, accessibility and equality[491]. Backme.org would support an EU fund for start-ups of persons with disabilities, legislation on the transparency of business loans and legislation that would require banks to invest in start-ups[492].

[487] Eurocities, SGI Europe, ERGO.
[488] Eurocities, City of Utrecht.
[489] EVPA.
[490] EMN and MFC.
[491] With Company.
[492] Backme.org.

3. ONGOING ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

This section presents a selection of actions that the EU has undertaken to turn the European Pillar of Social Rights into reality since its proclamation by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission in 2017.

Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights is the joint responsibility of the EU, its Member States, the regional and local levels, social partners and civil society at large. The boxes included in the following sections present examples of recent or ongoing actions at national, regional or local level, involving an array of players such as public authorities, social partners, civil society organisations or research institutions, some of which have received support from a variety of different EU funds.

They also present, where relevant, a summary of actions that stakeholders have pledged to carry out to contribute to implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights at local level.

I. Equal opportunities and access to the labour market

Principle 1: Education, training and life-long learning



European Skills Agenda

In July 2020, the Commission presented the European Skills Agenda[493]. It sets out a five-year plan (2020-2025) to support the development of more and better skills. It will help strengthen sustainable competitiveness, ensure social fairness and build resilience to react to crises. It puts forward 12 concrete actions to support wide-ranging partnerships for skills, ensure that skills provision is in line with the needs of the labour market and empower people to embark on lifelong learning. It also sets ambitious quantitative objectives to be reached by 2025, and paves the way to unlocking public and private investment in skills, including via EU funding.

Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET)

The Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET), adopted on 24 November 2020[494], defines key principles for ensuring that VET is flexible, adapts swiftly to labour market needs, including changes stemming from the green and digital transitions, and provides quality learning opportunities for young people and adults. It focusses on increasing the flexibility of VET, opportunities for work-based learning and apprenticeships and quality assurance. It promotes Centres of Vocational Excellence and stresses the need to integrate VET into economic, industrial and innovation

[493] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en

[494] Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience 2020/C 417/01, *OJ C 417, 2.12.2020, p. 1–16* *https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32020H1202%2801%29*

strategies and to embed social and environmental sustainability into training programmes.

Pact for Skills

In November 2020 the Commission launched the Pact for Skills[495], one of the actions of the European Skills Agenda. It invites public and private stakeholders to join forces, take action to up- and reskill people of working age in line with its Charter and build partnerships. This is key to supporting the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and delivering the green and digital transitions. The Commission will provide a platform where companies and stakeholders can exchange, find information, including on EU funding, and build synergies.

Common European frameworks

The Europass online platform[496] was launched in July 2020 in the framework of the European Skills Agenda. Building on a previous, successful online CV portal, it provides individuals and organisations with interactive tools, information on learning opportunities, qualifications and skills, and specialised services to support digitally-signed credentials.

The European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships sets out 14 criteria to ensure the good quality of apprenticeships[497]. They include the need for a written agreement, clear expected learning outcomes, a form of remuneration and appropriate work, health and safety conditions, and support conditions such as appropriate career guidance for apprentices and support for companies.

The European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF), which brings forward an initiative first launched in 2008, is having a major impact on qualifications in the EU and neighbour countries[498]. All Member States have established national frameworks where qualifications levels are defined through the complexity of skills and knowledge they recognise. As national frameworks are aligned to the EQF levels, and each qualification is defined in terms of skills, understanding and comparing qualifications throughout Europe are becoming easier.

Upskilling Pathways: new opportunities for adults

Over 50 million adults (25-64) in the EU (2019)[499] have at most attained lower secondary education. This group is also most likely to struggle with basic skills such as reading, writing, making simple calculations and using a computer. Significant barriers persist for members of marginalised groups such as Roma.

[495] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1517&langId=en
[496] https://europa.eu/europass/select-language?destination=/node/1
[497] Council Recommendation of 15 March 2018 on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships.
[498] Council recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.
[499] Eurostat, Labour Force Survey 2019.

The Upskilling Pathways initiative[500] provides a fresh start for these people by documenting and recognising the knowledge and skills they already possess; offering them further education and training and ultimately guiding them to a new qualification, relevant to the local labour market. While all Member States have implemented it, they need to significantly step up efforts to increase the scale of the measures offered.

Digital Skills and Jobs Coalitions

The Digital Skills and Jobs Coalitions[501] brings together Member States, companies, social partners, NGOs and education providers who take action to tackle the lack of digital skills both at the EU and national level. In the Member States digital skills actors work together to tackle the digital skills gap at national, regional and local level in the National Digital Skills and Jobs Coalitions[502]. They have reached millions of Europeans with different types of training and actions that are available on the Pledgeviewer[503]. The Digital Skills and Jobs Platform[504] is a one-stop-shop for digital skills in Europe. It offers information, resources, overview of training and funding opportunities and a space for networking and collaboration both at the European and national level.

European Democracy Action Plan

The European Democracy Action Plan[505], adopted in December 2020, stresses the role of media literacy in helping citizens navigate the news environment, identify different types of media and how they work, have a critical understanding of social networks and make informed decisions. Under the Plan, the Commission will increase its efforts to strengthen media literacy and further support national media literacy campaigns, in cooperation with the European Digital Media Observatory and the Media Literacy Expert Group, and provide support via the Creative Europe programme, Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps.

European Education Area

The Commission and the Member States set in motion actions to establish a European Education Area[506] to support future-oriented education and training systems. It will enable learners and educational staff to easily cooperate and communicate across disciplines, cultures and borders. Measures address: the acquisition of key competences for lifelong learning[507], digital skills[508], common values and inclusive education[509], the

[500] Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults.
[501] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-skills-and-jobs-coalition
[502] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/national-coalitions
[503] https://pledgeviewer.eu/
[504] https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu (available March 2021).
[505] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_2250.
[506] COM(2017) 673 final.
[507] Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning (OJ C 189, 4.6.2018). The reference framework sets out eight key competences: 1. Literacy, 2. Multilingual competence, 3. Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering (STEM), 4. Digital competence, 5. Personal, social and learning to learn competence, 6. Citizenship 7. Entrepreneurship competence, 8. Cultural awareness and expression.
[508] https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en
[509] Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching (2018/C 195/01).

creation of European Universities[510], the automatic mutual recognition of qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad[511], improving teacher education, diversifying teaching careers, increasing European collaboration between teacher education providers, improving the teaching and learning of languages[512], and the Higher Education for Smart Specialisation supporting public authorities to involve higher education in implementing Smart Specialisation Strategies[513].

In September 2020, the Commission outlined how European cooperation can further enrich the quality, inclusiveness, digital and green dimensions of EU education and training systems to achieve the European Education Area by 2025[514]. Member States agreed to address five strategic objectives in their cooperation: raising quality, inclusion and success for all in education and training; making lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all; enhancing competences and motivation in the education profession; reinforcing European higher education; and supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training[515].

Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027

The Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)[516] proposes initiatives for high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education in Europe. It calls for stronger cooperation between Member States and stakeholders and sets out two long-term priorities: (i) fostering the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem and (ii) enhancing digital competences for the digital transformation. The Commission has announced the creation of a European Digital Education Hub to foster synergies between relevant policy areas, create a network of national advisory services, monitor the development of digital education in Europe and strengthen the dialogue between stakeholders from the public and private sector.

European Research Area

The new European Research Area[517] will improve Europe's research and innovation landscape, accelerate the EU's transition towards climate neutrality and digital leadership, support the recovery from the coronavirus crisis, and strengthen the resilience against future crises. The Commission set out strategic objectives and actions to be implemented in close cooperation with the Member States, to prioritise investments and reforms in research and innovation, improve access to excellence for researchers across the EU and enable research results to reach the market and the real

[510] https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area/european-universities-initiative_en

[511] Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad, *OJ C 444, 10.12.2018, p. 1*.

[512] Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (2019/C 189/03).

[513] Renewed EU agenda for higher education, European Commission 2017

[514] https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area_en

[515] Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European Cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond.

[516] https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en

[517] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1749

economy. It will further promote researchers' mobility, skills and career development opportunities within the EU, gender equality, and better access to publicly funded peer-reviewed science. With the Skills Agenda[518], the Communication on the European Education Area[519] and the new Digital Education Action Plan, the European Research Area will strengthen the focus on increasing women's participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

In addition to the initiatives mentioned above, skills are a cross-cutting topic in a wide range of Commission initiatives. For instance, skills are essential for the success of many initiatives related to the European Green Deal (i.e. the Renovation Wave, the European Climate Pact, etc.).

A number of reforms recently launched by Member States contribute to put in practice Principle 1 of the Pillar. **Bulgaria and Belgium** have lowered the compulsory pre-school age from five to four and from six to five respectively. Many countries are investing in improving the accessibility and quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC). Many Member States have taken measures to increase the level of proficiency in basic skills such as reading, numeracy, science and digital competences. For example **Slovenia** adopted a national strategy to develop reading literacy until 2030, setting up goals for different age and target groups. To reduce early school leaving, **Romania** has developed an early warning system, with the assistance of the Structural Reform Support Programme, while **Spain** has launched a programme to support schools with a high rate of failure.

An important quality feature of education and training is their labour market relevance. Initiatives include reforms of apprenticeships and continuing vocational training in **France** and the establishment of higher vocational programmes in **Italy**, attracting school leavers towards short tertiary courses with strong involvement of companies. Financial support is given to companies to open traineeships, internships and apprenticeship places in **Denmark, Ireland and Portugal,** while a scheme in **Malta** financially supports companies to train the local workforce and bridge skills gaps. **Slovakia** is implementing a reform to increase the quality of higher education, including the creation of a body in charge of developing standards for quality assurance and accreditation.

Several Member States dedicated efforts to support up and reskilling of adults. For instance, the **Netherlands** launched an incentive scheme for learning and development in SMEs (SLIM scheme). Many Member States have put in place schemes to promote 'green skills' for professionals in the construction and buildings sectors. For instance, in **France**, the PACTE programme assists construction professionals in building their skills to improve the quality in construction and renovation works.

EU funding contributed to implementing Principle 1. For instance, the **ESF**-supported **Investing in Skills** scheme in Malta provided training grants to eligible firms to compensate part of the costs to train their employees, and opportunities for older

[518] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223

[519] https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/document-library/eea-communication-sept2020_en

people to update and extend their skills and qualifications. The ESF also supported projects to develop green skills in specific sectors. For instance, it helped train a new generation of Green Leather Managers responsible for developing sustainable products and processes in Arzignano's leather cluster (Italy). **Erasmus+** financed dedicated projects: for instance, **Skills 4 Work**[520], with partners from Ireland, Slovenia, Germany and the UK, developed a work-based learning implementation model, involving VET organisations and business tools to improve work-based learning pathways for VET learners. Several research projects supported through Horizon 2020[521] provided a better understanding of education, training and life-long learning policies, their effectiveness, and the relation to the labour market and the prevention of social exclusion.

Skills are a recurrent theme in the work of the **EU sectoral social partners**. In several sectors they address anticipation and mapping of skills, strengthening the role of social partners in vocational education and training, the recognition of qualifications for skills' mobility and apprenticeships[522]. Joint outputs include pledges to the European Alliance for Apprenticeships[523].

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) has developed analytical frameworks (i.e. on upskilling pathways), toolkits (i.e. on early leaving from education and training) and instruments on skills intelligence, guidance, validation of formal and non-formal learning, qualifications, VET and apprenticeships. The Pillar is also reflected in Cedefop's strategy for the coming years, with more emphasis on learner-centred VET and continuing training for all, accompanied by comprehensive support measures for learners.

The cities of Amsterdam, Athens, Cluj-Napoca, Gothenburg, Rennes and Vantaa have pledged to improve digital skills training, prevent school dropout, and boost vocational education and adult education and training to match new labour market needs[524].

[520] http://skills4workproject.eu/

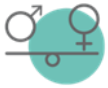
[521] For instance "YOUNG_ADULLLT - Lifelong learning for young adults: better policies for growth and inclusion in Europe", https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/693167 and http://www.young-adulllt.eu/index.php; and EduMAP - Adult Education as a Means for Active Participatory Citizenship, https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/693388 and https://blogs.uta.fi/edumap/; and
ENLIVEN - Encouraging Lifelong Learning for an Inclusive and Vibrant Europe, https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/693989 and https://h2020enliven.org/.

[522] In electricity, graphical industry, furniture and woodworking, industrial cleaning, maritime transport, sea fisheries.

[523] In contract catering, chemical industry, commerce, construction, education, electricity, food and drink, horeca, metal industry. https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1149&langId=en

[524] Eurocities pledges.

Principle 2: Gender equality



European Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025

On 5 March 2020 the Commission adopted the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025[525]. It frames the Commission's work on gender equality and sets out the objectives and key actions for 2020-2025. Its key objectives are ending gender-based violence; challenging gender stereotypes; closing gender gaps in the labour market; achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy; addressing the gender pay and pension gaps; closing the gender care gap and achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics. The Strategy combines key actions to achieve gender equality with strengthening the integration of a gender perspective in all EU policies and major initiatives (gender mainstreaming). The Strategy is coherent with the external policy on gender equality as laid out in the EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021-2025[526].

EU Action Plan on tackling the gender pay gap

The Commission adopted the EU action plan on tackling the gender pay gap in November 2017[527]. By October 2019, the Commission had completed a large majority of its 24 action points. An implementation report was published in March 2020[528] together with an evaluation of the Directive on equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men in employment and occupation (Directive 2006/54/EC)[529]. Finally, the Commission presented on 4 March 2021 a proposal for binding measures on pay transparency to support the equal pay principle.

Women in Research and Innovation

The Commission has strengthened the provisions for gender equality in Horizon Europe, the new Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. This includes setting Gender Equality Plans as an eligibility criterion for all public bodies, research organisations and higher education establishments applying to the Programme; increasing the target for gender balance to 50% women in all Horizon Europe related decision-making bodies and evaluators; and making the integration of the gender dimension into R&I content a requirement by default[530].

[525] COM(2020) 152 final. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2020%3A152%3AFIN

[526] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2184

[527] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52017DC0678

[528] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/com-2020-101_en.pdf

[529] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/swd-2020-50_en.pdf

[530] Factsheet on Gender Equality: a strengthened commitment in Horizon Europe https://op.europa.eu/en/web/eu-law-and-publications/publication-detail/-/publication/c0b30b4b-6ce2-11eb-aeb5-01aa75ed71a1

Building on this, the Commission's Communication 'A new ERA for Research and Innovation'[531] proposes the development of gender equality plans with inclusiveness addressed on three different levels: intersectionality with other social factors such as ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation; geographical inclusiveness; and better inclusion of the private sector. It places gender equality among the priority areas for deepening the European Research Area and strengthening the European R&I potential. This is reaffirmed in the Council Conclusions on the 'New ERA' of 1 December 2020[532].

Women in Transport – EU Platform for change

With the setting-up of the 'Women in Transport – EU Platform for change'[533] in 2017, the Commission has taken steps to address the gender gap in the transport sector and the lack of attractiveness of transport professions for young people and women. All important EU associations covering all transport modes, including social partners, have joined this action-oriented platform to strengthen women's employment and equal opportunities for women and men in the transport sector thanks to the actions brought about by the Platform members. By end 2020, 19 different actions were put forward.

The Declaration of commitment on women in digital, signed by EU Member States and Norway on 9 April 2019[534], is proof of the general agreement of Member States that increasing women's participation in Europe's digital economy can have a transformational socio-economic impact and increase growth and competitiveness.

Gender equality is a recurrent theme in the work of **EU sectoral social partners**. The railways social partners are negotiating an autonomous agreement to promote the employment of women. They regularly assess and report on the employment situation of women in European rail companies. The local and regional government social partners implement the revised guidelines on drawing up gender equality action plans in local and regional government. Enhanced participation of women and other equality aspects are addressed via several EU-funded projects implemented by social partners (live performance, maritime transport).

EU funding through Horizon 2020 contributes to implementing Principle 2. For instance, the **RESISTIRE project**[535] (2021-2024) aims to understand the impact of COVID-19 policy responses on behavioural, social and economic inequalities on the basis of a conceptual framework which considers intersections between gender and other discrimination grounds, such as class, ethnicity, migration status, disability, sexual orientation or age. The **UniSAFE project**[536] (2021-2024) will produce knowledge on gender-based violence in universities and research organisations, and translate this into operational tools and recommendations for universities, research organisations and policymakers to reduce

[531] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2020:628:FIN
[532] https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13567-2020-INIT/en/pdf
[533] https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/social/women-transport-eu-platform-change_en
[534] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/eu-countries-commit-boost-participation-women-digital
[535] https://cordis.europa.eu/projects.
[536] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101006261

gender-based violence. Two projects have been funded to bridge the gender gap in entrepreneurship and innovation: **Shemakes.eu**[537] (2021-2023) blends the approaches of two leading innovation ecosystems within the textiles and clothing sector and will promote the leading role of women in innovation. **EQUALS-EU**[538] (2021-2023) focusses on creating smart, sustainable and inclusive innovation ecosystems by building capacity and expanding networks for women and girls in social innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly in the ICT industry. For the whole of the Horizon 2020, over EUR 83 Million will have been allocated to over 40 collaborative projects and other actions on gender equality in research and innovation through the 'Science-with-and-for-Society' work programme, benefitting around 300 organisations.

A project in Germany[539] financed by a multi-fund ESF-ERDF operational programme addresses the needs of women engineers to maintain high skills levels and keep a balance with family responsibilities.

To celebrate remarkable women in research, innovation, education, culture and sports, break gender stereotypes and bring positive role models to young women and girls, the Commission launched the **#EUwomen4future campaign**[540] in 2020.

The cities of Bologna, Gijón, Ljubljana, Lyon, Madrid, Nantes and Vienna have pledged to involve 3 000 girls and 160 businesses in 'gender-free' career days and to finance centres to combat gender-based violence, while taking into account gender budgeting and mainstreaming[541].

Madrid has reaffirmed its commitment to gender equality via its Strategic Plan 2018-2020, targeting (1) gender mainstreaming in public action, (2) a city free of violence against women, (3) sustainability of life, employment and co-responsibility and (4) women's participation and new forms of leadership[542]. The city of Gijón is prioritising gender equality, in cooperation with civil society and social partners. This includes specific actions to combat violence against women, support employability, conciliate work and family life and remove gender stereotyping in education[543]. Ljubljana has put in place a Gender Equality Group with representatives from across the city administration and has appointed a coordinator for equal opportunities; set out a second action plan for Gender Equality for 2019-2022; and put an emphasis on the visibility of women by naming streets and erecting relevant monuments[544].

[537] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101006203
[538] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101006396
[539] https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/Germany/fishing-from-the-silent-reservoir-of-germanys-stem-skills
[540] https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/euwomen4future
[541] Eurocities pledges.
[542] City of Madrid pledge.
[543] City of Gijón pledge.
[544] City of Ljubljana pledge.

Principle 3: Equal opportunities



EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025

On 18 September 2020, the Commission adopted the EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025[545]. It aims at fighting racism and racial discrimination in Europe more effectively, including through national action plans. It sets outs actions to tackle racism and racial discrimination through EU law; working with Member States, including national law enforcement authorities, and with the media and civil society; harnessing EU tools; and looking into the Commission's own human resources. The Commission has committed to appoint a coordinator for anti-racism who will liaise with people with a minority racial or ethnic background and interact with Member States, the European Parliament, civil society, academia and the Commission to strengthen policy responses.

EU Roma strategic framework

The Commission adopted on 7 October 2020 the EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation[546] to promote effective equality, socioeconomic inclusion and the meaningful participation of Europe's largest ethnic minority. It sets objectives and quantitative headline targets at EU level up to 2030, addressing equality, inclusion and participation, and four policy areas: education, employment, health and social services, housing and essential services. The proposal for a Council recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation[547] (currently negotiated in the Council, planned for adoption in March 2021) strengthens the guidance to Member States on fighting discrimination including by tackling antigypsyism. It promotes the implementation of relevant EU legislation[548], the use of Union funds and the strengthening of partnerships, institutional capacities and monitoring.

LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025

On 12 November 2020, the Commission adopted the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025. The strategy sets out measures to tackle discrimination; ensure LGBTIQ people's safety; build LGBTIQ inclusive societies; and lead the call for LGBTIQ equality around the world. The Commission will also integrate the fight against discrimination affecting LGBTIQ people in all EU policies (equality mainstreaming). The LGBTIQ Equality Strategy announced that the Commission will promote the use of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) to improve the socio-economic position of the most marginalised LGBTIQ people

[545] COM(2020)565 final
[546] COM/2020/620 final
[547] COM/2020/621 final
[548] In particular, Directive 2000/43/EC which prohibits discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin in employment, social protection, social advantages, education, and access to and supply of the goods and services available to the public; Commission Recommendation (EU) 2018/951 establishing standards for an effective and independent functioning of bodies for the promotion of equal treatment ('equality bodies'); the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU; and Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA, designed to combat, through criminal law, certain forms and manifestations of racism and xenophobia.

and develop initiatives focusing on specific groups, such as the gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, gather evidence on the barriers to full equality in employment, but also in other areas, such as social protection, and develop guidance for Member States and businesses on enhancing trans and intersex people's participation in the labour market. Member States are encouraged to build on existing best practice and develop their own action plans on LGBTIQ equality.

