



For an Ambitious Quality Jobs Act

Declaration of PES Employment and Social Affairs Ministers

Adopted on 22/10/2026

As PES Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs, we reiterate that quality jobs and good working conditions are indispensable for the wellbeing of people and economies across Europe. This is why we support an ambitious Quality Jobs Act that tackles quality jobs deficits head-on.

We hear people's discontent in a world of uncertainty and profound economic, social, and security challenges. Millions of Europeans are struggling to pay for the essentials of everyday life. Roughly a third of Europeans envisage their standard of living to decrease over the next five years.¹ Workers, unions and collective bargaining are being challenged in several Member States. In a context where far-right forces seek to divide our societies, people's hardship is exploited, increasing the polarisation of our societies. Europe cannot accept widening social divisions, declining living standards and the affordability crisis as the new normal.

Fair wages and decent working conditions are essential to tackle the affordability crisis, to restore people's trust in Europe and its social model, and to provide perspectives for young people. We reiterate the importance of implementing the Pay Transparency Directive in all Member States to fight the gender pay and pension gap and to ensure equal pay. The Fair Labour Mobility Package, Anti-Poverty Strategy and Adequate Minimum Wage Directive are also crucial in tackling inequality and low pay. Building on this, the Quality Jobs Act comes at a crucial moment and must live up to its commitment, responsibility and expectations. This is how the EU can demonstrate its strong added value.

We cannot compromise on Social Europe and quality jobs. We must *strengthen* working conditions, not water them down under the guise of simplification. Weakened social rights, precarious and exhausted workers cannot build a sovereign and strategically autonomous Europe. Instead, it is quality jobs, empowered, skilled and protected workers that underpin Europe's prosperity and resilience. Furthermore, good regulation protects responsible employers and prevents unfair competition. We firmly reject any deregulation attempts and Omnibus provisions that undermine workers' rights, trade union rights, and social protection in Europe, including access to strong social security systems and fair pensions.

¹ European Parliament, Eurobarometer Spring 2026 Survey, available [here](#).



The ambition of the upcoming Quality Jobs Act must be reflected in strong legislation.
We call for:

1. Jobs that put humans at the centre

AI should serve workers, not harm them. It is time to extend the protections of the Platform Work Directive to all workers and codify the 'human-in-control' principle with binding legislation on AI and algorithmic management at the workplace. Workers must be protected against excessive surveillance, opaque algorithmic management and automated decisions, with strong requirements for transparency and workplace democracy, accountability and human oversight.

2. Jobs that guarantee equality between workers

All workers must have equal rights, no matter their contract, sector, company size, age, gender, or nationality. We call for EU legislation to improve worker protection across subcontracting chains and labour intermediation, including joint and several liability. Regulation of subcontracting must be strengthened to prevent exploitation, including by limiting long and complex subcontracting chains to a maximum length and prohibiting subcontracting practices in specific high-risk sectors and ensuring equal treatment throughout the chain. Bogus posting and bogus self-employment must be tackled, and unfair recruitment practices banned. Labour intermediaries must be regulated and subject to clear quality standards and obligations.

3. Jobs that are safe

Workers must be protected from physical and psychosocial risks. We support the extension of health and safety regulations to protect workers from severe weather hazards, heat stress and low temperatures at work. The Quality Jobs Act must also further enhance protections against psychosocial risks at work, occupational diseases, work-related musculoskeletal disorders, and gender-based violence and harassment at work with a dedicated directive.

4. Jobs that respect a work-life balance

We support strong and clearly defined rights of workers on telework. Workers must also have the right to effectively disconnect from work without facing negative consequences or disadvantages. We therefore support an EU legal act on telework and the right to disconnect. Transparency, equal treatment for teleworkers as on-site workers, safeguards against work intensification and additional occupational safety and health requirements mentioned above, and robust enforcement mechanisms are key. Employers must take responsibility for related costs and ensure compliance with occupational health and safety requirements.

5. Jobs that empower workers

Democracy at work means strengthening trade unions, collective bargaining and workers' participation. The Quality Jobs Act must support the protection of rights and prerogatives of unions, including their access to on-site and online workplaces and to collectively bargain contracts. All workers must be able to enjoy their right to join a union and to strike. The Act should promote an increase of collective bargaining coverage towards 80%, strengthen solid social dialogue structures and provide a voice for workers in corporate governance. We also

support workers in anticipating and managing change through binding legislation on Just Transition in the world of work, including access to free training.

6. Jobs that ensure gender equality

We need equal pay and equal opportunities in the labour market. The Quality Jobs Act and European Care Deal should work hand in hand to achieve this. Measures should include improving the job quality, pay, pension and recognition of female-dominated sectors, stronger rights for flexible working arrangements without career penalties and support for collective bargaining. We also stress that quality childcare and long-term care must be accessible and affordable to allow for women's equal participation in the labour market. We promote measures for equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men.

7. Jobs that are for everyone

We call for a legislative initiative that guarantees every person a pathway to quality employment. We also push for extended support for local job guarantee experiments, to help the more than four million long-term unemployed find their way to a meaningful job. Nobody should be trapped between poverty and precarious work.

8. Jobs that pay

High costs of living continue to hurt people. Quality jobs must be a source of fair wages and life stability. The Quality Jobs Act must be in line with and support the full and immediate implementation of the adopted Adequate Minimum Wages Directive and the Pay Transparency Directive. We must address wage gaps in companies and support trade unions in negotiating fair wages.

9. Jobs that are supported by the next long-term EU budget

The Quality Jobs Act must be backed by a Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) that truly invests in people and workers and their skills. Overall social investments must maintain at least the level of the current MFF. The proposed minimum target of 14% for social objectives under the National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) is insufficient. We support a well-financed, self-standing European Social Fund focusing on quality jobs, opportunities for young people, the eradication of child poverty and homelessness as well as unemployment and the fight against the housing crisis and social exclusion.

Signatories

- **Korinna Schumann**, Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, **Austria**, Chair
- **Frank Vandenbroucke**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Health, **Belgium**
- **Michael Schäfer**, State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, **Germany**
- **Inga Ruginienė**, Minister of Social Security and Labour, **Lithuania**

- **Michael Falzon**, Minister for Social Policy and Children's Rights, **Malta**
- **Sebastian Gajewski**, Deputy Minister of Family, Labour and Social Affairs, **Poland**
- **Elma Saiz**, Minister of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration, **Spain**
- **Petre-Florin Manole**, Minister of Labour, Family, Youth and Social Solidarity, **Romania**
- **Gaby Bischoff**, Chair, **PES Social Europe Network**; Member of the European Parliament, **S&D Group in the European Parliament**

The Polish cabinet wishes to state that this declaration does not prejudge the final position of the Polish government on the statement "Regulation of subcontracting must be strengthened to prevent exploitation, including by limiting long and complex subcontracting chains to a maximum length and prohibiting subcontracting practices in specific high-risk sectors and ensuring equal treatment throughout the chain.", mentioned in point 2.