Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States

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The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted a report on the Commission proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States. Under the consultation procedure, the report recommends that Parliament approve the proposal as amended and call on the Commission to revise its proposal accordingly. The committee adopted the report on 1 October 2026 by 34 votes to 4, with 5 abstentions.

Employment policy framework

The report supports fully updated Employment Guidelines, with stronger emphasis on job quality, education and skills, artificial intelligence (AI), algorithmic management, poverty reduction, affordable housing, and labour and skills shortages. It reiterates Parliament's request to participate in setting the Integrated Guidelines on an equal footing with the Council.

The committee proposes that the guidelines explicitly promote quality employment, better working conditions, a highly competitive social market economy, environmental protection, gender equality, social justice and protection, and the reduction of gender pay and pension gaps. It stresses that access to decent, sustainable and affordable housing, including public and social housing, is necessary for equal opportunities and social inclusion.

The report links the European Semester more closely to the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Social Convergence Framework, the Union's 2030 targets, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Union of Skills. It calls for policies that combine competitiveness, innovation and strategic autonomy with social inclusion, decent work, social dialogue, collective bargaining, upward social convergence, poverty eradication and action against inequalities.

Quality jobs, skills and fair transitions

The committee recommends renaming Guideline 5 to focus on "boosting quality job creation". It proposes that Member States promote sustainable and highly competitive social market economies, innovation, responsible entrepreneurship, the social economy and sustainable quality jobs, while respecting workers' rights and social and environmental standards.

It calls for well-funded green, digital and demographic transitions that create and transform jobs, including targeted support for regions facing persistent employment, infrastructure and service-access gaps. It recommends stronger short-time work and employment-protection instruments modelled on the Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE) programme, alongside just-transition funding, training and job-to-job transitions that safeguard employment, wages, working conditions and acquired rights.

The report proposes progressive tax systems, public investment in quality services and social protection, measures against unfair competition in public procurement, and investment in the care economy. It supports fair wages, adequate statutory minimum wages or collective agreements, and wage-setting arrangements responsive to productivity, inflation and living costs.

It recommends a right to accessible, quality education and training during working time and free of charge for workers. It also calls for lifelong learning, vocational education and training (VET), skills intelligence, support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and measures to address skills shortages while ensuring decent working conditions.

Inclusion, equality and workers' rights

The committee recommends universal, accessible and affordable education, paid quality traineeships and apprenticeships, action to close gender gaps in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), digital and AI skills, and tailored support for unemployed, inactive and vulnerable people. It calls for effective public employment services, adequate unemployment benefits of sufficient duration, quality training and individualised support towards sustainable employment.

The report strengthens provisions on labour-market participation for women, persons with disabilities, older workers, Roma people, migrants and other underrepresented groups. It proposes accessible workplaces, reasonable accommodation, retention measures and the continued payment of disability allowances while in employment.

It calls for paid maternity and parental leave, action against gender-segmented labour markets, implementation of equal-pay and pay-transparency rules, and measures against workplace violence and harassment. Legal labour migration should complement, rather than replace, the use of the Union's domestic workforce and should guarantee equal treatment, trade-union representation, collective bargaining access and protection against exploitation.

Social dialogue, digitalisation and social protection

The report proposes stronger social dialogue, democracy at work and collective bargaining, including an objective of 80% collective-bargaining coverage. It calls for adequate staffing and resources for labour inspectorates, action against undeclared work, bogus self-employment and abusive atypical contracts, and protection against the effects of extreme weather on workers' income and employment.

It supports human-centred, ethical and accountable AI in workplaces, with social dialogue and collective bargaining on its effects. It calls for measures to prevent AI-driven automation from reducing labour's share of income, adaptation of education and training to AI-related changes, and full implementation of rules on platform work and algorithmic management.

The committee recommends inclusive labour markets and accessible social protection throughout life, including for platform, atypical and self-employed workers. It calls for action against child and in-work poverty, an objective of eradicating poverty by 2035, adequate minimum income, universal access to essential services, and targeted support for households affected by climate change and rising housing, transport and energy costs.

It also proposes stronger commitments on decent, affordable and sustainable public and social housing, homelessness prevention through a housing-first approach, adequate pensions above the poverty line, gender-sensitive pension rights, quality healthcare including mental-health services, and social protection and support for unpaid and informal carers.

This summary was AI-generated and human-reviewed.