Supporting the work of equality bodies

The Commission, in June 2018, adopted a Recommendation on standards for equality bodies[549], encouraging the Member States to enhance the effectiveness and independence of national equality bodies. The Commission has been working together with the Member States to support the application of the Recommendation. For instance, in June 2019, the Commission brought together, within the High-Level Group on Non-discrimination, Equality and Diversity, representatives from the Member States, the European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet) and some of its members to exchange good practices on the implementation of the standards.

Proposed Equal Treatment Directive

The Commission continues to support the Member States to conclude the negotiations in Council of the proposal for a horizontal Equal Treatment Directive[550]. The main objective of the proposal is to combat discrimination based on religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation and to put into effect the principle of equal treatment, beyond the field of employment which is already covered by EU law.

Multidimensional inequality monitoring framework

Following a request from the European Parliament, the Commission's Joint Research Centre is finalising a pilot project to develop a structured indicator framework for monitoring and analysing inequalities in the EU[551]. The framework spans 10 key dimensions of human well-being and a range of methodological approaches to measuring inequality of opportunities and outcomes (interpersonal, between social groups, across territories and across generations). It can contribute to further strengthening the agreed EU monitoring framework on inequality (in particular the Social Scoreboard[552]), complementing the work of the Indicators Subgroup of the Social Protection Committee.

Integration of third-country nationals

Through the Action Plan on integration of third-country nationals, adopted in 2016 and implemented through 50 actions at EU level, the Commission provided policy, operational and financial support to Member States in their integration efforts, and 16 recommendations addressing pre-departure measures, education, employment, access to basic services, participation and inclusion. The Action Plan positively contributed to

[549] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32018H0951
[550] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52008PC0426
[551] https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/projects-activities/multidimensional-inequality-monitoring-framework_en
[552] As well as the Social Protection Performance Monitor and the Joint Assessment Framework.

improving the integration of third-country nationals across the EU Member States, increasing awareness of their situation, and coordination[553]. In November 2020, the Commission adopted a new Action Plan on integration and inclusion[554] for 2021-2027 addressing third-country nationals legally residing in the EU and EU citizens with a migrant background.

On 20 December 2017, the European Commission and the European social and economic partners signed the European Partnership for Integration[555]. It laid down key principles and commitments for the integration of refugees into the labour market, including providing support as early as possible, ensuring that integration benefits refugees, the economy and society at large, and adopting a multi-stakeholder approach[556]. On 7 September 2020, the Commission and the social and economic partners relaunched the partnership and expressed their interest in exploring how to extend their dialogue and future cooperation on labour migration[557].

Digital Services Act

The Commission proposal for a Digital Services Act[558] introduces obligations for intermediary service providers to ensure the safety of users online and strong safeguards to protect fundamental rights. Users will be empowered to report illegal content easily and effectively. A privileged channel will be created for trusted flaggers – entities which have demonstrated particular expertise and competence – to report illegal content to which platforms will have to react with priority. Finally, it will introduce measures to allow competent authorities in the Member State to enforce national and EU laws, for example on illegal hate speech online.

eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020

One of the underlying principles of the eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020[559] is 'inclusiveness and accessibility': public administrations should design digital public services that are inclusive by default and cater for different needs, such as those of the elderly and persons with disabilities. Member States committed to the principle of inclusiveness and accessibility in the 2017 Tallinn Declaration on eGovernment[560]. In

[553] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/pdf/20201124_swd-2020-758-commission-staff-working-document.pdf

[554] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/pdf/action_plan_on_integration_and_inclusion_2021-2027.pdf

[555] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/legal-migration/integration/docs/20171220_european_partnership_for_integration_en.pdf

[556] Examples of actions implemented by economic and social partners organisations in Member States in this area are available at https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/pdf/22122020_drafting_actions_partnership_en.pdf

[557] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration-policy/joint-statement-commission-economic-social-partners-renewal-european-partnership-integration.pdf

[558] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-services-act-package

[559] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/european-egovernment-action-plan-2016-2020

[560] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/ministerial-declaration-egovernment-tallinn-declaration

2020 Member States reconfirmed their commitment to inclusive digital public services in the Berlin Declaration on Digital Society and Value-based Digital Government[561].

Since April 2018, a law lays down the main principles and working arrangements of social enterprises in **Latvia**. It ensures direct support to social entrepreneurship by providing tax breaks and regularising volunteer involvement. Stakeholders, including the social entrepreneurship association, were involved in drafting the law. By 2022, almost EUR 9.5 million from the ESF will be available for starting new social enterprises and expanding existing ones. The integration of disadvantaged groups into the labour market is one of the main objectives of the project coordinated by the Ministry of Welfare.

The **Regional Integration Accelerators' (RIAC)** project (2018-2020)[562], funded by the Commission under the Employment and Social Innovation Programme (EaSI), has encouraged the rapid and long-term integration of asylum seekers and holders of international protection in the labour market. It was implemented by public administrations, employment centres, research bodies and NGOs from Germany, Italy, Denmark and Turkey. Tools for the integration of specific target groups (women and the self-employed) into the labour market were translated and transferred to very different regional contexts. The participants received a concrete job perspective early on and were integrated into the process by the cooperating employers from the beginning. The project shows that by inserting the beneficiaries into training courses and enhancing employability, integration times and workers' demotivation risks are reduced.

"Empleando Digital" is a project developed jointly by the Red Cross and the Fundación Secretariado Gitano, with the Accenture Foundation. It enhances digital inclusion and employability of people living in situations of high vulnerability and marginalisation (including Roma), by adapting their skills to the digital transformation of the labour market, through innovative socio-economic integration pathways, training and qualifications. It is cofinanced by ESF, under the social innovation axis of the Operational Programme for Social Innovation and Social Economy. Its cost is EUR 1.2 million. More than 300 employment professionals from Fundación Secretariado Gitano and the Red Cross adapted their employment programmes that benefit more than 95 000 people a year.

EU sectoral social partners are implementing a joint EU funded project[563] on the integration of migrants and refugees. Social partners of the sea fishers sector are developing guidelines for the vessel owners on decent recruitment of migrant fishers[564].

The **EUSOCIALCIT project**[565] (supported through Horizon 2020 in 2020-2024) examines policy scenarios to strengthen European social citizenships. By analysing current realities and alternative policy options, it will provide new indicators and implementation studies on social investment, working conditions, minimum income

[561] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/berlin-declaration-digital-society-and-value-based-digital-government
[562] http://riac-project.eu/
[563] https://www.csee-etuce.org/en/projects/migration-education/3453-introduction
[564] https://www.etf-europe.org/activity/pillars-of-the-sea/
[565] https://www.eusocialcit.eu/ and https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870978

protection and housing. The project '**GEMM - Growth, Equal Opportunities, Migration and Markets'**[566] (2015-2018) has assessed labour market inequalities of migrants and minorities in Europe, focussing on highly skilled migrants. The project '**DIAL - Dynamics of inequality across the life-course'**[567] (2016 - 2022) examines the sources, structures and consequences of inequalities as they unfold over the life-course, focussing on education, child development, health, LBTQ citizens, and working life.

The cities of Athens, Frankfurt, Helsinki, Leeds, Lille, Ljubljana, Malmö, Milan, Rotterdam, Stuttgart, Turku and Zagreb have pledged to take action in 51 of the most deprived urban areas in the EU. They will focus on training city staff on equal and non-discriminatory access to public services, and reducing the employment and welfare gaps for the people in most vulnerable or marginalised situations, including migrants, Roma and persons with disabilities[568]. Amsterdam, Helsinki, Frankfurt, Ghent, Gijón and Utrecht have pledged to use the current crisis as an incentive for positive change towards a stronger social Europe, where all citizens are treated equally and have equal opportunities. Helsinki will invest EUR 6 million to enhance the youth employment situation. Gijón will support the self-employed and micro companies. Utrecht will channel EUR 6 million to free 200 000 household of problematic debts. Ghent will focus on people most in need (LGBT with a migrant background, persons with disabilities and at risk of poverty, undocumented immigrants). In 2020, EUR 5.8 million have been allocated to implementing equal opportunities policies.

Principle 4: Active support to employment



EU Public Employment Services Network

In November 2020, the European Parliament and the Council adopted the Commission proposal to continue the successful work of the EU Public Employment Services Network until 2027[569]. As Europe moves towards the recovery phase, public employment services are helping millions of workers in short-time work schemes to preserve jobs and income, and assisting people in adapting their skills to the changing labour market. The Network[570] brings together the public employment services of all EU Member States, Norway and Iceland. It provides a platform to identify good practices and learn from each other to boost performance and prepare for future labour market challenges.

[566] https://gemm2020.eu/ and https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/649255
[567] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/724363 and https://dynamicsofinequality.org/
[568] Eurocities pledges.
[569] Decision (EU) 2020/1782 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2020 amending Decision No 573/2014/EU on enhanced cooperation between Public Employment Services (PES) OJ L 400, 30.11.2020, p. 7–10.
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1606741261195&uri=CELEX%3A32020D1782
[570] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1100&langId=en

Youth Employment Support, accompanied by a reinforced Youth Guarantee

The 2020 Commission Communication "Youth Employment Support: a Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation"[571] presented clear and tangible EU support to young people in their increasingly difficult school-to-work and early job-to-job transitions. A wide range of actions acknowledge the new economic downturn, while equipping Europe's youth to help accelerate the digital and green transitions. These actions are linked to a vast array of EU funding, notably ESF+.

The Council Recommendation on reinforcing the Youth Guarantee was adopted in October 2020[572]. It reaffirms the commitment of the EU Member States to set up national schemes through which young people can receive an offer of employment, education, traineeship or apprenticeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. It also steps up the outreach to vulnerable and/or marginalised young people across the EU, and extends the age limit for targeted young people from 25 to up to 29 years.

Integration of the long-term unemployed in the labour market

In 2019 the Commission reported[573] on the implementation of the 2016 Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed in the labour market[574]. The report takes stock of progress made to help long-term unemployed people (those unemployed for more than one year) getting back to work since the adoption of the Recommendation.

The Recommendation proposes actions to strengthen the services offered to long-term unemployed for this purpose. One of the key aims is to ensure that all long-term jobseekers receive an individual assessment and a job integration agreement, for a concrete and personalised plan back to work before reaching 18 months of unemployment.

The report showed that the Recommendation has been a catalyst for change, encouraging Member States to put in place more holistic and individualised support, while increasing coordination of services and employer involvement.

European Globalisation Adjustment Fund

The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund[575] has provided support to people losing their jobs as a result of major structural changes in world trade patterns due to globalisation, e.g. when a company shuts down or production is moved outside the EU, or as a result of the global economic and financial crisis. With an average annual ceiling of EUR 170 million for 2014-2020, it could co-finance up to 60% of the cost of measures

[571] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0276
[572] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.C_.2020.372.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ%3AC%3A2020%3A372%3ATOC
[573] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=89&langId=en&newsId=9346
[574] Council Recommendation of 15 February 2016 on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market OJ C 67, 20.2.2016, p.1.
[575] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=326

designed to help workers made redundant find another job or set up their own business, including via career advice, education and training, mentoring and coaching. Support for NEETs was also possible under certain conditions.

Industrial Strategy and SME Strategy

The New Industrial Strategy for Europe[576] and its implementing actions support industry in the twin green and digital transition to create new quality jobs in the EU and industrial employment in this transition. For example, the transition to a circular low-carbon economy is expected to create more than 1 million jobs by 2030.

The SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe[577] is the compass for SME support in Europe's recovery following the COVID-19 crisis. It supports SMEs in the transition to sustainability (green and social), digitalisation and resilience. It covers all types of SMEs, including social enterprises, and includes several actions to improve skills of employees (e.g. Digital Crash Courses, a digital volunteers programme and sustainability advice by the Enterprise Europe Network).

The project '**Mettersi in proprio'**[578] - Regional services in support of business creation and self-employment, co-funded by ESF in the Piedmont region, supported the emergence of new economic activities and fostered the spread of entrepreneurial spirit, both among job-seekers, to improve the levels of participation in the labour market, and among those in employment, to increase the level of responsibility of aspiring entrepreneurs and the competitiveness of new economic activities in the area.

Groupe Terre[579], based in Liège (Belgium), aims at creating business to offer permanent contracts to socially deprived employees. It is composed of both social enterprises and associations active in a variety of sectors (sorting of clothes and paper recycling, production of sound insulating panels or agricultural projects in developing countries). To foster the participation of its employees in the governance of the group, it created a dedicated tool for "participative management", based on questions which employees and managers are asked to reflect upon regularly (following a methodology similar to audits). Groupe Terre is a member of the European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE), which has been receiving an operating grant from the EaSI programme since 2016.

As a response to the economic crisis following the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19, the **Danish Government** is massively investing in education and upskilling so that the many people who have lost their employment can obtain new in-demand skills, giving them opportunities to adapt to new industries with labour shortage. The Danish Government has reached two ambitious political agreements that strengthens the opportunities for upskilling and job-focused education for the many unemployed following the COVID-19 pandemic. They contain initiatives for a total sum of over DKK 730 million (approx. EUR 100 million) in 2020-2023.

[576] COM(2020) 102.
[577] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/sme-strategy-launched-european-commission
[578] https://mettersinproprio.it/
[579] https://www.terre.be/

In the context of the **Future Skills Initiative**[580], the Luxemburg employment agency (ADEM) supports the anticipation and development of future skills, to preserve employment. A special training programme for job seekers (online-training followed by internships in the public sector) has been developed, responding to current market needs and aiming to develop the future skills (soft skills + digital skills) needed across sectors and jobs. In addition, sector-level studies with a more precise analysis and foresight of the evolution of occupations, activities and skills within the sectors are planned.

Jobsplus[581], the Maltese public employment service, has been implementing various projects on labour market activation. The Access to Employment scheme (total budget: EUR 12 million) provides employment aid to enterprises to promote recruitment of the more challenged amongst jobseekers and inactive persons. Employers who engage eligible individuals receive a subsidy of EUR 85 per week per new recruit for 26 weeks, 52 weeks or 104 weeks. For registered persons with disabilities, a subsidy of EUR 125 per week is provided for a maximum of 156 weeks. Eligible applicants cover all employers, including self-employed. The Work Programme Initiative (total budget: EUR 2.2 million) improves the employability prospects of long-term unemployed by providing individual profiling, training and work placement. Training activities tailor to individual needs are financed through this ESF project and complement the profiling and placement activities that are financed by National funds. The Youth Guarantee 2.0 (total budget: EUR 5.9 million) provides training and personalised assistance to young people at risk of social exclusion and becoming long-term unemployed. It focuses on the current stock of NEETs and those at risk of becoming NEETs or young unemployed through a mix of tailor-made interventions (i.e. activation scheme, work exposure, ECDL courses).

The ESF transnational project **"Social Innovation and Employment through public procurement"**[582] allowed Swedish and Finnish authorities to explore how to better integrate social employment criteria in their procurement. They looked into recruitment processes and labour market analysis, support measures for specific target groups (e.g. migrants), statistics and economic impact evaluation and the role of social enterprises. Based on this project, Sweden developed a national model for using employment clauses in public procurement to create employment for people who are far from the labour market. The project helped Finnish cities launch pilot procurements which produced substantial impact in terms of employment, apprenticeships and integration of disadvantaged persons in the labour market.

Berlin, Lille, Lyon, Madrid, Malmö, Nicosia, Rennes, Rotterdam and Turku have pledged to allocate EUR 1.7 billion to create 26 000 new jobs[583]. Nicosia will combine support to

[580] https://adem.public.lu/en/employeurs/futureskills.html
[581] https://jobsplus.gov.mt/
[582] More information can be found in the Commission report "Making socially responsible public procurement work – 71 good practices"
[583] Eurocities pledges.

employment with initiatives for economic development, by creating innovation hubs and co-working spaces, to enhance entrepreneurship and job opportunities[584].

II. Fair working conditions

Principle 5: Secure and adaptable employment



Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE)

The temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE)[585] is available as a second line of defence for Member States that need to mobilise significant financial means to fight the negative economic and social consequences of the coronavirus outbreak on their territory. It can provide financial assistance up to EUR 100 billion in the form of loans, granted on favourable terms, from the EU to affected Member States to address sudden increases in public expenditure for the preservation of employment and, as an ancillary, some health-related expenditure[586]. Proposed by the Commission in April 2020, SURE entered into force on 19 May 2020 and will remain available until end-2022. By the end of 2020, the Council has approved EUR 90.3 billion in support to 18 Member States, and by the beginning of February 2021 EUR 53.5 billion have been disbursed to 15 Member States. This will help workers keep their income and ensure businesses can retain staff.

Improving the working conditions of platform workers

As announced in its 2021 work programme, the Commission is preparing an initiative to improve the working conditions of platform workers, and ensure dignified, transparent and predictable working conditions and adequate social protection in platform work. The Commission recently launched a first-stage consultation of the social partners[587] on the direction of possible EU action. The consultation paper requests the social partners' views in the following areas: i) addressing the possible misclassification of employment status in platform work; ii) ensuring fair working conditions for all; iii) guaranteeing protection against economic and social risk for people working through platforms; iv) promoting a human-centred automated-decision-making in platform work; v)

[584] City of Nicosia pledge.

[585] https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/financial-assistance-eu/funding-mechanisms-and-facilities/sure_en#:~:text=The%20temporary%20Support%20to%20mitigate,coronavirus%20outbreak%20on%20their%20territory.

[586] To finance SURE loans, the Commission has been issuing social bonds consistent with the Social Bond Framework, designed to provide investors with confidence that the funds mobilised will be used to finance targeted social policy measures. The Commission will evaluate the instrument in the bi-annual reports to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Financial Committee and the Employment Committee based on reporting requirements established by the Council Regulation (EU) 2020/672.

[587] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_686

addressing access to collective bargaining and collective rights; vi) promoting cross-border fairness in platform work; and vii) supporting the professional development of people working through platforms.

Revision of the Posting of Workers Directive

The revision of the Posting of Workers Directive was adopted in June 2018 and has to be applied by all Member States since 30 July 2020[588]. The changes introduced improve the working conditions of posted workers and guarantee a level playing field for employers in the internal market. The main changes concern the payment of all the mandatory elements of remuneration instead of the "minimum rates of pay", the right of workers posted for more than 12 months to an extended set of terms and conditions of employment of the receiving Member State, and the equal treatment of posted temporary agency workers with local workers.

New social rules governing the internal road transport market of the European Union

On 15 July 2020, the European Parliament and the Council adopted a set of rules to improve the working conditions of drivers, increase road safety and ensure fair competition between operators. The new rules on driving times and rest periods, which apply since 20 August 2020, clarify that the regular weekly rest must be taken in an adequate accommodation paid by the employer[589]. The rules provide for some flexibility related to the organisation of regular and reduced weekly rests of drivers engaged in international transport, promote the creation of safe and secure parkings, strengthen the right of drivers to regularly return home and give them more flexibility to be able to reach their base or residence before weekly rests.

The package contains sector-specific rules on the posting of drivers in international road transport[590]. They make it clear when drivers are subject to the terms and conditions of employment of the host country and set out administrative and control requirements that provide for effective implementation and enforcement. The strengthened requirements for the effective and stable establishment of transport undertakings[591] will help fight illicit employment practices such as letterbox companies.

[588] Directive 2018/957 amending directive 96/71.

[589] Regulation (EU) 2020/1054 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 July 2020 amending Regulation (EC) No 561/2006 as regards minimum requirements on maximum daily and weekly driving times, minimum breaks and daily and weekly rest periods and Regulation (EU) No 165/2014 as regards positioning by means of tachographs https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2020/1054/oj

[590] Directive (EU) 2020/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 July 2020 laying down specific rules with respect to Directive 96/71/EC and Directive 2014/67/EU for posting drivers in the road transport sector and amending Directive 2006/22/EC as regards enforcement requirements and Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012.
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2020.249.01.0049.01.ENG&toc=OJ:L:2020:249:TOC

[591] Regulation (EU) 2020/1055 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 July 2020 amending Regulations (EC) No 1071/2009, (EC) No 1072/2009 and (EU) No 1024/2012 with a view to adapting them to developments in the road transport sector.
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2020.249.01.0017.01.ENG&toc=OJ:L:2020:249:TOC

European Labour Authority (ELA)

ELA was established in July 2019 to contribute to fair labour mobility across the EU[592]. ELA will support work to improve access for citizens and employers to information on rights and obligations about EU labour mobility and relevant services, including via Your Europe, the EU's Single Digital Gateway[593] and EURES. Secure, fair and adaptable cross-border employment also requires support to enforcement of free movement rights by tackling irregularities and undeclared work. ELA will support the organisation of concerted and joint inspections, the exchange of information between Member States, and strengthen national authorities' and social partners' capacities. ELA's management of EURES and the European Platform tackling undeclared work (from later in 2021) and its analyses and risk assessment will help develop the necessary intelligence to promote, support and enforce fair EU labour mobility.

Protection of seasonal workers in the context of COVID-19

On 16 July 2020 the Commission presented guidelines to ensure the protection of seasonal workers in the EU in the context of the coronavirus pandemic[594]. The guidelines provide guidance to national authorities, labour inspectorates and social partners on how to guarantee the rights, health and safety of seasonal workers and ensure awareness of their rights. These guidelines complement those on the exercise of free movement of workers during COVID-19 outbreak[595] published on 30 March 2020, and respond to a call by the European Parliament in its resolution of 19 June 2020[596].

Promoting decent work worldwide

The Commission published in October 2020 a staff working document[597] outlining how the EU is promoting decent work worldwide, including core labour standards, employment, social dialogue and social protection. The document covers EU regional and bilateral external action, in trade, development, enlargement, neighbourhood and human rights policies, as well as EU action in international and multilateral fora, in particular in cooperation with the ILO, UN, OECD and G7/G20. It addresses also corporate governance, corporate transparency, sustainable finance and public procurement, and recalls how the EU engages with stakeholder on decent work, for example social partners in the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees.

The **RAISE UP** project[598] (supported by the EaSI programme – EUR 350 000) promotes strategic discussions and responsive policies to tackle undeclared work in agriculture. The aim is to allow key actors to learn from each other, develop integrated approaches and ensure cross-border cooperation. The project is led by FLAI CGIL, the largest Italian

[592] https://www.ela.europa.eu/
[593] https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/single-digital-gateway_en
[594] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1342
[595] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020XC0330%2803%29
[596] European Parliament resolution of 19 June 2020 on European protection of cross-border and seasonal workers in the context of the COVID-19 crisis (2020/2664(RSP).
[597] SWD(2020) 235 final https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/10102/2020/EN/SWD-2020-235-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF
[598] https://www.fondazionemetes.it/raise-up/

trade union in the agriculture sector, with partners from Bulgaria, Romania and North Macedonia. It includes outreach campaigns to increase awareness of labour rights and obligations. In Italy, an info-point has been activated in the Apulia (Puglia) region in cooperation with the Romanian Consulate. Thanks to RAISE UP the first information point for Bulgarians in Italy was established, in Ginosa, in the Apulia region.

The **Equal Treatment Office**[599] is the German body for free movement of workers, established as a provision of the Directive 2014/54 on measures facilitating the exercise of rights to which they are entitled in the context of freedom of movement for workers. It supports European workers, including seasonal workers, with advice, assistance and information regarding workers' rights. The Office promotes dialogue with social partners and non-governmental organisations, and it acts as a contact point for equivalent bodies in other Member States. It provides comprehensive on-line information in several languages for workers in the COVID-19 situation in Germany and has a free Info-hotline called "Coronavirus and labour law" in five languages (Polish, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Romanian and Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian)[600].

EU sectoral social partners promote adequate working conditions via agreements, guidelines, projects and other joint efforts. Owing to the efforts of the inland waterway transport social partners, certain aspects of the organisation of working time in the sector are part of EU legislation, based on a social partner agreement[601]. Social partners of agriculture, construction, industrial cleaning and private security sectors have worked on tackling undeclared work in their industries via joint projects and/or issued joint statements on the topic[602].

The **road transport social partners** contributed to the revised social and market rules bringing clarity on minimum standards for social protection and pay of posted workers in the road transport sector and help to eliminate illicit employment and business practices, such as letterbox companies. They jointly work on better enforcement of EU rules. The temporary agency work sector, via an EU-funded project[603], has developed innovative practices to improve training, working conditions and social protection of agency workers.

The **TECHNEQUALITY project**[604] (supported thought Horizon 2020 in 2019-2021) helps provide a better understanding of technologically driven social inequalities. It will explore new ways of measuring automation rates in European countries, explain how technological innovations are most likely to shape societal inequalities, study the role of various forms of education and social welfare in maximising growth and reducing inequality, and assess the consequences of automation for public finances. **PLUS -**

[599] http://www.eu-gleichbehandlungsstelle.de/eugs-en/about-us/mission-and-tasks.
[600] http://www.eu-gleichbehandlungsstelle.de/eugs-de/informationen-zu-corona.
[601] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en&agreementId=5223
[602] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en&day=&month=&year=&sectorCode=&themeCode=DOMS21&typeCode=&recipientCode=&mode=searchSubmit&subscribe=Search
[603] https://wecglobal.org/event-post/social-innovation-in-the-temporary-agency-work-industry-wec-europe-uni-europa-webconference/
[604] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/822330 and https://technequality-project.eu/

Platform Labour in Urban Spaces. Fairness, Welfare, Development[605] (2019-2021) addresses the platform economy's impact on work, welfare and social protection to contribute to promote social protection, economic development and well-being in digital labour. The project intertwines four disruptive platforms (AirBnb, Deliveroo, Helpling and Uber) and seven European cities (Barcelona, Berlin, Bologna, Lisbon, London, Paris and Tallinn).

A growing number of public buyers across the EU are starting to use **public procurement to promote fair working conditions**[606] in Europe and globally. In labour-intensive sectors (e.g. cleaning services, construction etc.), public authorities can rely on occupational health and safety measures, requirements to promote gender equality and work-life balance and safeguards to protect labour rights. In sectors with complex global supply chains (textiles, ICT, etc.), there is increasing awareness concerning risks of human rights violations. Public buyers are responding by requiring more transparency and more due diligence in their procurements, in line with ILO standards.

Principle 6: Wages



Initiative on adequate minimum wages

In October 2020 the Commission proposed a Directive to ensure that workers have access to adequate minimum wage protection in the EU[607]. This objective is relevant for both statutory minimum wage systems and for those relying on collective bargaining. To reach this objective, the proposal provides first of all for the promotion of collective bargaining on wages in all Member States. It also aims to ensure that Member States with a statutory minimum wage put in place the conditions for statutory minimum wages to be adequate, including through the use of clear and stable criteria for minimum wage setting, timely updates and an effective involvement of the social partners. Finally, it strengthens enforcement of minimum wage protection; and provides for effective data collection and monitoring.

The proposal is designed as to fully respect the specificities of Member States' systems and competences, and social partners' autonomy and contractual freedom. It does not seek to harmonise the level of minimum wages across the EU nor to establish a uniform mechanism for setting minimum wages in all Member States. Minimum wage protection would continue to be provided through collective agreements or legal provisions.

[605] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/822638 and https://project-plus.eu/

[606] More information can be found in the Commission report "Making socially responsible public procurement work – 71 good practices".

[607] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1968

Bulgaria ratified in January 2018 the ILO Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, and supplemented its regulatory framework with clearly structured and pre-defined socio-economic criteria for minimum wage setting.

Croatia adopted a new Minimum Wage Law in 2018, setting an annual frequency for minimum wage updates, a clear decision-making process, and criteria related to the broad economic situation to be taken into account for minimum wage updating.

Slovakia introduced in 2020 an important reform of the minimum wage, whereby the government, when updating minimum wages, has to adopt the outcomes of the bargaining by social partners in case they reach an agreement, otherwise the government has to apply automatic minimum wage indexation to the average nominal wages.

Eurofound provides regular updates on pay in the EU, including an annual study on how minimum wage rates have developed across the EU, reviewing how national governments and social partners engage in setting new rates. It also looks at the concept of a living wage, aimed at guaranteeing workers and their families a decent level of living and social participation in response to the inadequacy of income for many working households reliant on existing statutory minimum wage rates[608].

The project '**WorkYP - Working and Yet Poor'**[609] (supported by Horizon 2020 in 2020-2023) focuses on the increasing social trend of working people at risk or below the poverty line. It will explore the reasons of such phenomenon and elaborate recommendations.

Principle 7: Information about employment conditions and protection in case of dismissals



Transparent and predictable working conditions

The current Written Statement Directive[610] has since 1991 given employees starting a new job the right to be notified in writing of the essential aspects of their employment relationship. However, from the Commission's REFIT evaluation of this Directive in 2017, it emerged that many workers in the EU did either not receive this at all or not in a timely manner. Moreover, since 1991 the labour market has changed and new needs have emerged.

The new Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions[611] sets new rights for all workers, addressing insufficient protection in more precarious jobs, while limiting

[608] Minimum Wages in 2020: Annual Review, https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2020/minimum-wages-in-2020-annual-review

[609] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870619 and https://workingyetpoor.eu/

[610] Directive 91/533/EEC https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=706&langId=en&intPageId=202

[611] Directive (EU) 2019/1152 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on transparent and predictable working conditions in the European Union, *OJ L 186, 11.7.2019, p. 105–121*.

burdens on employers and maintaining labour market adaptability. It provides for: more complete information on the essential aspects of the work, to be received early by the worker, in writing; a limit to the length of probationary periods at the beginning of the job; the right to know a reasonable period in advance when work will take place, for workers with very unpredictable working schedules, as in the case of on-demand work; anti-abuse legislation for zero hour contract work; the right to receive a written reply to a request to transfer to another more secure job, and to receive cost-free the mandatory training that the employer has a duty to provide.

Its broad scope aims to ensure coverage of all workers in all forms of work, including in the most flexible non-standard and new forms of work. It also sets out targeted provisions on enforcement, to make sure that workers effectively benefit from these rights. Member States have until August 2022 to transpose the new rules into their national law.

Eurofound has expertise in monitoring and analysing working conditions across a wide range of dimensions[612]. It has looked specifically at the working conditions of men and women, in different sectors and occupations and of workers of different age groups. Since its launch in 1990, Eurofound's European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) has provided an overview of working conditions in Europe. Themes covered today include employment status, working time duration and organisation, work organisation, learning and training, physical and psychosocial risk factors, health and safety, work-life balance, worker participation, earnings and financial security, as well as work and health. The seventh EWCS takes place in 2021, covering 37 countries[613].

Several Spanish diocesan Caritas are members of the **Local Domestic Workers Platforms** helping ensure compliance with regulations regarding wages and working conditions, offering information to both workers and employers and facilitating access to jobs with decent conditions.

Principle 8: Social dialogue and involvement of workers



Supporting and promoting social dialogue in the EU

The involvement of social partners has been central to the delivery of social rights[614]. Social partners have strongly supported the implementation of the Pillar via collective bargaining, promoting good practices across Europe and contributing to EU and national policy-making. The Commission acted on the priorities set out in the joint statement on a new start for social dialogue signed in 2016 by the EU social partners, the Commission and the Dutch Presidency of the Council of the EU.

[612] https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/topic/working-conditions

[613] https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/european-working-conditions-surveys-ewcs

[614] Promoting dialogue between management and labour is enshrined as a common objective of the EU and its Member States, in Article 151 TFEU. At EU level, in the policy domains covered by Article 153 TFEU, social partners are to be consulted in accordance with Article 154 TFEU and may request implementation of their agreements at EU level under Article 155 TFEU.

The involvement of social partners in the European Semester at European and national level has greatly improved over the last years and now is well established. However, there is some diversity in how governments involve national social partners in the Semester cycle (notably as concerns the preparation of National Reform Programmes) and in the design and implementation of reforms.

The Commission, following the introduction of new forms of social partner consultations, going beyond the obligations for a two-stage social partner consultation on legislative action based on Article 153 TFEU, increased the number of consultation meetings with social partner on new political and legislative initiatives, e.g. via dedicated hearings and meetings at high political level. In 2020, dedicated social partners hearings took place inter alia on the Skills Agenda, the Youth Guarantee, pay transparency measures and the Child Guarantee. The Commission has also put emphasis on capacity building of social partners in its proposal for the ESF+. The Commission has also supported the negotiations of social partner agreements.

Social partners have been active in projects promoting the functioning of social dialogue.[615] Linked to the New Start, the cross-industry and several sectoral social partners (e.g. metal, ports, postal services) took joint positions on the functioning and the role of EU level social dialogue. Via several projects, EU level social partners promoted capacity building and stronger dialogue in countries and areas where it is weak.

With the support of EU funding, social partners have been strengthening their capacities and structures at national level. For instance the project "Strengthening social dialogue in the hospital sector in the East, South and Central Europe" (2019-2020) was implemented by EPSU and HOSPEEM to strengthen hospital sector social partners in 14 countries.

Sectoral social dialogue covers forty-three sectors, which amounts to 80% of the EU workforce. Each year, the EU sectoral social partners adopt around forty joint documents[616]. 2020 saw a record-high activity with about eighty joint documents, including 43 in response to the COVID-19 emergency alone. Linking with the 2020 autonomous agreement on digitalisation of the EU cross-industry social partners[617], several sectorial social partners have implemented projects and agreed on joint outcomes on the impact of digitalisation on their sectors. Sectoral social partners in the railways sector are negotiating an autonomous agreement on promoting the employment of women. Social partners of the personal services/hairdressing sector have agreed on an Action Plan for implementation of their 2016 European Framework Agreement on health and safety, with the support of the Commission.

In some Member States, social partners are adapting to the platform economy. This includes expanding existing trade unions to include platform workers or creating new

[615] The social partners in Air Traffic Management (CANSO, ETF and ATCEUC) have promoted through a project funded under the Commission their Toolbox for successful social dialogue in the implementation of the Single European Sky.

[616] Social partner agreements, framework of actions, mutual learning or guidance documents etc.

[617] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en&agreementId=5665

organisations for them. German trade unions, such as IG Metall or ver.di or the French Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), have taken the first approach. In France a labour law from 2016 gives platform workers the right to constitute a trade union. Delivery workers in Paris founded a new organisation, the Collectif de Livreurs Autonomes de Paris. Trade unions are also providing a range of services to non-standard workers, from training and administrative support, to legal advice and accounting. Foodora couriers in Vienna founded what is probably the first works council of online platform workers. This was facilitated by the Austrian transport and services trade union "vida". The main aim of the council is to negotiate better working conditions between couriers and management, and increasing the number of employment contracts.

In February 2020 the social partners in Denmark, CO-industri, and Danish Industry (DI), agreed on a collective agreement which includes a protocol regarding the green transition, to increase the focus on workers' competences and to upskill these competences continuously.

Principle 9: Work-life balance



Directive on Work-Life Balance

The Directive on Work-Life Balance[618] entered into force in August 2019 and Member States will have to transpose it into national law by 2 August 2024. It introduces minimum standards for family leaves and flexible working arrangements for workers with caring responsibilities, and promotes their equal take-up by women and men. A set of policy measures are designed to support Member States in achieving these aims, including by using EU funds to improve the provision of formal care services. The Commission will encourage Member States to monitor the impact of the Directive using the indicators developed with the Employment Committee's and the Social Protection Committee's indicators group.

Through the EaSI programme, the Commission is supporting the **'Redesigning Activities in a Family Friendly wAy in VitErbo's workpLaces' (R.A.F.F.A.E.L) project**[619] (2019-2021) to foster a culture of sharing responsibilities among men and women. The project has developed and tested a model for work-life balance in the Tuscia area (Viterbo Province) of Italy, based on the collaboration of public and private organisations, to promote women's (especially young women's) labour market participation. It also aims at testing services at the workplace and "community work-life balance", i.e. a system in which both public and private entities are actively involved and share services and instruments, including ICT solutions. Lastly, it has raised awareness of the sharing of care responsibilities, also through fathers' parental leave.

[618] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019L1158
[619] http://raffael.iasi.cnr.it/

Also financed via EaSI, the **'Men in Care' (MiC)** project[620] (2019-2022) is helping reducing the barriers for men who want to become involved in caring activities. MiC is improving workplace conditions to promote men taking up caring roles and helps assess how policies and workplace cultures can change to enable men to become more active in caring for children, older persons, partners, co-workers and friends. By involving workers, trade unions, employers, and families, the project will enable men to take time to care for themselves and others. The project involves partners from different European countries (Austria, Germany, France, Slovenia, Poland, Spain, Norway and Iceland) and is led by the Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (UNED) in Spain.

Ljubljana and Lyon have pledged to improve parental leave rights for their staff. Ljubljana is committed to continue investing in subsidised and accessible childcare to ensure all children get a place in kindergarten; continue the high-quality scheme of parental rights and cash benefits; co-financing programmes of NGOs to provide holiday care, after-school and leisure activities, including sports and cultural activities that promote inclusion and participation of all children[621].

Principle 10: Healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment and data protection



Revision of the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive

The Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive[622] is regularly updated to improve workers' protection against cancer, in line with new scientific evidence and technical data[623]. The Commission proposed the fourth revision in September 2020[624] to add new or revised occupational exposure limits for acrylonitrile, nickel compounds and benzene. This initiative has been developed in collaboration with scientists and representatives of workers, employers and Member States. It will benefit workers by preventing work-related cases of cancer and other serious illnesses, improving health and quality of life; companies will benefit from reduced costs caused by work-related ill health and cancer, like absences and insurance payments.

[620] https://www.men-in-care.eu/
[621] City of Ljubljana pledge.
[622] Directive 2004/37/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work (Sixth individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16(1) of Council Directive 89/391/EEC), OJ L158, 30.4.2004, p.50.
[623] Three previous updates have addressed workers' exposure to 26 chemicals. These three initiatives were adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in December 2017 (Directive (EU) 2017/2398), January 2019 (Directive (EU) 2019/130) and June 2019 (Directive (EU) 2019/983).
[624] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_1691

Revision of the Biological Agents Directive

The Commission published in June 2020 an update to the Biological Agents Directive[625] to include SARS-CoV-2 among the list of biological agents it covers. The directive takes into account new risks in the workplace and offers additional protection to all workers, particularly those in direct contact with the virus in hospitals, industrial processes and laboratories. For the update, the Commission relied on the scientific advice of experts from all Member States, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the World Health Organisation, stakeholders and interest groups. In April 2020, the Commission, with the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, published guidance for a safe return to the workplace after the COVID-19 crisis[626].

EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020

The EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020[627] has helped trigger actions and mobilise actors to improve the implementation of existing health and safety rules, and the prevention of work-related diseases by tackling new and emerging risks without neglecting existing risks, and taking account of the ageing of the EU's workforce.

Given the growing concerns about psychosocial risks at the workplace, the Commission with the Swedish Ministry of Employment and the Swedish Working Environment Authority organised in 2019 a **peer review on legislation and practical management of psychosocial risks at work[628].** It gathered experts from ten Member States, the Commission, EU-OSHA, the Senior Labour Inspectors' Committee (SLIC) and social partners to share experiences on legislative and enforcement approaches to protect workers from psychosocial risks, particularly among micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Participants also discussed how gender aspects and the self-employed are addressed and how to raise awareness among enterprises.

Since the early days of the COVID-19 outbreak, the **European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)**, in coordination with the Commission, has provided resources and practical guidance to the OSH stakeholders to assess and mitigate the risks and impact on workplaces[629]. This includes practical tips to make home-based telework healthy, safe and effective. EU-OSHA has released a new online specific OiRA tool on Covid-19 to carry out risk assessment and extensive information related to biological agents at work.

The **WorkinAge project**[630] (supported through Horizon 2020) combines the efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and well-being of people at

[625] Commission Directive (EU) 2020/739 amending Annex III to Directive 2000/54/EC as regards the inclusion of SARS-CoV-2 in the list of biological agents known to infect humans and amending Commission Directive (EU) 2019/1833 (2020).
https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9695&furtherNews=yes
[626] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_729
[627] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=151&langId=en
[628] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9803&furtherNews=yes
[629] https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/covid-19-resources-workplace#pk_campaign=ban_homecw
[630] https://www.workingage.eu/project/

work. It seeks to prevent illnesses at the workplace (including work-related illnesses, working accidents, and stress), by providing an improved environment thanks to networked sensors. Moreover, societal elements, such as cohesion among individuals obtained through personalised technology and friendly/intelligent human interfaces, strengthens the potential for health and well-being at the workplace and a healthy balance between working and private life.

Occupation safety and health (OSH) is central to the efforts of the **EU sectoral social partners.** Social partners of the personal services/hairdressing sector implement the autonomous agreement on health and safety[631], supported by the Commission, for an agreed set of activities. The signatories of the European Network for Silica multi-sectoral agreement[632] have continued their commitment to protect workers by minimising the exposure to respirable crystalline silica. Enhanced workers' protection is also at the heart of guidelines developed and implemented by social partners of several sectors: the multi-sectoral guidelines to tackle third party violence and harassment related to work[633], the telecommunications "Good Work, Good Health Guidelines II"[634] on mental well-being, "Guidelines on training for port workers on fumigated containers", "International guidelines on players' health protection during the emergency calendar of football competitions"[635]. Furthermore, since March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 emergency, the social partners have issued some 43 joint statements[636] with proposals to deal with the crisis and pave the way to recovery, with a focus on OSH[637].

Social partners also helped implement teleworking measures to avoid the risks of infection during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Austria, the chamber of labour of the region of Styria (AK Steiermark) with the government of the region of Styria launched a campaign to promote teleworking, and to support investments in information and communication technology for small and medium enterprises. The Maltese social partners were consulted on a government financial support package to help employers invest in the technology needed for teleworking.

The **EU cross-industry social partners** have concluded an **autonomous agreement on** digitalisation[638] and the central government social partners have started negotiations. Signed by BusinessEurope, ETUC, CEEP (now SGI Europe) and SMEunited, the agreement supports the digital transformation of Europe's economy, to help manage its

[631] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en&agreementId=5460
[632] https://www.nepsi.eu/
[633] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en&agreementId=5175
[634] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en&agreementId=5590
[635] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en&agreementId=5690
[636] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en&day=&month=&year=&sectorCode=&themeCode=DOMS07&typeCode=&recipientCode=&mode=searchSubmit&subscribe=Search
[637] The inland waterways, ports, maritime transport, shipbuilding and railways social partners, in the Joint industry Statement of 23 March 2020: Transport keeps us going, highlighted the importance of protecting health and safety of transport workers. The sea fisheries social partners, on 27 March 2020, urged to secure free movement of fishing crews and protection of fishermen's health. The social partners of the woodworking and furniture sectors signed, on 24 April 2020, a joint opinion proposing a number of measures focusing on OSH and economic activity and recovery of their sectors.
[638] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en&agreementId=5665

implications for labour markets, the world of work and society at large. The agreement enables employers and unions to introduce digital transformation strategies in partnership in a human oriented approach at national, sectoral, company and workplace levels, including on the modalities of connecting and disconnecting and respect of working time rules and appropriate measures to ensure compliance.

Several sectorial social partners have implemented projects and agreed on joint outcomes on the impact of digitalisation on their sectors. For instance, the maritime transport social partners, via an EU funded project, are developing guidelines on the provision and appropriate use of internet access on board and studying the impact of increased use of digitalisation on-board ships.

The European social partners from the telecom sector, UNI Europa, ICTS (EU trade unions of the ICT sector) and ETNO (the European employer organisation of incumbent telecom operators) investigated the impact of digitalisation and related new challenges for the health and safety of workers in the sectors. They published guidelines to improve the mental health of workers in the sector. These guidelines provide advice in the event of stress caused by being expected to be available for work at any time. The social partners from the banking sector signed a joint declaration on telework in November 2017, agreeing on some minimum standards and best practices to ensure a healthy work environment for the employee.

III. Social protection and inclusion

Principle 11: Childcare and support to children



Preparatory action on the European Child Guarantee

In 2015 the European Parliament called for a child guarantee to help ensure that every child in Europe at risk of poverty or social exclusion has access to free healthcare, education and early childhood education and care, decent housing and adequate nutrition. In 2017, the European Parliament requested the European Commission to implement a multi-annual preparatory action to clarify the concept of such a guarantee, its feasibility and potential to contribute to fighting child poverty. Also, the 2017 evaluations of the implementation of the 2013 Recommendation on Investing in Children concluded that there was room for improvement in stepping up efforts to reduce child poverty.

In this context, in 2018 the Commission commissioned a feasibility study[639] to explore how a child guarantee scheme could contribute to combating poverty and social exclusion, particularly amongst the EU's most disadvantaged children and ensuring the access of these children to the five areas identified by the European Parliament.

[639] https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=22253&langId=en

The second phase of the preparatory action (March 2020-2021) is a study on the costs and benefits of the Child Guarantee. In the third phase (summer 2020 - summer 2022) pilot projects will be carried out in several Member States.

Quality framework for early childhood education and care

The Council Recommendation on high quality early childhood education and care systems, adopted in 2019[640], supports Member States in their efforts to improve access to and quality of their early childhood education and care systems. It includes a quality framework with 5 key components and recommendations on how to address them: access to early childhood education and care, training and working conditions of staff, the definition of appropriate curricula and governance, funding, and monitoring and evaluation of systems. These actions are linked to an array of EU funding, notably ESF and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Within this framework, the Commission, through the Technical Support Instrument, is supporting Member State reforms aimed at setting up national quality frameworks on early childhood education and care.

To improve the access and quality of education and training in the EU and achieve the European Education Area, Member States agreed that by 2030 at least 96% of children between 3 years old and the starting age for compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education. This framework has since been completed by a toolkit for inclusion in early childhood education and care, to support Member States in their efforts to provide accessible and affordable education and care to all young children across Europe, regardless of their individual or family circumstances.

The "**Priority to the Children**" programme of Caritas Portugal focuses on children in the most vulnerable situations. It identifies cases of children and youth affected by poverty, neglect, abandonment, mistreatment and abuse; it monitors the cases; refers them to the competent institutions, and proposes appropriate measures. The programme **Social services for children with disabilities**, run by Caritas Latvia, promotes the inclusion of children with disabilities and their families, via a day care centre, the provision of social rehabilitation of disabled children and social care at home.

The cities of Bilbao, Bristol, Brno, Ghent, Hamburg, Leeds, Lyon, Madrid, Malmö, Nicosia, Pau, Timisoara, Vantaa, Vienna and Warsaw have pledged to invest EUR 6 billion for children. Cities will build 291 new and affordable childcare centres and will reinforce integrated services to help children in need[641]. Malmö has pledged to open additional family centres with Swedish classes to facilitate the social inclusion of migrant families[642]. Bilbao has committed EUR 78 million from 2018-2021 for socio-educational and psychological programmes for children and adolescents[643]. Brno has pledged to ensure the quality and access to education including the facilitation of

[640] COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems (2019/C 189/02).
[641] Eurocities pledges.
[642] City of Malmö pledge.
[643] City of Bilbao pledge.

quality hobbies and non-formal education[644]. Ljubljana has committed to creating a good contingency plan for the functioning of kindergartens and schools and the provision of food for children in most vulnerable situations, based on the experience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Principle 12: Social protection



Council Recommendation on access to social protection

In November 2019, the Council adopted the Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed[645]. Since then, the Commission has developed a monitoring framework with the Social Protection Committee[646] and ensured mutual learning on formal access, effective access, adequacy and transparency[647]. The Commission continues to support Member States and stakeholders in the follow-up of the Recommendation. The Recommendation asks Member States to submit a plan setting out the corresponding measures to be taken at national level by 15 May 2021 to implement the principles set out in the Recommendation. These would feed into a review of the Recommendation by the Commission by November 2022.

Revision of social security coordination rules

Free movement would not be possible in practice without European rules on the coordination of social security systems, guaranteeing that mobile citizens maintain their social security rights acquired in another Member State. In December 2016, the Commission presented its proposal to update the social security coordination rules in the following areas: long-term care, unemployment benefits, family benefits and applicable legislation[648]. The proposed revision aims to modernise the existing rules and ensure they respond to the current challenges, by making them fairer, clearer and easier to enforce. Negotiations with the European Parliament and Council are ongoing.

In 2017-2019, some Member States adopted significant reforms to improve access to social protection for the self-employed or non-standard workers. For instance, **Ireland** extended access to dental and optical care, invalidity benefits and unemployment benefits for the self-employed. **Belgium** took a series of measures to improve or create family-related leaves for the self-employed (maternity leaves, paternity leaves, foster parent leaves) and shortened or abolished waiting periods in other domains (sickness benefits, pensions).

[644] City of Brno pledge.
[645] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019H1115%2801%29
[646] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8358&furtherPubs=yes
[647] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8357&furtherPubs=yes
[648] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=849&newsId=2699&furtherNews=yes

The COVID-19 crisis has put the spotlight on people who are not or not adequately covered by social protection, such as non-standard workers or the self-employed. As a response, Member States took a number of temporary measures to address emergency situations. For instance, during the first months of the crisis (March/April 2020), Member States extended and scaled up existing schemes, and loosened their eligibility conditions (for instance, unemployment benefits or sickness benefits schemes). Unemployment benefits were prolonged (e.g. Denmark, Greece, Bulgaria or Luxembourg), increased (Bulgaria) or their degressivity was frozen, like in Belgium. Self-employed received more possibilities to benefit from income support schemes, mostly for a limited period or through one-off payments (e.g. Belgium, Cyprus, Czechia, Portugal). Finally, in March 2020, Spain adopted extraordinary measures to ensure temporary income support for specific groups affected by the pandemic. In particular, the measures target temporary workers or those working in the domestic sector whose job has been totally or partially interrupted (including job termination) and lack access to regular unemployment benefits.

The **EUROSHIP project**[649] (supported through Horizon 2020 in 2020-2023) investigates the effectiveness of social protection policies targeted at reducing poverty and social exclusion in Europe. It focusses on the role of social protection systems (including minimum income schemes), digitalisation of work and social protection delivery, and the social and political opportunities for active agency by youth at risk, precarious workers with care obligations and people with long-term care needs.

Principle 13: Unemployment benefits



Access to unemployment benefits

The scope of the Council Recommendation on access to social protection includes unemployment benefits. The monitoring framework that the Social Protection Committee adopted in November 2020 shows that some self-employed and non-standard workers did not have access to unemployment benefits before the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. However, even before the crisis, a number of Member States decided to enhance the unemployment benefits to better cover new forms of work. During the crisis, coverage was also extended to previously uncovered group (see box below).

Benchmarking framework

The Commission has developed a benchmarking framework together with Member States on unemployment benefits and active labour market policies. The framework, agreed by the Employment Committee (EMCO), has been used as part of the European Semester since 2018. It covers, among others, the net replacement rate, entitlement periods and unemployment benefit coverage. It notably shows that, on average, before

[649] https://euroship-research.eu/ and https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870698

the COVID-19 crisis, around one third of the short-term unemployed were covered by unemployment benefits in the EU.

Public employment services are playing an important role in containing the impact of the crisis and supporting people facing barriers to employment. Public employment services are going beyond traditional ways of working to tackle a surge in the number of job-seekers and to support them in their transitions across occupations or sectors. The adoption by the European Parliament and the Council of Decision (EU) 2020/1782 of 25 November 2020 is an important step to continue and strengthen the successful cooperation among public employment services also in their key role mitigating job losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2017-2019, some Member States adopted significant reforms to improve access to social protection for **the self-employed or non-standard workers** in the system. For instance, **Spain** made coverage for unemployment and accidents at work mandatory; **France** and **Malta** granted access to their unemployment scheme to the self-employed.

In **Denmark,** the new unemployment scheme implemented in 2018 aims to handle all types of employment and to increase coverage for people in non-standard jobs, with multiple jobs and persons combining employment and self-employment. In this new scheme, unemployment is defined in relation to activities rather than a categorisation as either self-employed or wage earner. Income as both wage earner and self-employed as well as income from multiple sources (such as surplus in own company and secondary activities) establishes eligibility and entitlements.

As a result of the 2008 economic and financial crisis, **Ireland** committed in 2016 to extend unemployment benefits, in the form of the Jobseeker's Benefit, to the self-employed. Around 13% of the Irish workforce are self-employed. With this new scheme, which came into force on 1st November 2019, the self-employed have the same access to unemployment benefits (and activation) as standard employees, whilst they pay the same contribution rate as before.

The Danish and Irish approach both offer the possibility to combine work with the unemployment benefit and provide access to active labour market policies. The latter should be specialised on the nature of self-employment work, for example training in entrepreneurship.

During the COVID-19 crisis, a range of countries temporarily amended their unemployment benefit scheme. Member States further extended existing schemes to groups that were previously uncovered, and rolled out a series of new measures, to close some gaps. Governments decided to lift some eligibility conditions for unemployment benefits, extended the duration of unemployment benefits and / or granted access to non-standard workers in at least 14 Member States. In Italy, Spain, Cyprus, Greece, Estonia, Croatia and Romania, procedures to access unemployment benefits were simplified, mainly to lower the administrative burden and to speed up processes.

In **Spain**, access to unemployment protection was improved: seasonal workers (permanent-discontinuous workers) are entitled to unemployment benefit for 90 days, even if they have exhausted their unemployment entitlements or have not contributed

enough. A temporary extraordinary unemployment benefit was established for domestic employees in the event of lack of activity, reduction of hours worked or termination of the contract as a result of COVID-19. The amount of the subsidy is70% of the Social Security "regulatory base", with a maximum amount of EUR 950 per month. The duration of the benefit is open. An exceptional subsidy was introduced for workers with a temporary contract of at least two months, when their work contract expires and they do not have the minimum period required to access ordinary unemployment benefits. This allowance (EUR 430) lasts for one month and can be extended. Moreover, unemployment benefits received under these schemes during this situation will not count towards consumption of future unemployment benefits.

In **Poland**, a special allowance was granted to persons working under civil law contracts. **Croatia**, the scheme for "permanent seasonal workers" was modified, to better support employers and permanent seasonal workers within the tourism sector.

Principle 14: Minimum income



EU framework on minimum income

The current Union framework on minimum income protection includes recommendations on common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems[650], on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market[651], and monitoring and policy coordination activities within the European Semester, underpinned by the EU benchmarking framework on minimum income protection.

To strengthen the exchange of experience and good practices, the Commission, assisted by the Social Protection Committee, initiated a mutual learning platform - the Minimum Income Network (MINET), reuniting representatives from national administrations in charge of minimum income schemes. Several discussions were organised in 2019-20 to exchange views on elements of minimum income schemes design and identify common implementation challenges.

A study on the methodology to measure the returns on investment from integrated social assistance schemes was conducted to advance knowledge and evidence gathering on the design and effectiveness of Member States' social safety nets[652]. Harmonising and integrating data on participation in active labour market policies and other services and transitions to employment, this study attempts to assess how social assistance beneficiaries are more effectively supported in returning to employment.

[650] Council Recommendation 92/441/EEC on common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A31992H0441

[651] Commission Recommendation 2008/867/EC on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=celex%3A32008H0867

[652] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8362&furtherPubs=yes

In 2020, the Commission launched a call to co-fund local/regional-level projects to put in place comprehensive systems to support people in (the most) vulnerable situations and test the integrated approach within minimum income schemes. The call is funded by the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation and has a total budget of EUR 10 million. The selected projects will test innovative practices to provide for the integrated delivery of the three strands of active inclusion: adequate income support, labour market activation and effective access to enabling goods and services.

On 12 October 2020, the Council of the EU adopted conclusions on "Strengthening Minimum Income Protection to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion in the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond". Taking into account that Member States are responsible for designing their social protection systems, the Council has invited:

(i) the Commission to initiate an update of the Union framework to effectively support and complement the policies of Members States on national minimum income protection;
(ii) the Commission and Member States to strengthen the exchange of good practice and mutual learning in further developing minimum income, including within the Minimum Income Network (MINET) as a technical forum of the Social Protection Committee (SPC);
(iii) the Commission, SPC and EMCO to prepare periodically a joint report to analyse and review progress achieved in the development of minimum income.

In May 2020, **Spain** approved a new national minimum income scheme (Ingreso Mínimo Vital) supplementing the existing 17 regional schemes. It establishes a subjective right to income support, non-conditional on budget availability. It targets the 23-65 age group [or from 18 if having a dependent child], who have been residing legally in the country for at least one year. Eligibility is subject to an income and a wealth test. The benefit rate varies depending on the household composition. Beneficiaries must be registered as job seekers and participate in activation schemes provided by regional and local administrations, with the involvement of the private sector. This is a major step, as Spain was the only Member State without a comprehensive national system. This has the potential to address the adequacy and coverage gaps of the previous fragmented system.

The city of Barcelona has pledged EUR 172 million to help 2 500 households to get out of poverty and to regenerate 16 most deprived neighbourhoods[653].

[653] Eurocities pledges.

Principle 15: Old age income and pensions



Policy coordination on pensions

The Commission has supported national efforts to ensure adequate pensions and minimum income in old age by identifying joint challenges, exchange of best practices and guidance on policy responses[654]. The triennial Pension Adequacy Reports (PAR) of the Commission and the SPC (next edition due in 2021) analyse how current and future pensions help prevent old-age poverty and maintain income for the duration of retirement. The 2019 joint EPC-SPC paper on pensions considered how to reconcile the policy objectives of fiscal sustainability and adequacy of pensions in our ageing societies. A majority of Member States have received pension-related CSRs in the European Semester, mostly focusing on sustainability, but also on adequacy and fairness, depending on their individual situation. The High-level group of experts on pensions reported in 2019 on the contribution of supplementary pensions to adequacy and recommended, in particular, to promote pension credits in occupational schemes to foster gender equality. The triennial Ageing report looks at the long-run economic and fiscal implications of Europe's ageing population (next edition due in 2021).

Through the Technical Support Instrument, the Commission is supporting Member State reforms aimed at designing pension information web-portals aimed at providing comprehensive, up-to-date and accessible information to citizens about their expected income situation in old age; and the setting-up of funded pension savings schemes.

Initiatives on demographic change

The importance of demographic change for social policies has been illustrated through facts and figures in the Commission Report on the Impact of Demographic Change[655]. This evidence provided a foundation for the Green Paper on Ageing published by the Commission on 27 January 2021[656], which opened a wide debate on possible ways to respond to the impacts of Europe's ageing population. The Green Paper looks at challenges and opportunities brought by ageing, and implications for all generations. Key issues for the public debate include the future social protection systems, long-term care and pension systems and healthy and active ageing.

In **Sweden**, the cross-party parliamentary Working Group on Pensions adopted in 2017 the Action plan for gender-equal pensions, to monitor gender differences in pension entitlements including occupational pensions. The group monitors why women have shorter careers, what the pension entitlements for parental leave are and how this contributes to gender (in)equality in pensions. It also investigates the impact of factors unrelated to the national pension system, such as the development of part-time work,

[654] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=752
[655] COM(2020) 241 final, 17.6.2021.
[656] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12722-Green-Paper-on-Ageing/public-consultation

the social security system for parents, the inequalities at the labour market and the differences in occupational pension schemes coverage.

Belgium offers a national pension tracking system through the portal mypension.be. All individuals registered in Belgium can access information on their accrued statutory and occupational pension rights and the projected statutory and occupational pension entitlements. The projections covering the two pillars are available since 2016 thanks to cooperation of the public institutions and the occupational pension industry. The development of a database for occupational pensions was triggered by the need to get more insight into occupational pensions to make better policy decisions and improve savers' awareness of their total pension rights.

Ireland is implementing a new funded pension savings scheme. Through the Technical Support Instrument, the Commission is providing technical support towards establishing an 'automatic enrolment' workplace retirement savings system in Ireland, expected to improve the financial retirement readiness of employees, and contribute to more adequate pension income for future generations of pensioners.

Principle 16: Access to healthcare



Building a European Health Union

In its Communication of 11 November 2020 'Building a European Health Union: Reinforcing the EU's resilience for cross-border health threats'[657], the Commission has put forward proposals to strengthen the EU's health security framework, and the crisis preparedness and response role of key EU agencies. This responds to challenges revealed by the pandemic and aims at protecting citizens with high quality healthcare, more resilient health systems and better preparation to future crises. The package also sets out the main elements of the future Health Emergency Response Authority, to be proposed by the end of 2021.

Europe's Strategy for Covid-19 vaccines

On 17 June 2020, the Commission presented the European vaccines strategy[658] to accelerate the development, manufacturing and deployment of vaccines against COVID-19. Based on this Strategy, the Commission and Member States agreed on a joint action at the EU level for a centralised EU approach to securing supplies and support the development of COVID-19 vaccines. On 15 October 2020, a second Commission Communication[659] was published to support Member States in preparing for large-scale vaccination at all levels, including (cold-chain) infrastructure, sufficiently resourced vaccination centres and vaccination registries. Member States were also invited to

[657] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_2041
[658] COM(2020) 245 final of 17.06.2020.
[659] COM(2020) 680 final of 15.10.2020.

define priority groups for vaccination, for instance older persons and health professionals.

Europe's beating cancer plan

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan[660], presented by the Commission on 3 February 2021, will help improving access to healthcare for cancer patients. It proposes actions at every key stage of the disease: prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, and quality of life for patients and survivors. Inequalities in access to cancer prevention and care will be monitored to close the persisting gaps for disadvantaged people. The Plan will promote actions for continuous access to care during shocks and specific measures to improve access to care for children.

Pharmaceutical strategy for Europe

The Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe adopted in November 2020 aims to ensure Europe's supply of safe and affordable medicines to meet patients' needs[661]. It seeks to create a future proof system, which reaps the benefits of digitalisation and promotes innovation especially in areas of unmet needs, such as antimicrobials, medicines for children and for rare diseases. It will be instrumental in improving access to affordable treatments.

Digital transformation of health and care

In 2018, the Commission published a Communication on the digital transformation of health and care in the digital single market[662]. It prioritises the secure exchange of health data of EU citizens and patients, also across borders for better and more efficient diagnosis and treatment, with full respect of citizens' privacy. It promotes the use of digital tools and technologies to empower people to look after their health, stimulate prevention and enable feedback and interaction between users and healthcare providers.

Improving evidence on gaps in access to healthcare

Following the call from the European Parliament for the Commission to improve data on access to healthcare, the Commmission carried out a pilot project in 2018, which fed into the State of Health in the EU cycle, proposing possible ways forward to improve the accessibility metrics. Further work was carried out in the Health System Assessment Expert Group, with a report on improving access to healthcare through more powerful policy tools, published in February 2021. The report explores more granular ways of measuring accessibility. It brings to the policy debate a need for fairer distribution of health benefits and argues for a policy change to address better health inequity-related problems in access to healthcare.

[660] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2021%3A44%3AFIN
[661] https://ec.europa.eu/health/human-use/strategy_en
[662] https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/document.cfm?doc_id=51628

Addressing challenges of medical deserts

The Commission launched in 2020 a call for projects under the third Health Programme, to improve access to healthcare in medical deserts. This initiative should support policies related to workforce retention in underserved areas and approaches to adjust the allocation of resources of health systems to local needs. The projects will be implemented in 2021 and 2022.

In the **Joint Action on Health Equity**[663], funded under the 2014-2020 Health Programme, Member States worked jointly to address health inequalities and improve health and well-being in Europe. The action has also a specific focus on groups in vulnerable situations and migrants. Measures supported the formulation of national, regional and local policies and programmes to reduce inequalities in access to health and social services and capacity building to implement them.

Member States continue to modernise their health systems, e.g. by increasing access and availability of healthcare services. Some provide incentives or grants to family doctors or medical students to work in underserved areas (e.g. in Estonia, Latvia, France, Germany) or increase the salaries of (certain professions of) healthcare workers (in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania). Primary care is being strengthened by establishing community health centres, local health care units, or general practitioner group practices (in Austria, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Luxembourg, Romania). Lithuania put in place measures to shorten waiting lists and reduce co-payment to prescriptions. Cyprus implemented the first phase of out-patient care in 2019, which is expected to reduce significantly out of pocket payments and further increase access to healthcare. The final phase of the general health system reform in Cyprus was launched on 1 June 2020, with the introduction of hospital care coverage as part of the benefits package. A number of Member States are planning or implementing improved health workforce planning and/or training (Sweden, Germany, France, Estonia, Spain, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia).

The pandemic prompted some changes, such as the removal of user charges for primary care in Ireland, extending coverage for migrants in Portugal or covering for contributions for those out of work to some extent in Hungary, Slovenia, Greece and Croatia.

The cities of Leipzig, Ljubljana, Utrecht and Zagreb have pledged to renovate health centres and equipment, and promote healthy urban and work environments.[664] Ljubljana has pledged to continue working on the renovation of health centres and purchase of high-quality healthcare equipment.[665]

[663] https://jahee.iss.it/
[664] Eurocities pledges.
[665] City of Ljubljana pledge.

Principle 17: Inclusion of people with disabilities



European Accessibility Act

The European Accessibility Act entered into force in 2019 and Member States[666] will have to transpose it into national law by 28 June 2022. The directive aims to improve the functioning of the internal market for accessible products and services, by removing barriers created by divergent rules in Member States. This will thus facilitate the employment and participation of persons with disabilities in society on an equal basis with others.

European Electronic Communications Code

The European Electronic Communications Code[667] entered into force at the end of 2018. Member States had to transpose it by 21 December 2020 into national law and apply it from that date. The transposition process is still on-going in most Member States. The Directive has maintained and strengthened the general obligation to ensure equivalent access to and choice of electronic communications for end-users with disabilities already existing in the electronic communications legislation framework (Directive 2002/22). Under the universal service provisions (see below under Principle 20), Member States are also required to ensure the availability and affordability of specific equipment and services, including total conversation and relay services, to consumers with disabilities. The European Electronic Communications Code requires Member States to ensure that access for end-users with disabilities to emergency services is available through emergency communications and is equivalent to that enjoyed by other end-users.

Web Accessibility Directive

The Web Accessibility Directive[668], in force since 2016, harmonises the internal market for web accessibility products and services and increases digital inclusion by making the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies more accessible based on common requirements, thus contributing to equal opportunities and full participation of persons with disabilities in society. The Commission will review the application of the Web Accessibility Directive by June 2022.

[666] Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019L0882

[667] Directive (EU) 2018/1972 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 establishing the European Electronic Communications Code. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32018L1972&qid=1558365285548

[668] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2016/2102/oj

Audiovisual Media Services Directive

The revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive[669] strengthens the provisions on accessibility by obliging all media service providers to make their services continuously and progressively more accessible to persons with disabilities. The means to achieve the accessibility of audiovisual media services should include, but not be limited to, sign language, subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, spoken subtitles and audio description. Under the new rules, Member States will have an obligation to report on these measures and to encourage the development of accessibility action plans.

Passenger rights and other transport related measures

Passenger rights legislation[670] (adopted mostly between 2004 and 2011) ensures that persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility are not discriminated when they intend to use collective transport (air, rail, bus and coach and waterborne transport) and if necessary receive assistance free of charge.

In 2013, the Commission proposed to amend the air passenger rights Regulation. Among other points, the Commission proposed to increase the liability of air carriers with regard to mobility equipment up to the actual value of the equipment. This is achieved, in conformity with the Montreal Convention, by compelling air carriers to automatically offer the option to make a special declaration of interest laid out within the Convention, at no additional cost[671]. In 2017, the Commission proposed to amend the regulation on rail passenger rights. In line with the commitments undertaken under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the proposal aimed to contribute to making rail traveling more inclusive. The Commission started also to evaluate the other three passenger rights Regulations[672] to assess whether amendments are necessary.

Evaluation of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020

In November 2020 the Commission published the evaluation of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020[673]. It shows that, while there is room for improvement, the Strategy had a positive impact on EU rules and policies. Examples of its positive impact are the inclusion of disability issues in EU legislation and policy, with the adoption of the European Accessibility Act, the Web Accessibility Directive and legislation on the rights of passengers. Despite the efforts of the EU and its Member States, persons with disabilities continue to face challenges, like high rates of unemployment or poverty. The

[669] Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018.
[670] https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/passengers_en
[671] COM(2013)130 final (Article 2(4) of the proposal – Article 6a of the amended Regulation (EC) No 2027/97).
[672] Regulation (EC) No 1107/2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air; Regulation (EU) No 181/2011 concerning the rights of passengers in bus and coach transport; Regulation (EU) No 1177/2010 concerning the rights of passengers when travelling by sea and inland waterway.
[673] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1137&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9835

results of this evaluation fed into the new Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 presented by the Commission on 3 March 2021[674].

Accessing published works

The EU is a party to the Marrakesh treaty[675] to facilitate access to print works in formats adapted for persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print disabled. The EU has regulated the making and dissemination of copies of printed works in the internal market through the so-called "Marrakesh Directive"[676], and their exchange with non-EU countries[677]. These rules provide for a mandatory exception to copyright for persons who are print disabled as regards their access to printed works in accessible formats. The Commission will prepare a report in 2021 assessing the availability of printed works and works for disabilities not covered by the "Marrakesh Directive"[678].

EU Disability Card project

In 2016-2018 eight Member States (Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Malta, Romania and Slovenia) implemented the pilot project on the EU Disability Card. Its aim was to facilitate free movement of persons with disabilities by mutual recognition of their disability status. The Card ensures equal access to benefits and services in some or all of the selected areas (culture, leisure, sports and transport). Member States retain their discretion to determine who is eligible to receive the Card, using the national definition of disability, the issuing procedure and what areas, services and benefits would be available for cardholders from other countries. The Commission is considering how to scale up the initiative in the context of the new Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 presented by the Commission on 3 March 2021.

Estonia launched the **"Work ability reform"** in 2016. It created a system to support the full-fledged life of people with reduced work ability, changing attitudes of society towards them and supporting their integration in the labour market. The reform helped update the assessment of work ability, the support system and offer a range of services. The reform is co-financed by ESF during 2016-2023 with EUR 170 million. Services have been provided in 54 900 cases, with 950 different actions supporting employers and employees.

[674] COM(2021) 101.

[675] The Marrakesh Treaty is an international copyright treaty administered by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). The Treaty was signed by the EU in 2014 and was ratified in 2018.

[676] Directive (EU) 2017/1564 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 September 2017 on certain permitted uses of certain works and other subject matter protected by copyright and related rights for the benefit of persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print-disabled and amending Directive 2001/29/EC on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society, OJ L 242, 20.9.2017, p. 6–13.

[677] Regulation (EU) 2017/1563 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 September 2017 on the cross-border exchange between the Union and third countries of accessible format copies of certain works and other subject matter protected by copyright and related rights for the benefit of persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print-disabled. OJ L 242, 20.9.2017, p. 1–5.

[678] Article 9, Directive (EU) 2017/1564.

Specialisterne[679] is a socially innovative company where the majority of employees has autism. Employees work as business consultants on tasks such as software testing, programming and data entry for the public and private sectors. Specialisterna Ireland has received ESF funding through its participation in the Ability Programme. This programme facilitates Specialisterne to assist over 100 students and recent graduates from third level colleges throughout Ireland to prepare for and gain meaningful employment in the workplace.

The **Ability Programme**[680] is an ESF funded programme aimed at guiding young persons with disabilities aged between 15-29 towards the labour market. Ability provides funding on a local, regional and national level. The programme aims to be person-centred and assists individuals who are not currently work-ready. Ability has an overall budget of up to EUR 16 million from 2018 to 2021.

The cities of Brno, Ljubljana and Stuttgart have pledged to spend EUR 304 million on inclusion of persons with disabilities[681]. Ljubljana mainstreams the inclusion of persons with disabilities across all city relevant policy areas. In education, it offers tutoring programmes in the pre-school and school environment, together with support services for pupils with intellectual disabilities. It allocates around EUR 2.5 million annually for inclusion of children and adolescents with disabilities. Ljubljana provides adapted non-profit rental housing to adults with disabilities. The municipal housing fund is expected to provide an additional 1 500 non-profit rental housing units by 2022 with at least 10% adaptable for persons with disabilities in accordance with the principle of universal design, ensuring an accessible and barrier-free living environment. The city commits to contributing to independent living for persons with disabilities by co-financing personal assistance for those who are not entitled to the coverage of such costs directly from the State budget. Over EUR 10 million are earmarked annually for various forms of assistance[682].

[679] https://specialisterne.com/
[680] https://www.gov.ie/en/service/d38c9e-apply-for-funding-under-the-ability-programme/
[681] Eurocities pledges, City of Brno pledge.
[682] City of Ljubljana pledge.

Principle 18: Long-term care



EU-level actions on long-term care include legislative measures providing opportunities for workers to be granted leave to care for dependent relatives[683] and the Commission proposal to bring more clarity on the coordination of long-term care benefits in cross-border situations[684]. Analytical work[685] is on-going to better understand common long-term care challenges such as the need to improve long-term care access and affordability, support the quality of long-term care , and ensure adequate long-term care workforce. The Commission is working with the Member States on a common portfolio of EU-level indicators. The dialogue with the Member States is taking place in the context of the social open method of coordination. A joint Commission-SPC Report mapping out the state of play of long-term care systems across the EU will be published in mid-2021.

Digitalisation of the health and care sector

Since 2012, the Commission has supported the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Health Ageing[686], gathering innovators, policy makers, patients, health and care providers to ensure the deployment of digital innovations for health and care of older people. These actions range from integrated care to independent living and to age-friendly environments, and include tackling age-related difficulties such as frailty and falls.

The Commission supports the Active and Assisted Living (AAL) Programme[687] to create better living conditions for older adults with the help of technology, and to strengthen the international industrial opportunities in information and communication technology. The programme has funded more than 200 projects, involving small and medium enterprises (SMEs), research bodies and end-user organisations (representing seniors). The Joint Programming "Initiative More Years, Better Lives"[688] (JPI MYBL) consolidates the activities of more than 15 countries to enhance coordination and collaboration between European and national research programs related to demographic change.

[683] Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU.
[684] Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems and regulation (EC) No 987/2009 laying down the procedure for implementing Regulation (EC) No 883/2004, COM(2016) 815 final.
[685] Recent studies focus on social protection against the risk of LTC, LTC workforce, informal care and the LTC market. See also JRC, Healthcare and long-term care workforce: Demographic challenges and potential contribution of migration and digital technology, https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC121698.
[686] https://ec.europa.eu/eip/ageing/home_en
[687] http://www.aal-europe.eu/
[688] https://www.jp-demographic.eu/

Seven **social innovation projects** in the area of long-term care (LTC) are ongoing at EU, national and regional level with the support of EaSI Programme. They aim to design and test innovative ways to address LTC challenges: designing integrated care models, new ways to provide LTC in rural sparsely populated areas, new funding models for LTC, strengthening individual autonomy and introducing participatory decision-making in LTC policy formation. Some projects have a national/regional focus and are based in Slovakia, Poland (Podlaskie voivodship) and Spain (Region of Castile and León). Others have a pan-European dimension covering different countries (France, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Germany, Poland, Austria, Spain, North Macedonia, Belgium, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia, etc.). They run for three years (2020-2023), have an average budget of EUR 1.6 million (of which 80% EU grant), and target people in need of LTC and their carers. If successful, the new models could later be up-scaled using EU structural funds.

Croatia launched a programme using EU funding to encourage the employment of disadvantaged women (especially aged 50+) to care for older people in their communities. **France** introduced an allowance for persons entitled to carer's leave. **Malta** reinforced homecare by introducing a cash benefit for persons employing a full-time carer of their choice to assist them in their daily needs. The **Netherlands** improved working conditions in the care sector through better protected contracts (e.g. open-ended contracts, flexible working time, leave). **Portugal** established a formal status of informal carers. **Germany** has enhanced in-house quality assurance, external quality assessments and quality reporting in residential care.

Croatia is strengthening the position of informal carers by redefining their status. Through the Technical Support Instrument (formerly known as Structural Reform Support Programme), the Commission is providing technical support to develop policy recommendations to review the policy framework for long-term care services and implement a new social benefit for informal care delivered at home. This is expected to contribute to poverty eradication (i.e. by providing additional support to an at-risk social category), and enhance social protection for informal carers (mostly women), by providing them with a salary for their caring duties, and rendering them eligible to receive contribution-based pensions (thus reducing the gender gap in pensions).

In **Lithuania**, the ESF supports the provision of integrated social care and nursing services at home for older people or people with disabilities, including children. The project called ''Integrated services at home'' also provides consultation and training for family members to improve their knowledge and skills to help people that need such services. Overall, some EUR 30 million (ESF) are dedicated to such projects in Lithuanian municipalities.

The pandemic prompted some changes. Finland has adopted amendments to the Act on Care Services for Older Persons to increase the minimum staffing level and quality of care for 24-hour care and for long-term institutional care for older people gradually, from 0.5 employees per client in October 2020 to 0.7 employees per client by April 2023. Portugal established the legal statute of the informal caregivers. To protect care recipients during the pandemic, several Member States (e.g. Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Slovenia) have introduced measures to isolate residents from other care recipients within the care home. Member States (e.g. Belgium (Wallonia), Estonia, France, Ireland, Italy, Spain) have also introduced measures to fight increased

loneliness resulting from the pandemic and containment measures. As labour shortages in the long-term care sector have worsened during the crisis, Member States (e.g. Austria, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Sweden) have introduced or extended measures to increase the pool of long-term care workers. Some Member States (e.g. Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Spain) also introduced measures to support informal carers during the pandemic, e.g. through benefits, allowing to reduce working time or introducing special leave schemes.

The **Homes4Life project**[689] – supported through Horizon 2020 in 2018-2020 - has developed a European certification scheme based on a long-term vision of people's health, care, social and other needs as they age in their homes. The certification scheme aims to develop better living environments integrating construction and digital solutions where beneficial.

The Commission has been supporting a pilot project on the personal and household services sector (2018-2020)[690], which can play an important role in long-term care systems in the context of the demographic transition.

The cities of Bilbao, Braga, Brno, Timisoara, Warsaw and Zaragoza have pledged to spend EUR 34.5 million on affordable long-term care. Their main aim is to improve residential care, homecare and tele-care[691]. Bilbao a member of the Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities to encourage active ageing, social participation and the overall quality of life of elder people[692].

Principle 19: Housing and assistance for the homeless



Renovation wave

The Communication "A Renovation Wave for Europe: greening our buildings, creating jobs, improving lives"[693] helps ensure access to decent, safe and affordable housing. It acknowledges affordability as a key principle of building renovation and the need to make energy-performing buildings widely available, in particular for medium and lower-income households. One focus area is tackling energy poverty. It seeks to stimulate investments in affordable housing, notably via incentives for owners and tenants to undertake renovations, to ensure adequate funding and scale up technical assistance[694]. Moreover, it should benefit persons with disabilities by making renovated buildings accessible.

[689] http://www.homes4life.eu/
[690] https://ad-phs.eu/
[691] Eurocities pledges.
[692] City of Bilbao pledge.
[693] COM(2020) 662 final of 14 October 2020.
[694] See Staff Working Document (2020)550 "Support from the EU budget to unlock investment into building renovation under the Renovation Wave".

The Commission encourages Member States to make the renovation of buildings a pillar of their Recovery and Resilience and National Energy and Climate plans. It monitors progress through the national long-term renovation strategies[695], the European Semester and the governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action[696].

Furthermore, cohesion policy supports integrated investments in social housing which contribute to social inclusion, as well as measures to prevent and combat spatial segregation and provide access to quality mainstream services.

Finland is the only EU Member State where homelessness has decreased significantly over the last two to three decades. This success lies in the Housing First Principle, i.e. a home rather than temporary accommodation, as a human right. This principle means that when addressing the problems faced by homeless people, the first support measure should always be the provision of housing. A dwelling is a precondition for solving other problems, and hence housing is always a top, unconditional priority. Positive drivers for the consistent fall in homelessness in Finland over the last decades include the adoption of a long-term strategic policy response, a multi-level political commitment to ending homelessness and a shared collaborative approach in policy and service provision.

In the **Netherlands**, in the framework of the 2012 Covenant on Energy Saving Industry, the housing corporations, the Woonbond and the public authorities agreed that the total rental housing stock for 2021 reaches an average energy efficiency index of 1,25 (average energy label B).

France is implementing a five-year plan on 'housing first'[697] and combatting homelessness (2018-2022). Through the Technical Support Instrument (formerly known as Structural Reform Support Programme), the Commission is providing technical assistance towards implementing change management strategies for stakeholders and training of technical/administrative personnel. The project envisages also the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework, and extensive consultation with stakeholders to raise awareness of the housing first approach and generate the necessary buy-in.

The **HOME_EU project**[698] – supported through Horizon 2020 in 2016-2019 – looked at how people with a lived-experience of homelessness perceive the opportunities,

[695] https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficient-buildings/long-term-renovation-strategies_en

[696] Article 2a of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive requires Member States to notify their national Long-Term Renovation Strategies to the Commission by 10 March 2020. Most Member States did not respect the deadline: as of 15 November 2020, 13 Member States had submitted their strategies (Austria, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain and Sweden). In addition, in Belgium, the Brussels Region and the Flanders Region had submitted their regional Long-Term Renovation Strategies. The Commission is in contact with all Member States to provide guidance on the drafting and accelerate the submission process.

[697] Housing First refers to an alternative system of emergency/transitional housing progressions. Rather than moving homeless individuals through different 'levels' of housing, whereby each level moves them closer to 'independent housing', Housing First moves the homeless individual or household immediately from the streets or homeless shelters into their own accommodation.

[698] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/726997

choices and capability gains with services and existing social policies; what strategies are considered to be more effective in reversing homelessness; and how to develop an indicator on policy and programme efficacy.

The EaSI-financed **project on integrated housing and labour services in the social rental enterprise model (HomeLab** - 2016 – 2019)[699] promoted the social and labour market integration of groups in situations of vulnerability through housing and employment. It was based on the implementation of the Social Rental Enterprise (SRE) model, an institutionalised model of integration, expanding the usual concept of social housing, by integrating the private rental market into it. The model is characterised by intensive, long-term and personalised case-handling solutions. It was tested by five implementing organisations in nine locations in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia.

EnergieSprong[700] is an approach initially implemented in the Netherlands in 2012 to undertake large-scale energy renovation of social housing districts to reach net-zero level consumption, while ensuring affordability of renovated units (residents charges do not increase) and minimum disturbance for residents (as they can remain in their homes during renovation works and be involved in the process). More than 5000 homes could take advantage of the method in France and the Netherlands and 14 000 other projects are being developed in **Germany, Italy, France and the Netherlands**.

Other actions like the **Social Green project**[701] funded via the European Regional Development Fund help regional authorities to identify, share and transfer methods of formulating and implementing green social housing policies and instruments cutting greenhouse gas emissions from social housing and tackling energy poverty. The projects involves partners from Croatia, Estonia, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden.

The cities of Athens, Barcelona, Birmingham, Bologna, Ghent, Glasgow, Hamburg, Leipzig, Lille, Ljubljana, Lyon, Nantes, Poznan, Timisoara, Utrecht, Vienna and Zaragoza have pledged EUR 4.3 billion of city investments in more affordable housing, to providing 82 709 new and affordable housing units in cities and to building 3 500 new 'Housing First' shelters and temporary housing for homeless. They will continue working for the renovation of social housing and recycling of vacant housing[702]. The city of Florence pursues a Smart Liveability model that supports independent living, complementing its integrated system for temporary accommodation. It has taken action to build 7 994 social houses to host 7 302 families; open 4 new winter shelters for the homeless, hosting over 400 people; extend temporary shelters during lockdown, and create 8 new social canteens.

[699] http://homelab.mri.hu/
[700] https://energiesprong.org/
[701] https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/Estonia/mutual-learning-for-greener-social-housing
[702] Eurocities pledges.

Principle 20: Essential services



The report on "Access to essential services for people on low incomes in Europe", published in September 2020, provides a first mapping of the measures Member States have put in place to help people on low incomes to access essential services[703].

European Accessibility Act

The European Accessibility Act includes provisions and accessibility requirements relevant for essential services and to ensure access for people with disabilities or reduced mobility, and specific obligations for transports, electronic communication services and consumer banking services. In addition, it contains obligations for e-commerce, so when services are sold on line their e-commerce platforms and related mobile device based services have to be accessible.

Tackling energy poverty

The Commission has put forward several initiatives to address energy poverty and enhance access to energy services. The Clean energy for all Europeans package[704] integrates energy poverty in its instruments. It introduced obligations for Member States to monitor the situation and to indicate specific national objectives and actions in their national energy and climate plans (NECPs) and national long-term renovation strategies to alleviate energy poverty. This has resulted in energy poverty rising in Member States' political and legislative agendas and becoming an increasingly relevant part of local government programmes.

The Renovation Wave Strategy, adopted in October 2020, includes a Commission's Recommendation on Energy Poverty[705]. The Recommendation aims to help Member States define, monitor and assess energy poverty and spread best practices. It calls for the assessment of the distributional effects of the energy transition and for targeted support for low-income households (such as grants and support to overcome high upfront costs of renovations). The accompanying guidance[706] presents the energy poverty situations across Member States with indicators available from the Statistical office of the European Union and the European Energy Poverty Observatory. It maps good practices and available EU funding for energy poverty projects.

The Commission's prioritisation of energy poverty is largely reflected in the EU Energy Poverty Observatory[707], launched in 2018 to collect data, develop indicators and disseminate best practices to tackle energy poverty. As of 2021, the Observatory will

[703] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1135&newsId=9764&furtherNews=yes
[704] https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/energy-strategy/clean-energy-all-europeans_en
[705] Commission Recommendation C(2020)9600 on Energy Poverty.
[706] https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/swd_on_the_recommendation_on_energy_poverty_swd2020960.pdf
[707] https://www.energypoverty.eu/

take on an active role in steering municipal policies and measures to greater effectiveness through targeted (both thematic and regionally organised) technical assistance. It will go beyond the platform for exchange it was originally designed to be, offering to practically assist, coordinate and promote successful local actions for just transitions.

Since 2008, the Commission has been supporting the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, which helps about 10,000 local authorities across the EU adopt and implement plans on energy savings, adaptation to climate change, and, since 2015, addressing energy poverty. The Covenant of Mayors will have a reinforced purpose to help share experience on how to deal with energy poverty at local level through events and working groups, attended by municipalities from across Europe and beyond.

Revision of the Drinking Water Directive

The revised Drinking Water Directive[708] will guarantee safer access to water for all Europeans. The Directive introduces the obligation for Member States to improve or maintain access to safe drinking water for all, with a focus on vulnerable and marginalised groups. It also provides for better access to information for citizens regarding water suppliers, concerning for example the quality and supply of drinking water in their living area. It is based on the proposal presented by the Commission in February 2018, as a direct follow-up to the first-ever successful Right2Water European Citizens' Initiative.

WiFi4EU

The WiFi4EU initiative aims to provide free high-quality internet access across the EU via Wi-Fi hotspots in public spaces such as parks, public squares, administrations, public libraries, health centres, etc. As part of the Commission's Digital Single Market strategy, WiFi4EU also brings digital services (e-Government, e-Health, e-Tourism, etc.) to work in practice for local citizens and visitors. It has distributed over 8,800 vouchers across 30 participating countries since its inception.

European Electronic Communications Code

The universal service provisions in the European electronic communications regulatory framework provide a safety net to ensure that a set of services is available to all end-users and at an affordable price to consumers. One of these services is connection at a fixed location to a public communications network. These provisions have been updated and strengthened in the European Electronic Communications Code[709], where the focus is on affordability to all consumers of an adequate broadband internet access service and of voice communications services (see also under Principle 17).

[708] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-drink/review_en.html

[709] Directive (EU) 2018/1972 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 establishing the European Electronic Communications Code (Recast)Text with EEA relevance. *OJ L 321, 17.12.2018, p. 36–214.*

Digital government

The Commission has been supporting digital government in Europe through the eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020[710]. In the 2017 Tallinn Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment[711], Member States and EFTA states confirmed their commitment to strive to be open, efficient and inclusive, providing borderless, interoperable, personalised, user-friendly, end-to-end digital public services to all citizens and businesses – at all levels of public administration. In the Annex of the Tallinn Declaration, Member States emphasise the importance of user-centric digital public services, e.g. by engaging citizens in the creation of digital public services. Member States signed the Berlin Declaration on Digital Society and Value-based Digital Government on 8 December 2020[712]. The Declaration acknowledges the public sector as a driving force innovative technological solutions for public services and societal challenges and a role model for a value-based digital transformation that fully respects citizens' rights and freedoms.

In the 6 June 2020 Council Conclusions 'Shaping Europe's Digital Future'[713] Member States called on the Commission to propose a reinforced EU digital government policy, bearing in mind the e-inclusion of all citizens and private actors, to ensure coordination and support for the digital transformation of public administrations in all EU Member States, including interoperability and common standards for secure and borderless public sector data flows and services. Member States recognise that public administrations have the responsibility for ensuring citizens are treated equally in access to digital government.

France's Long-Term Renovation Strategy points to gradual measures to address worst-performing buildings, starting with a ban on rent increase in the case of poorly performing buildings ("passoire énergétique") as from 2021, a ban on renting these as from 2023 and an obligation to renovate all worst performing buildings as from 2028. It also envisages the establishment of an annual report on the achievement of the energy renovation targets for housing, and in particular the eradication of "passoires thermiques".

The city of Antwerp has pledged to reduce energy poverty by helping people save on energy costs. It aims to provide a one-stop-shop (Ecohouse Antwerp) to connect all city services on sustainable building and living, uniting practical and financial support and counselling on energy reduction, renewables, energy retrofitting, etc[714].

[710] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0179

[711] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/ministerial-declaration-egovernment-tallinn-declaration

[712] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/berlin-declaration-digital-society-and-value-based-digital-government

[713] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/06/09/shaping-europe-s-digital-future-council-adopts-conclusions/

[714] Eurocities pledges.

4. MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PILLAR

I. Targets

The Action Plan proposes three headline targets with a 2030 time horizon. They complement those set out or announced in other frameworks, such as the European Green Deal, the European Skills Agenda, the European Education Area, the EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation, and the Digital Decade. The proposed headline targets, building on the revised Social Scoreboard and reflecting the three chapters of the Pillar, are set in continuation with the social and employment targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy[715]. They will replace the current headline targets in the employment, education and social area, and are:

1) Employment rate of the 20-64 year-old[716] (already part of the Europe 2020 targets);
2) Adult participation in learning during the last 12 months (new target relative to Europe 2020)[717];
3) At risk of poverty or social exclusion rate (already part of the Europe 2020 targets)[718].

The numerical targets by 2030 are set as follows:

	Target minimum for 2030	Current level	Expected minimum change
Employment rate	78.0%	73.1% (2019)	+ 4.9 pps
Adult participation rate in learning during the last 12 months	60.0%	37.4% (2016)	+ 22.6 pps
At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate	Decline by at least 15 million people	Around 91 million persons (2019)	Decline by at least 15 million people

The following sub-sections present the rationale for each target's choice, as well as their recent trends and projection scenarios up to 2030, featuring in the impact of the COVID-19 crisis as much as possible. The significant level of uncertainty linked to the evolution

[715] This strategy notably included an employment rate target of 75%, education targets (reducing the early school leaving rate and tertiary education target) and a target to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 20 million. Cf. COM(2010) 2020 final: EUROPE 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

[716] Work will be carried out to explore the possibility of extending this age bracket to better reflect demographic developments, societal changes and active ageing, also in view of the Green Paper of Ageing, in consultation with the relevant EPSCO Committees.

[717] This indicator will be available every two years starting from 2022.

[718] To keep pace with recent developments, the definition of the indicator will be updated in the components of severe material (and social) deprivation and quasi-jobless households.

of the pandemic and its future impact on economic and societal outcomes has been taken into account by elaborating alternative scenarios where relevant. Complementary goals and ambitions for improvement on other indicators, with a view to helping reach the headline targets, are discussed where relevant.

Employment rate

Ensuring a high employment rate remains a key priority for 2030 to support active participation in society, strengthen the growth potential and ensure the adequacy and sustainability of social protection systems in the light of ageing.

In this context, the inclusion of underrepresented groups in the labour market will play an important role. In particular, halving the gender employment gap will be essential and would contribute to reducing gender inequalities more generally (and together with further reductions in the gender pay gap, will contribute to reduce the gender pension gap). Increasing employment rates among other disadvantaged groups – e.g. young people, the low skilled, persons with disabilities, people with a minority racial or ethnic background, particularly Roma, people with a migrant background – would also contribute to the overall goal, while ensuring equal opportunities in the labour market and preventing social exclusion. In particular, the Action Plan explicitly puts forward the ambition to significantly reduce the share of young people neither in employment, nor in education or training (NEETs).

In addition, a higher labour market participation of older people would be important to achieve the headline employment rate target as well as for ensuring the sustainability and adequacy of our pension systems (as it would raise contributions and lower the number of beneficiaries in relation to the active population), while supporting active ageing. Finally, addressing gaps in employment rates across regions (including between rural and urban areas), which are relevant in some Member States, will also be important to achieve the overall target.

Why this indicator?

The employment rate is one of the most comprehensive, well established and reliable indicators in the employment and social domains. It has been already used as a headline target in the Europe 2020 strategy. It is also part of the EU SDG indicator set. The employment rate of the 20-64 years old focusses on participation in paid work in general, including that of a short period. The indicator spans across all population groups, types of employment and payment regimes. Available data from the Labour Force Survey allow for breaking down the overall employment rate across a number of relevant sub-groups.

After the 2009 economic and financial crisis, the EU entered a job-rich recovery, which hinged especially on an increase in the employment rate among older and high-skilled workers, while the gender employment gap has remained broadly stable[719]. Based on

[719] The gender employment gap (i.e. the difference between the employment rates of men and women) amounted to 11.8 pps in 2013 and 11.7 pps in 2019, while remaining roughly constant during the period.

this trend, an employment rate of 73.1% was reached in 2019[720], before the onset of the COVID-19 crisis (still somewhat below the 75% Europe 2020 employment rate target by 2020).

In 2019, seven Member States (Sweden, Germany, Czechia, Estonia, the Netherlands, Denmark and Lithuania) had an employment rate above 78%. On the other hand, Spain, Croatia, Italy and Greece had employment rates as low as 68%, 66.7%, 63.5% and 61.2%. Population groups with lower than average employment rates include in particular women (67.2%), low-skilled persons (ISCED 0-2) (55.7%), older people aged 55-64 (59.1%) and non-EU born people (64.4%). Data available from surveys of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency also point to substantially lower employment rates and a higher gender employment gap for most important ethnic (Roma) and racial minorities.

The COVID-19 crisis has strongly affected the economic and employment performance in the EU thereafter. The employment rate fell to 72.1% in the second quarter of 2020, to then partly recovered to 72.4% in the third quarter[721]. The Autumn Forecast projects that, on a yearly basis, the employment rate will start increasing again only in 2022[722]. The proposed target of 78% by 2030 takes into account the impact of the crisis, assuming that a more substantial recovery in employment figures may only happen from 2023 onwards.

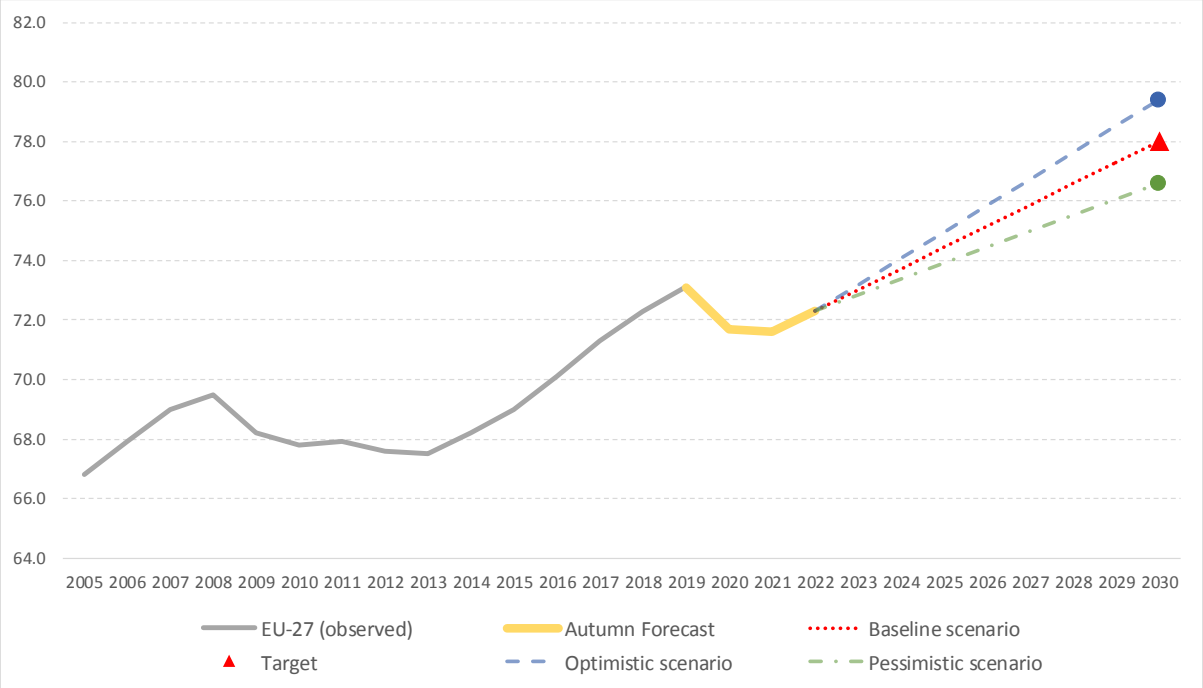
As shown in Figure 1, different scenarios have been simulated based on projected GDP growth up to 2022[723] and potential GDP growth rates from 2023 to 2030[724], and on Eurostat population projections up to 2030 for all Member States. The employment rate in 2030 is computed by applying the elasticities of the employment rate to GDP and population estimated over 2013-2019 (i.e. by assuming that the forthcoming recovery will be as job rich as the last one, without the impact of additional policies)[725] and averaging the results at EU level. The baseline scenario leads to an estimated employment rate of 78% in 2030, corresponding to the proposed target.

Alternative scenarios are estimated by assuming, for all Member States, GDP growth respectively 0.5 percentage points (pps) higher or 0.5 pps lower than in the baseline, which implies a median GDP growth of 1.6% per year over the period 2023-2030 (in the alternative scenarios, median GDP growth is therefore at 2.1% and 1.1% respectively). Under the two scenarios the employment rate would reach respectively 79.4% and 76.6% in 2030, compared to 78% in the baseline. It should be noted that, during the

[720] This represents a substantial increase compared to 67.5% in 2013, mostly owing to increasing rates among the elderly and the highly educated.
[721] Seasonally adjusted.
[722] Based on the Commission Autumn Economic Forecast, the employment rate would amount to 71.7% on average in 2020, remain stable in 2021, and increase to 72.3% in 2022. These projections are based on the forecast for the employment rate in the age group 15-64 (by making a proportion). Note that the Winter (interim) Forecast published on 11 February 2021 does not present estimates for the employment rate (but only for GDP and inflation).
[723] From the Commission Winter (interim) Economic Forecast.
[724] Long-term T+10 projections by ECFIN, with a median value of 1.6% per year.
[725] Projections using long-term periods such as the 20-year average would not capture the recent increase in elasticity accompanying the job rich recovery of 2013-2019. An alternative scenario using the lower elasticity estimated over 2000-2019 would lead to an estimated employment rate of 74% in 2030.

2013-2019 recovery, the actual median GDP growth was on average 2.3% per year (which implies that the employment rate in 2030 could be even higher, if economic growth were to follow a similar path after the current crisis).

Figure 1: Employment rate projections (for EU) and target



Note: Projections based on forecast of potential GDP growth rates up to 2030 (±0.5 pps yearly for the optimistic and pessimistic scenarios), Eurostat population projections and average elasticity of employment to GDP and population during the 2013-2019 recovery. The projections from 2020 to 2022 are based on the Autumn Economic Forecast (note that the Winter Forecast does not include projections for employment).

To reach the headline target on the employment rate, it will be important to increase the employment rate of women. With a view to addressing the persisting challenge of women's under-representation in the labour market, the ambition is to **at least halve the gender employment gap** (i.e. the difference between the employment rates of men and women). Reducing this gap is a priority highlighted in the European Pillar of Social Rights and supported by other EU initiatives, notably the Gender Equality Strategy. It is also instrumental in responding to the challenges of an ageing population and a shrinking workforce, and improving equal opportunities in the society, including in view of the generally higher educational outcomes of women. It may also be conducive to progress on the target of reduction of poverty and social exclusion, including among children, through the positive impact on households' incomes.

Gender differences persist in the EU labour market. Between 2005 and 2019, the female employment rate in the EU-27 has increased from 58.7% to 67.3%, while the gender employment gap has declined from around 16.4 pps to 11.7 pps. However, the reduction of the gap has stagnated in recent years. In a similar way as for the general employment rate, the impact of the COVID-19 crisis is expected to weigh on female employment rates until 2021. Current data suggest that, so far, the drop in the employment rate of women (down to 66.6% in Q3-2020) has been comparable in size

with that of men, leaving the gender gap almost unaffected. However, women's over-representation in lower paid sectors and occupations, as well as in part-time employment, makes them particularly vulnerable until the recovery sets in.

Gender gaps are larger for women with young children, as well as for older, non-EU born and low-skilled women, and women with disabilities. Increasing employment rates for these groups would be crucial to achieve the proposed reduction of the gender employment gap by (at least) half by 2030. To this purpose, **increasing the provision of formal early childhood education and care (ECEC),** thus contributing to better reconciliation between professional and private life will be important. While on average, the EU has reached the Barcelona target of 33% of children below the age of 3 in early childhood education and care (35.5% at EU-27 level in 2019), there remain significant gaps, with 15 Member States not having reached this level and a lower access for children from lower income households. The revision of the Barcelona targets on the provision of formal early childhood education and care will further contribute to this goal.

Halving the gender employment gap would require a decrease from 11.7 pps in 2019 to 5.8 pps in 2030. Despite the stagnation of this indicator over the last few years, the gender employment rate has seen considerable improvements in the long run, from a peak of 16.4 pps in 2005. The improvement has been especially strong among Member States with lowest rates. In 2019 four Member States had a gender gap below 5.8 pps (Sweden, Finland, Latvia and Lithuania), all with employment rates very close or above 78% (which indicates that reaching that level for the gender employment gap will contribute to achieve the headline employment rate). On the other hand, the gap was close or above 20 pps in Greece, Italy, Malta and Romania – indicating scope for progress, on top of the reduction already achieved by some of these countries in recent years.

Reducing the rate of young people neither in employment, nor in education or training (NEET) will also contribute to achieving the overall employment rate target. The ambition for the EU is to reduce this share (in the age group 15-29) from 12.6% in 2019 to 9% in 2030 (taking into account the impact of the COVID-19 crisis as explained below).

Promoting youth employment and improving school-to-work transitions has been a priority for the EU since the adoption of the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative in 2013. With the reinforced Youth Guarantee adopted in 2020, Member States have committed to ensuring that all young people under 30 years of age receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education, in line with Principle 4 of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Despite the pre-pandemic progress in youth employment rates and a decrease in the number of young people neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET), the transition of young people from school to work is still facing challenges in relation for instance to labour market segmentation and/or unsatisfactory outcomes of education and training systems. The COVID-19 crisis, which is proving to have a disproportionate effect on young people - with an increase in the youth unemployment rate of 2.6 pps

between the first and third quarter 2020, compared to 0.9 pps overall – will further compound these challenges. The NEET rate is a broad measure of untapped potential and lowering it will help the EU mitigate the economic and social costs of the crisis on young people.

The Action Plan's ambition of reducing the NEET rate is aligned with the implementation of the reinforced Youth Guarantee. At the same time, it is complementary with the adult learning headline target, based on which more people in the age bracket 25-29 will have access to training, with the ambition to reduce the share of early leavers from education and training to 9% (see below), and with the targets proposed in the context of the European Education Area.

The NEET rate of those aged 15-29 years old was 12.6% in 2019, down from a peak of 16.1% in 2013. The COVID-19 crisis has pushed the NEET rate up in the short run (up to 14.7% in Q2-2020, then decreasing to 13.5% in the third quarter) and is expected to have a negative impact on it also in 2021. Reaching 9% would require a 4 pps decrease compared to 2019, and a steeper one considering the impact of the current crisis. In 2019, 7 Member States (the Netherlands, Sweden, Luxembourg, Germany, Malta, Austria and Slovenia) already had NEET rates lower than 9%, while Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Italy had the highest rates, at 16.7%, 16.8%, 17.7% and 22.2%, respectively. Countries in the first group have particularly high employment rates for the 15-29, and have benefitted more from the job-rich recovery and an increased participation in education and training after 2013.

A simulation based on the post-2013 recovery pattern shows that, with uninterrupted progress and continuing policy effort, the EU could reach a NEET rate of around 7.5% by 2030[726]. Both a rapid recovery after the COVID-19 crisis as well as the ambitious education agenda could make this transition plausible. However, the COVID-19 crisis has hit youth employment hard; this calls for caution in projecting a substantial decrease in the NEET rate at this stage of the cycle. Adjusting to a possibly more permanent negative shock to the NEET rate, a reduction from current levels to 9% appears both ambitious and realistic.

Adult participation in learning in the last 12 months

In today's society and fast-changing labour markets, adults cannot afford any longer to rely solely on what they have learned in their initial education and training, but need to constantly update their skills and competences to thrive. A large majority of EU companies cite the scarcity of skilled staff as the first obstacle to investment[727]. This problem is likely to exacerbate in the future with ongoing transformations of jobs and workplaces.

[726] This would imply a period of faster decrease from 12.6% in 2020 to 9.5% in 2025 (one could observe a similar decrease between 2014 and 2019 for Member States starting from a level close to the current EU-27 average), followed by a slower one to 7.5% by 2030 (one could observe a similar decrease between 2014 and 2019 for Member States starting from the value projected for 2025).

[727] In 2019, 77% of companies considered that scarcity of skilled staff remained the most frequent reason limiting long-term investments (European Investment Bank Group Investment Survey 2019, p. 19).

Both the digital and green transitions will fundamentally change the skill requirements of many jobs and will create new ones. The digital transition reaches beyond the labour market, as an increasing number of services, e.g. banking or public administration, are turning to online access – and will increasingly do so in the future. In this context, digital skills are critical to ensure labour market participation, competitiveness, innovation capacity and active participation of people in society. Also the success of the green transition will depend on people who have the skills that are needed for a significant change of "business as usual". Job creation in the green economy is expected to include mostly middle-skilled, middle-paying jobs[728].

The COVID-19 crisis is having a significant impact on labour markets that will also translate into the need to support and ease transitions across jobs and sectors. Appropriate upskilling and reskilling will be essential to this purpose, also in the light of the more structural changes mentioned above.

Adult learning captures a broad range of education and training activities that equip people with the skills they need, including digital skills from basic to advanced ones such as coding. Countries with higher participation rates in adult learning typically display higher employment rates; this positive correlation suggests that the targets on employment and adult learning are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, while achieving higher skills levels among adults may contribute to reducing poverty and social exclusion.

Why this indicator?

Adult participation in learning is a comprehensive and well-established indicator. It has been endorsed by the Member States in several Council Conclusions, is already used by the Commission to monitor Member States' progress in this area in the context of the Social Scoreboard, and is one of the targets of the European Skills Agenda. It is also one of the indicators used in the European Semester's benchmarking framework for adult skills and learning. It covers all forms of formal and non-formal learning in the 25-64 age group, thereby referring to the acquisition of skills needed for the labour market as well as, more generally, for full participation in society. The European Skills Agenda proposes to increase the reference period for which learning activities are considered from one month to one year: a longer reference period better captures shorter trainings, which are becoming increasingly important in today's labour markets.

In 2016 (latest available data), 37.4% of adults in the EU-27 participated in learning, showing an increase of 3.3 pps compared to 34.4% in 2011. In 2016, the best performing Member States (Sweden, the Netherlands, Austria and Hungary) reached adult learning participation rates of 58.8%, 57.1%, 55.3% and 54.8%, respectively. Poland, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania, on the other hand, had participation rates as low as 20.9%, 16.0%, 11.8% and 5.8% in the same year. Some groups of adults participate less in learning. People with lower education levels (ISCED 0-2), the inactive and the

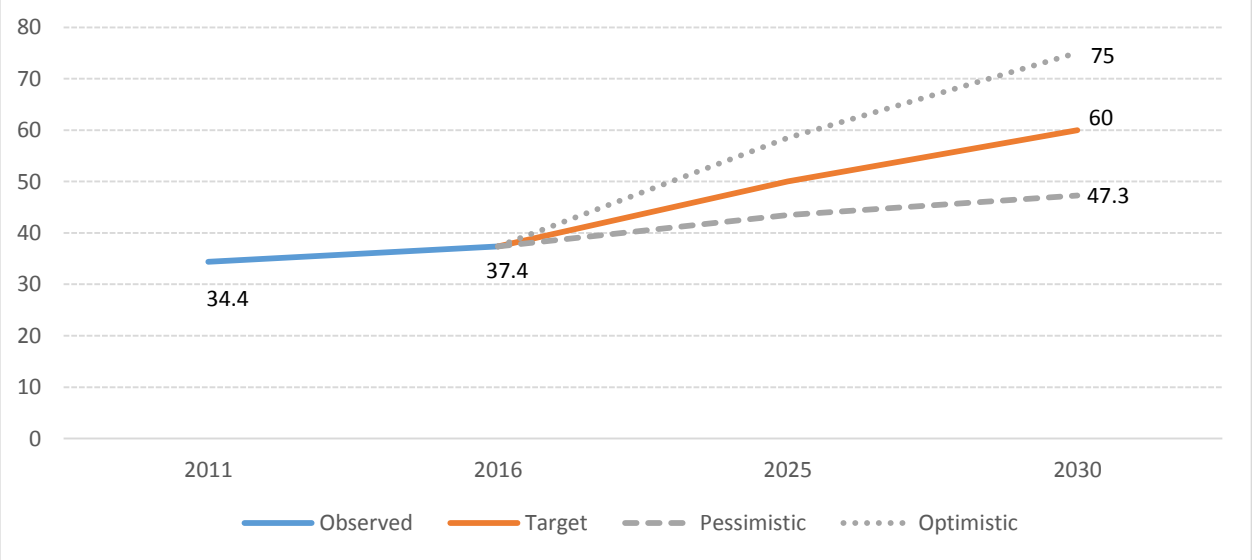
[728] Also the success of the green transition will depend on people who have the skills that are needed for a significant change of "business as usual". Job creation in the green economy is expected to include mostly middle-skilled, middle-paying jobs. While no dedicated quantitative indicators on green skills exist at this stage, the Commission will develop such indicators as part of the Skills Agenda.

unemployed had participation rates of 17.9%, 21.3% and 26%, respectively, well below the EU average. Participation of employees in micro-enterprises (35.6%) was well below participation in large companies (55.1%).

The Action Plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights sets a new target for adult participation in learning at 60% for 2030. Figure 2 shows different scenarios on which the target setting was based. If growing at the same rate as observed between 2011 and 2016, the indicator would reach around 47.3% in 2030. This implies a growth rate of 1.7% per year and is reflected below as the pessimistic scenario, as it does not take into account of the reinforced EU and Member States' policy efforts triggered by the European Skills Agenda and the Action Plan, nor the unprecedented available EU funding for skills, notably with Next Generation EU. Considering these additional efforts, the growth rate may be expected to double (i.e. to 3.4% per year) reaching the 60% target in 2030. An optimistic scenario could even envisage a tripling of the growth rate compared to the baseline. This would lead to a growth rate of 5.1% per year and a target of 75% reached by 2030. However, considering that, as shown above, some groups are particularly difficult to reach, this is considered as not sufficiently realistic.

Monitoring this target will be based on the Labour Force Survey, which will include adult learning participation in the past 12 months every second year starting in 2022. The past trend and baseline values can be estimated based on the Adult Education Survey waves of 2011 and 2016.

Figure 2: Adult participation in learning in the EU (in %) and target



Note: Projections based on different growth scenarios up to 2030.

Achieving the adult learning headline target will be instrumental **to increase the share of individuals with basic or above basic digital skills to at least 80%** by 2030. A still large part of the EU population lacks basic (44% in 2019) or above basic (69%) digital skills. At the same time, the mismatch between demand and supply of ICT specialists is substantial (57% EU companies found it difficult to recruit ICT specialists in 2019[729],

[729] Eurostat community survey on ICT usage and e-commerce in entreprises [isoc_ske_itrcrn2].

while only 3.6% of all graduates have a degree in ICT subjects[730]) and women are significantly under-represented within this group. Europeans need digital skills in a great part of their life and work activities: 90% of jobs already require some kind of digital ability. Moreover, participation in society increasingly requires basic digital skills (e.g. for education, e-government and social interaction). A successful and inclusive digital transition, including the collaborative economy, artificial intelligence and e-services, depends on a population with digital skills. However, the supply of digital skills from the education and training systems is often not sufficient. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasised the need to reinforce our efforts.

Looking at basic digital skills reflects the spirit of the European Pillar of Social Rights, in particular its first principle, which affirms that everyone should have the opportunity to acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market. In 2019, on average within the EU27, 56% of individuals aged between 16 and 74 were reported to have at least basic digital skills[731]. The European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience put a particular emphasis on these skills and set the objective to increase the share of adults 16-74 with at least basic digital skills from 56% in 2019 to 70% in 2025[732]. In the context of the Action Plan, the ambition – complementary to the achievement of the adult learning headline target – is to further increase this share, with the view to reach 80% in 2030.

Since 2015 (the first year with available data), this share increased by 2 percentage points from 54 to 56%. Assuming that this growth rate continues, progress would be limited to reaching 59% with at least basic digital skills in 2025 and 62% in 2030. However, the impact of demography (with older cohorts, having on average lower levels of digital skills[733], progressively leaving the sample) and reinforced policy efforts would make this ambitious goal within reach. The Skills Agenda objective foresees that reinforced policy efforts would lead to increasing the average growth rate from 0.9% to 3.8% each year until 2025. Keeping a similar rate, while taking into account the fact that this will require additional efforts to reach increasingly hard-to-reach subsets of the

[730] At the same time, ICT professionals represent 8.2% of all vacancies (according to CEDEFOP's Skills-OVATE - Online vacancy analysis tool for Europe).

[731] The data for the indicator is from the Community Survey on ICT usage in households and by individuals. Digital skills are measured as a composite measure based on a series of yes/no questions, measuring to what extent someone has performed a number of activities such as seeking information online, sending emails, installing software or using a word processing software. An individual is then deemed to have "at least basic digital skills" if there is at least one "basic" but no "no skills" in all four domains. A detailed description can be found here: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/tepsr_sp410_esmsip2.htm

[732] The European Data Strategy from February 2020 had announced a 65% target by 2025. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light even more how crucial basic digital skills are to be able to take part in society. Moreover, the additional EU funding that will be available through the "Next Generation EU" budget is an opportunity to aim for an even more ambitious digital skills target for 2025.

[733] The skills indicators are strongly influenced by socio-demographic aspects. For example, 82% of young individuals (16-24), 85% of those with high formal education, 68% of employed or self-employed people and 87% of students have at least basic digital skills. By contrast, only 35% of those aged 55-74 and 30% of the retired and the inactive possess basic skills.

population, achieving 80% by 2030 looks both ambitious and feasible. This represents an average growth rate of 3.3% each year until 2030.

Educational attainment is a major factor in determining the employment prospects of young people. People with low levels of education are exposed to lower rates of participation in adult learning: a key factor of success to ensure that adults are able to engage in up- and reskilling later in life is a strong foundation of basic and transversal skills acquired in initial education and training. Early leavers display lower employment rates, lower earnings, and have a higher risk of social exclusion and ultimately poverty.

Reducing early leaving from education and training has been a priority of the EU for over a decade. Being a headline target in Europe 2020 raised the visibility of the challenge and the ambition of Member States to take measures against early leaving from education and training.

There has been a substantial decrease in the percentage of early leavers from education and training (ELET) at EU level over the past 10 years. The ELET rate of those aged 18-24 years old was 10.2% in 2019, down from 13.8% in 2010, only 0.2 percentage points above the 10% value of the Europe 2020 headline target on early leaving from education and training. During the latter half of the ten-year period, the development stagnated, however. While there was a reduction in the ELET rate at EU level of 2.7 percentage points from 2010-2014, the reduction from 2015-2019 was only 0.8 percentage points.

In 2019, a higher percentage of men (11.9%) than women (8.4%) were early leavers in the EU. This has been the trend over the past 10 years. A significantly lower share of native-born people (8.9%) were early leavers than foreign-born people (22.2%). At the level of the Member States, 19 had ELET rates below 10% in 2019. In the eight Member States with rates above 10%, the rates ranged from 10.3% in Germany to 17.3% in Spain[734].

In the Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)[735], adopted on 18 February 2021, Member States agreed that the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 9% by 2030[736].

Reaching 9% in 2030 would require a 1.2 percentage point decrease in the current ELET rate (2019). While this seems a modest reduction in absolute terms, reducing early school leaving becomes increasingly difficult with every percentage point, since measures need to address increasingly those hard to reach and hard to motivate to continue education and training. The situation of education and training systems has also changed dramatically during the last year. With the massive interruption of

[734] BG (13.9), DE (10.3), ES (17.3), IT (13.5), HU (11.8), MT (17.2), PT (10.6) and RO (15.3).
[735] 2021/C 66/01, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021G0226%2801%29&qid=1614343723885
[736] Early leavers from education and training is defined as the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education (i.e. ISCED levels 0-2) and who were not in further education and training during the last four weeks preceding the EU Labour Force Survey (LFS).

education and training programmes, increases in the rate of early leavers from education are expected. Consequently, 2019 does not take the effects of the crisis into account. The goal of achieving a rate below 9% is therefore both realistic and challenging with regard to the expected increase in the ELET rate due to the COVID-19 crisis. This goal will be accompanied by monitoring the rate of young people (20-24) completing upper secondary education. Stepping up efforts in this direction will contribute to reaching the headline target on adult participation in learning, set out in the Action Plan.

This EU-level target will be complemented by an accompanying indicator on upper secondary level attainment, measuring the share of people aged 20-24 with at least an upper secondary qualification through data made available by Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey[737].

At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE)

Achieving an ambitious decline in poverty and social exclusion is essential to ensure inclusive growth and upward social and economic convergence in the EU, with benefits spreading over the whole population, including those living in the most vulnerable situations. This would also significantly help to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Therefore a continuation of the Europe 2020 approach appears warranted by looking at poverty and social exclusion in an integrated and multidimensional way, covering income, access to goods and services and labour market integration.

The poverty and social inclusion target entails a decline by at least 15 million in the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) in the EU by 2030, in light of the potential for improvement in Member States and population groups that are currently relatively more affected. The 2019 level for the EU-27, before the COVID-19 crisis, was around 91 million people or 20.9% of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion. In 2019, the best performing Member States (Czech Republic, Slovenia and Finland) reached AROPE rates of 12.5%, 14.4% and 15.6% respectively. On the other hand, Bulgaria, Romania and Greece had rates as high as 32.5%, 31.2% and 30.0% respectively in 2019. Population groups with higher rates include children, single parents (mostly women), older women, Roma, persons with disabilities and non-EU born people, as well as rural population in some EU territories. Also in view of the expected increase in AROPE rates following the COVID-19 crisis, there is, therefore, ample room for improvement across both Member States and vulnerable groups.

Children, in particular, remain structurally more exposed to poverty or social exclusion than the rest of the population in Europe, and are disproportionally affected by the impact of the crisis. This is why the Action Plan sets a specific and complementary ambition to **reduce the number of children (aged 0-17) at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 5 million in 2030** (more details below).

Why this indicator?

The at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate is the most widespread and reliable indicator in monitoring poverty and exclusion. It reflects the central importance of the

[737] Eurostat Online data code: [edat_lfse_03].

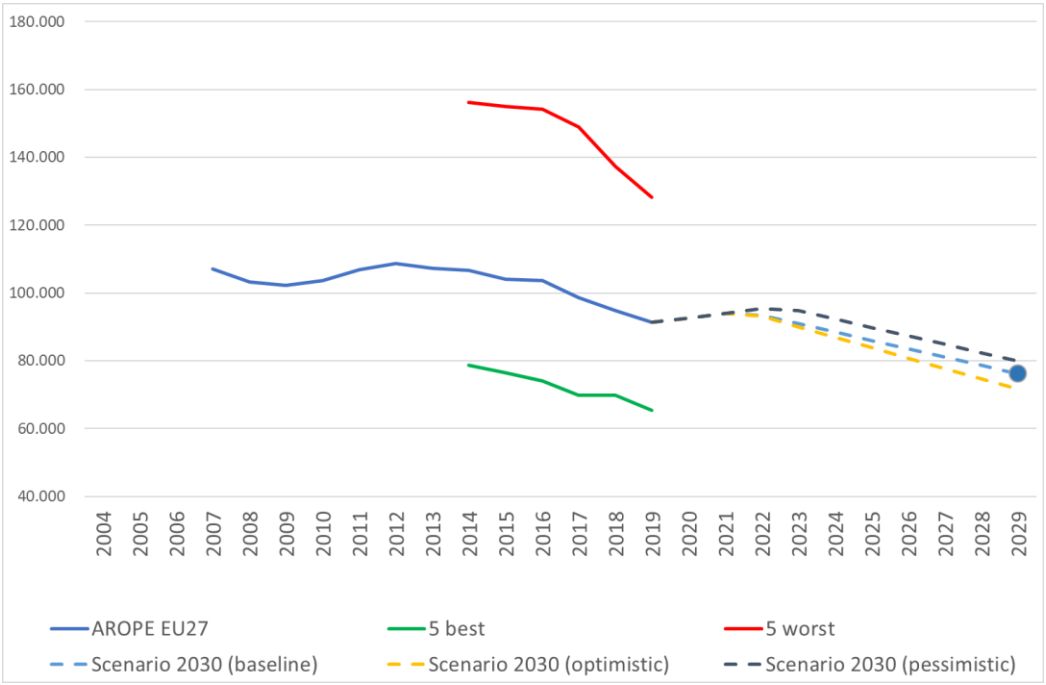
relative dimension of poverty. It accounts for the overall living standards and weak labour market attachment by looking respectively at the extent of material and social deprivation and at people living in very low work intensity households. It allows to capture the situation of the whole population in a consistent manner, across age groups, from childhood to working and older age. It is also part of the EU SDG indicator set. Two of the components of the AROPE indicator used under the EU 2020 strategy will be slightly revised for the monitoring of the new AROPE target: those related to severe material (and social) deprivation[738] and quasi- jobless households[739].

While the COVID-19 crisis is expected to have a significant adverse impact on average household incomes and living conditions, information on the impact on poverty or social exclusion is not yet available for 2020. Changes in 2020 are difficult to foresee, also due to the likely impact of the crisis on median incomes. Simulation results[740] show that, thanks to the policy measures adopted in response to the crisis, the AROP rate may only increase by 0.1pp on average in the EU in 2020.

A decline of AROPE by 15 million over the next decade would be both realistic and ambitious, and consistent with the target envisaged under the initial Europe 2020 target[741]. It corresponds to a scenario where the EU would experience around two and a half bad years (for AROPE trends) and seven and a half good ones over the next decade[742]. This pattern[743] would roughly correspond to a scenario where income levels and GDP would recover after around 2.5 years to their pre-crisis levels (such as outlined in the Winter Economic Forecast)[744].

[738] Accounting for a revised and extended set of deprivation items, leading to the replacement of the severe material deprivation component by the severe material and social deprivation component.
[739] Corresponding to the extenstion of the age bracket from 0-59 to 0-64.
[740] The anchored AROP rate (i.e. the rate computed against a poverty threshold fixed on a base year) would instead increase by 1.7 pps, reflecting the substantial expected drop of income levels against a fixed poverty line. See Almeida et al. (2020), Households´ income and the cushioning effect of fiscal policy measures during the Great Lockdown, JRC Working Papers on Taxation and Structural Reforms No 06/2020. Available at: https://europa.eu/!Vj39hX and the accompanying policy brief at https://europa.eu/!JU66Gc
[741] Reflecting also the impact of the Brexit, while some of components such as the severe material (and social) deprivation could show a lower decline in the next decade than over the last decade.
[742] Bad and good years in this context are years where the change in the number of people at risk of poverty or exclusion corresponds to the average increase and decline respectively observed over the period when the 2008 double dip recession hit (2009-2012) and years of recovery since then (2013-19).
[743] Relatively short compared to what happened over the past decade, whereby there was a double dip recession in 2009 and then afterwards in 2012.
[744] With GDP levels reaching the levels of end 2019 around mid 2022.

Figure 3 – At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate trend (for the EU) and target



Note: the 5 best and 5 worst performer lines correspond to the average rate of the 5 best (or worst) applied to the whole EU *population.*

In this baseline scenario, the pace of annual decline in the number of people at risk of poverty or exclusion after the crisis would remain similar to the one observed over the last decade (reflecting a similar degree of progress and upwards convergence in the reduction of poverty and social exclusion), though it would take place over a longer period than previously observed. This decline for AROPE over the next decade would reflect the expected speed of the recovery as well as the impact of further policy action and upward convergence in the effectiveness of policies to address poverty and social exclusion across Europe, following the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

There is obviously significant uncertainty surrounding the baseline scenario. This can be illustrated by considering the impact of a longer period of increase in poverty and social exclusion than in the baseline (pessimistic scenario), or looking at the impact of a quicker decline after the period of increase resulting from the 2020 recession (optimistic scenario). In the pessimistic scenario, the duration of the period of increase of poverty and social exclusion would be of 3.5 years instead of 2.5 years as in the baseline and, all other things being constant, this would translate into a decline by around 11 million people at risk of poverty or social exclusion over the decade. In the optimistic scenario, while the duration of the increase of AROPE due to the crisis would remain similar (2.5 years), the speed of the decline in the good years would be stronger[745], reflecting better socio economic conditions and stronger upwards convergence in Europe, which would lead to an overall decline over the decade reaching around 20 million people.

[745] Corresponding to the average decline observed over the period 2015-19.

A **reduction in the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 5 million**[746] will be instrumental to reach the headline target, but also important per se. A specific focus on children is key to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and contribute to more equal opportunities throughout the EU, setting the conditions for social progress.

The gap in the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate of children (aged 0-17) compared to the general population has not closed over the last decade, in spite of a slight reduction in recent years. This slow progress hampers equality of opportunities: children from lower-income households fare worse throughout their lives[747], scoring lower on tests of cognitive skills in early childhood, being more likely to drop out of school and less likely to attain tertiary education. Achieving a quicker reduction in the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate of children than of the general population should be a priority in view of building more resilient and inclusive economies and societies, especially in view of the expected stronger impact of the COVID-19 crisis on children (not yet visible in the data). As the risk of poverty or exclusion is captured at the household level, this goal entails *de facto* a focus on households with children.

Overall, in 2019, the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate for children (aged 0-17) was 22.2%, compared to 20.9% for the overall population. This gap of 1.3 pps has been almost halved compared to the first half of the decade (when it ranged between 2.5 pps and 3 pps), thanks in particular to the positive impact of the recovery allowing to partly reabsorb the negative impact before the 2008 crisis. In the EU, children experience a lower risk of poverty or social exclusion than the general population in one third of the Member States (Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and Finland), while the two rates are very close in Czechia, Greece, Cyprus, Lithuania and Portugal. The largest gaps (by between 4 and 5 pps) can be observed in Greece, Spain, Luxembourg, Romania and Slovakia.

Reducing the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 5 million is both realistic and ambitious. While, similarly to the 2008 crisis, the pandemic can be expected to negatively impact on child poverty and on the gap with the total population in the short run, the progress needed to reach the goal is close to the one observed over the period 2012-19. In terms of drivers, reducing poverty and social exclusion more quickly among children than for the general population entails a focus on both households with children and children.

[746] Ensuring that the risk of poverty of exclusion rate of children declines by at least 5 million, while the overall reduction of the number of people at risk of poverty and exclusion in the general population would experience a reduction of at least 15 million by 2029 corresponds to a situation where the risk of poverty and exclusion of children would decline faster.

[747] See for instance Mayer (1997), Duncan et al. (2012), Cooper and Stewart (2013), Thévenon and al (2018).

II. The Social Scoreboard

The Social Scoreboard[748] has been designed as reference framework to monitor 'societal progress' in a tangible, holistic and objective way. It monitors, notably in the context of the European Semester, Member States' performance in relation to the European Pillar of Social Rights and contributes to assessing convergence or divergence patterns across Member States[749]. The Social Scoreboard is also used as reference framework in the Economic Reform Programmes (ERP) which mirrors the European Semester in the enlargement countries.

The proposed update of the Social Scoreboard accompanying the Action Plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights aims at reaching a better and more comprehensive alignment between the Scoreboard indicators and the twenty Pillar principles. This should allow a closer monitoring of the dimensions of the Pillar and of the initiatives put forward under this Action Plan.

The proposal for the revised Scoreboard includes 17 headline indicators and 31 secondary indicators. For the choice of new indicators, priority has been given to those already used in existing monitoring (or policy) frameworks by the EU (such as the EU Sustainable Development Goals indicators set, the Joint Assessment Framework, the European Skills Agenda and the European Education Area).

The proposal is based on the respect of several criteria. First of all, the selected indicators have to be available for all Member States, be comparable across them, and statistically reliable. In this perspective, whenever possible, the priority has been given to indicators supplied by Eurostat. In specific circumstances, indicators currently under development have been included, provided that – once available – they will respect all above-mentioned criteria.

Second, a principle of parsimony has guided the choice of the indicators. The basis for the update is the Social Scoreboard presented by the Commission in 2017[750], incorporating a few subsequent revisions agreed with the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee[751]. Starting from that set (including 14 headline and 20 secondary indicators), the proposal adds a few headline and a number of secondary indicators, while deleting (or changing status, i.e. from headline to secondary) other

[748] In 2018 the Joint Employment Report (JER) presented for the first time the Social Scoreboard. Following a methodology agreed within the Employment Committee (EMCO) and the Social Protection Committee (SPC), the Member States' performance is analysed in the JER looking jointly at levels and changes of each indicator in comparison with the respective EU averages.

[749] The online visualisation tools for the Social Scoreboard developed by the Joint Research Centre allow users to visualise convergence trends and compare performance across Member States (https://composite-indicators.jrc.ec.europa.eu/social-scoreboard/).

[750] SWD(2017) 200 final, accompanying the Communication COM(2017) 250 final of 26 April 2017.

[751] In particular, the headline indicators "participation in ALMPs per 100 persons wanting to work" and "compensation of employees per hour worked", included in the initial proposal, have been replaced by, respectively, "long-term unemployment rate" and "net earnings of a full-time single worker without children earning an average wage".

ones, either because they are less relevant in the current context or because their practical use and relevance for monitoring purposes has proved limited[752].

The main differences in the proposed updated Social Scoreboard compared to the current one concern the addition, among the headline indicators, of the participation of adults in learning over the previous 12 months, the child poverty rate (AROPE), the disability employment gap[753], and the housing cost overburden. The inclusion of these indicators reflects current political priorities and recent or upcoming strategic initiatives. In addition, the age group for the NEET rate indicator is extended from 15-24 to 15-29 in line with the goal discussed in the previous section. In particular, the adult learning indicator is in line with the European Skills Agenda, highlighting the importance of upskilling and re-skilling, also in light of strengthening social resilience. The child poverty rate (AROPE) underlines the importance that the EU attaches to fighting child poverty, and will accompany the forthcoming Commission proposal for a European Child Guarantee. The employment disability gap stresses the importance of improving the inclusion of persons with disabilities in line with Pillar principle 17, and will accompany the new strategy on the rights of persons with disabilities, launched by the Commission in March 2021. The housing cost overburden will help monitor a key dimension of poverty emerging in recent years and at risk of exacerbating in the current crisis.

At the same time, the net earnings of a full time single worker earning the average wage is taken out from the Scoreboard as rarely used in policy documents, and also due to its partial overlap with the gross disposable household income indicator. The variation in performance explained by students' socio-economic status is removed, as rarely used in policy documents and is replaced with the standard indicator ("Gap in underachievement between the bottom and top quarter of the socio-economic index[754]") used in DG EAC's monitoring framework and in Semester outlets like the Joint Employment Report.

Among the secondary indicators, the main changes refer to:

- the integration of some European Skills Agenda indicators (participation of low-qualified adults in learning activities and the share of unemployed adults with recent learning experience);
- the integration of some SDG monitoring indicators (e.g. the income share of the bottom 40% earners to capture inequality developments for the lower middle

[752] The Social Scoreboard complements other monitoring tools focusing on the inclusion of specific groups, notably the portfolio of indicators and the headline targets proposed under the EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation, adopted on 7 October 2020.

[753] On the disability employment gap (i.e. the difference between the employment rates of persons with and without disabilities), the aim is to use the indicator based on the Survey of Living and Income Conditions (SILC) until the one based on the Labour Force Survey (LFS) will be available in 2022.

[754] OECD measures the ESCS index taking into consideration multiple variables related to pupils' family background, namely: parents' education, parents' occupation, home possessions, number of books and educational resources available at home. The gap is measured between the top and bottom quartile of this index.

class[755]; an indicator on fatal accidents at work per 100,000 workers to capture the health and safety at work dimension; the share of the population unable to keep home adequately warm);

- a reinforcement of indicators related to healthcare and long-term care, which are key policy domains in the current context (e.g. the coverage of long-term care needs, public long-term care expenditure as % of GDP[756] and an indicator of standardised preventable and treatable mortality, the latter also part of the SDG indicators set);
- and strengthening social inclusion and social protection statistics under some particularly relevant dimensions (e.g. the median at-risk-of-poverty gap; the coverage rates of unemployment benefits, and the overall benefit recipient rate).

Compared to the current situation, where six Pillar principles are not monitored with any indicator, only two principles would remain uncovered: Principle 7 ("information about employment conditions and protection in case of dismissals"), for which indicators are currently unavailable[757], and Principle 8 ("social dialogue and involvement of workers") for which further work is needed, including with Member States and social partners, to identify measurable dimensions of social dialogue and improve the statistical reliability and timeliness of available indicators (e.g. coverage of collective agreements).

Of the other four principles, which will now be covered:

- Principle 10 ("healthier, safe and well-adapted work environment and data protection") will be monitored through a secondary indicator (fatal accidents at work per 100,000 workers);
- Principle 17 ("inclusion of people with disabilities") will be monitored through a headline indicator (disability employment gap) as well as with breakdowns of other indicators by disability, where available.
- Principle 18 ("long-term care") will be monitored through two secondary indicators (public long-term care spending as % of GDP; and coverage of long-term needs);
- Principle 20 ("access to essential services") will be partly monitored through a secondary indicator (share of the population unable to keep home adequately warm).

[755] It is worth noting that the SDG indicator on the income share of the bottom 40% of the population does not directly capture the concentration of income among those at the top of the income distribution (which is monitored via the income quintile share ratio, or S80/S20), and the associated risk of a 'shrinking share' of those in the middle. More work is planned to develop indicators that would reflect the income situation of the middle class.

[756] The proposed source is the Ageing Report. Member States provide national administrative data on number of recipients per setting (institutional care/home care/cash benefits) to the Ageing Working Group, which is relatively complete and the only data source available. By showing benefits in kind and benefits in cash separately, double-counting can be avoided. Furthermore, the Ageing Report compensates for the lack of reporting of long-term care (social) expenditure data by many Member States in the System of Health Accounts. These estimates are validated by the national authorities of each country. Both indicators have been agreed upon by the SPC indicators sub-group for the portfolio of long-term care indicators.

[757] This principle is, in any case, covered through the monitoring of the implementation of Directive 2019/1152 on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions.

Breakdowns to the Social Scoreboard indicators by age group, gender, country of birth, and disability status will be used to complement the analysis where relevant.

Further work will be conducted to develop indicators on the principles that would remain only partly covered and for which stronger indicators are currently unavailable, including notably principles 18 on long-term care and 20 on access to essential services. Benchmarking frameworks, both already available or under development (see next section), would contribute to monitoring the Pillar principles, especially in cases where specific indicators are currently unavailable.

III. Benchmarking

In addition to the monitoring in the context of the Social Scoreboard, benchmarking allows for a systematic examination of performance and policy settings across countries and time. It helps identify performance gaps, needs for action and policy priorities, therefore supporting the formulation of policy responses and facilitating monitoring of progress over time.

The Communication establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights[758] identified benchmarking as a key tool to support structural reforms and foster upward convergence in the employment and social fields within the European Semester.

Since then, benchmarking frameworks have been developed by the Commission and discussed with Member States in several areas, in line with a common approach agreed by the Employment Committee (EMCO) and the Social Protection Committee (SPC). This approach focuses on the identification of specific policy parameters that can have a positive impact on socio-economic outcomes (so-called 'policy levers'), which are accompanied by general principles for policy guidance and, when available, specific indicators. In the benchmarking exercises developed so far (on unemployment benefits and active labour market policies, adult skills and learning, and minimum income), policy levers are not accompanied by reference values. Work is ongoing on benchmarking minimum wages, on mapping collective bargaining, on benchmarking pension adequacy and on benchmarking childcare and support to children.

The benchmarking framework on **unemployment benefits and active labour market policies** was first used in the 2018 European Semester, with analysis presented in the annual Joint Employment Report and in the context of the country reports. It is linked to the implementation of Principle 4 on "Active support to employment" and Principle 13 on "Unemployment benefits" of the European Pillar of Social Rights. This framework covers two closely related policy domains: (i) the generosity of unemployment benefits systems, for which policy lever indicators on unemployment benefits' replacement rate, duration and coverage are identified; and, (ii) the capacity of national systems to preserve the labour market attachment and employability of job-seekers, for which policy lever indicators on the availability-to-work and job-search requirements attached to receiving unemployment benefits are proposed. Work is to be finalised with the development of indicators on early-support services. The benchmarking framework on **adult skills and learning** was agreed by the EMCO and EDUC committees in October

[758] COM(2017) 250 final.

2018, and has been used in the European Semester since then, notably in the Joint Employment Report and in the country reports. Adult skills and learning are linked to Principle 1 on "Education, training and life-long learning" and Principle 4 on "Active support to employment" of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The framework puts forward three policy levers to improve adult skills and learning: (i) the provision of guidance to individuals about learning; (ii) the provision of learning to specific disadvantaged groups, such as the unemployed and the low-qualified adults; and (iii) the provision of financial support to companies for training purposes.

The benchmarking framework on **minimum income** was fully integrated in the 2019 European Semester cycle, again for use in the Joint Employment Report and the country reports. It focuses on the working age population and covers the adequacy, coverage and activation aspects of minimum income schemes. Adequacy is assessed with a twofold indicator, which compares the income of a minimum income beneficiary respectively to the national poverty threshold and to the income of a low wage earner. For the policy levers on coverage and activation combined with access to services, general principles were agreed within SPC, but no quantitative indicators. Coverage is however captured through a performance indicator on benefit recipient rate, that measures the share of working age individuals receiving any benefits (other than old age or survivors benefits) in the population at-risk-of poverty and living in households with very low work intensity. The recent Council Conclusions on strengthening minimum income protection[759] invite to further develop this benchmarking framework.

The Commission has started working on additional frameworks for possible use in future Semester cycles, notably in cooperation with EMCO on benchmarking minimum wages and on mapping collective bargaining, and with SPC on pension adequacy and on childcare and support to children. The framework for mapping collective bargaining will provide a comprehensive set of indicators to support the analysis of national collective bargaining systems and foster mutual learning across the EU. As concerns the benchmarking framework for pension's adequacy, the task is to assess the current set of indicators in relation to adequacy and their feasibility for designing a framework for benchmarking. The SPC Indicators Sub-Group (ISG) has identified outcome and performance indicators; work on policy levers will be further elaborated on the basis of experience with indicators in the forthcoming Pension Adequacy Report 2021. The work on childcare and support to children aims at further developing the existing SPC framework on child poverty, in particular along its two dimensions on access to adequate resources and access to quality services. Some outcome and performance indicators have been already identified, while work continues on policy levers.

[759] Council Conclusions on to Strengthening Minimum Income Protection to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion in the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond of 9 September 2020.

Annex: List of Acronyms

3F	United Federation of Workers in Denmark
ABV	German Association of Pension Schemes for Liberal Professions
ABVV-FGTB	General Labour Federation of Belgium
ACEFIR	Catalan Association for Education, Training and Research
ACV-CSC	Belgian Confederation of Christian Trade Unions
AEDES	Association of Dutch Social Housing Corporations
AEIP	European Association of Paritarian Institutions
AIM	European Association of Mutual Benefit Societies
AROPE	At Risk Of Poverty or Social Exclusion
ATD	ATD Fourth World
BAG WfbM	German Association of Sheltered Workshops
BAGFW	German Federal Association of Non-statutory Welfare
BAVC	German Federation of Chemical Employers' Associations
BDA	Confederation of German Employers' Associations
BI	Swedish Construction Federation
CCP	Portuguese Confederation of Trade and Services
CEC	Confédération Européenne des Cadres (European Managers)
CECOP	European Confederation of Industrial and Service Cooperatives
CEEMET	Council of European Employers of the Metal, Engineering and Technology-based industries
CEMR	Council of European Regions and Municipalities
CESI	European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions
CFDT	French Democratic Confederation of Labour
CFE-CGC	French Confederation of Management – General Confederation of Executives
CGIL	Italian General Confederation of Labour
CIN-NIC	National Intermutualist College Belgium
CIP	Confederation of Portuguese Business
CNEL	Italian National Council for Economics and Labour
CNOS-FAP	Italian National Centre for Salesian Work – Professional Training
COFACE	Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union
COMECE	Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union
CONFECOOP	Portuguese Cooperative Confederation
CoR	Committee of the Regions
CPME	Standing Committee of European Doctors
CTEO	Chief Trade Enforcement Officer
DFK	German Confederation of Managers
DGB	German Trade Union Confederation
DGUV	German Statutory Accident Insurance
DSV	German Social Insurance
DVSV	Umbrella Organisation of the Austrian Social Insurances
EAEA	European Association for the Education of Adults
EAPN	European Anti-Poverty Network
EaSI	EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation

EASPD	European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities
ECEBM	European Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring
ECEG	European Chemical Employers Group
ECPC	European Cancer Patient Coalition
ECRE	European Council for Refugees and Exiles
EDF	European Disability Forum
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EFCI	European Cleaning and Facility Services Industry
EFEE	European Federation of Education Employers
EFFE	European Federation for Family Employment and Home Care
EFIC	European Furniture Industries Confederation
EFSI	European Federation of Services to Individuals
EFSI	European Federation for Services to Individuals
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EK	Confederation of Finnish Industries
EKD	Evangelic Church in Germany
ELA	European Labour Authority
EMCO	Employment Committee
EMN	European Microfinance Network
ENIL	European Network for Independent Living
ENNHRI	European Network of Human Rights Institutions
ENSIE	European Network of Social Integration Enterprises
EPHA	European Public Health Alliance
EPSCO	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ERGO	European Roma Grassroots Organisation
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIP	European Social Insurance Platform
ESN	European Social Network
eTIC	European Federation for Managers in Technologies of Information and Communication
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
EUD	European Union of the Deaf
Euratex	European Apparel and Textile Confederation
EUROFEDOP	European Federation of Public Service Employees
Eurofound	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
EURORDIS	European Organisation for Rare Diseases
EUWIN	European Workplace Innovation Network
EVPA	European Venture Philanthropy Association
EWL	European Women's Lobby
FAFCE	Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe
FEANTSA	European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless
FENACERCI	Portuguese National Federation of Social Solidarity Cooperatives

FFE	Federation of Finnish Enterprises
FH	Danish Trade Union Confederation
FLAI-CGIL	Italian General Confederation of Labour - Agribusiness Workers' Federation
FO	French General Confederation of Labour – Workers' Force
FOREM	Public Service for Employment and Vocational Training in Wallonia (Belgium)
FSG	Fundación Secretariado Gitano
GI-ESCR	The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
HOSPEEM	European Hospital and Healthcare Employers' Association
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IHPG	Irish Homeless Policy Group
IKEM	Innovation and Chemical Industries in Sweden
ILGA-Europe	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans und Intersex Association
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPSE	Institute for European Social Protection
JTF	Just Transition Fund
KL	Local Government Denmark
LO	Swedish Trade Union Confederation
M+E	Federation of German Employers' Associations in the Metal and Electrical Engineering Industries (Gesamtmetall)
MEDEF	Movement of the Enterprises of France
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MFC	Microfinance Centre
MKB-Nederland	Dutch Organisation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
MMM	Make Mothers Matter
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NEXEM	French Association of Not-for-profit Employers in the Social, Medico-social and Health sector
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NJCM	Dutch Section of the International Commission of Jurists
NVR	Dutch Council of Women
OCHCR	UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
ÖGB	Austrian Trade Union Confederation
ONCE	Spanish National Organisation of the Blind
PpDM	Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights
REIF	Representation of the French social security institutions to the EU
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
SGI Europe	Services of General Interest Europe
SGP	Stability and Growth Pact
SOSTE	Finnish Federation for Social Affairs and Health
SPC	Social Protection Committee
SPP	Social Progress Plan
SS BOFOS	Serbian Independent Trade Union of Bank Employees
SSE	Social Services Europe
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

STTK	Finnish Confederation of Professionals
SURE	Temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency
TCO	Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees
TELA	Finnish Pension Alliance
TMF	Swedish Federation of Wood and Furniture Industry
TSS	Tripartite Social Summit
UDES	French Union of Employers of the Social and Solidary Economy
UGT Portugal	Portuguese General Union of Workers
UGT Spain	Spanish General Union of Workers
UNIA	Belgian Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIPSO-UNISOC-BRUXEO	Belgian Cross-industry Confederations of Social Profit Employers
UN SDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
VBO-FEB	Federation of Belgian Enterprises
VCP	Dutch Trade Union Federation for Professionals
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNO-NCW	Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers
WEC	World Employment Confederation
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
ZDH	German Skilled Crafts Organisation
ZPP	Polish Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers