Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States

2026/0137(NLE) - 21/10/2026 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 434 votes to 212, with 23 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States.

Parliament welcomed the Commission's proposal for fully updated employment guidelines for the Member States, in particular its focus on job quality, education and skills, new technologies, artificial intelligence and algorithmic management, poverty reduction, affordable housing and tackling labour and skills shortages. It reiterated its call, with a view to strengthening democratic decision-making, to be involved in setting the Integrated Guidelines at Union level on an equal footing with the Council.

The main amendments adopted in plenary session are as follows:

Guideline 5: Boosting quality job creation

Member States should:

- actively promote a **sustainable, social and highly competitive market** economy. They should facilitate and support investment and foster innovation-led growth and productivity growth for sustainable quality job creation, notably in the context of the digital, green and demographic transitions as well as security, defence and strategic autonomy;

- adopt **integrated approaches** reflecting the specific challenges and development potential of different territories and regions, including those most affected by the digital, ecological and demographic transitions and which face persistent disparities in employment prospects, infrastructure and access to services compared to urban centres;

- ensure that **national taxation** is supportive of job creation while ensuring that tax systems are progressive, and in line with climate and environmental objectives. Joint taxation schemes should be reformed to ensure that national tax policies support gender equality and women’s broader participation in the labour market. Member States should address and, if necessary, exclude from public contracts primary contractors and subcontractors and their subsidiaries that engage in unfair competition, for instance by committing tax fraud, participating in criminal activity or not respecting workers’ and trade union rights;

- invest in the **care economy**, including childcare, long-term care and disability support services. They should also ensure an effective involvement of **social partners** in a transparent and predictable manner, allowing for adequate responsiveness of wages to productivity developments, inflation and the cost of living, and fostering fair wages that enable a decent standard of living, paying particular attention to lower and middle-income groups;

- remedy their **education and training systems** and, in particular, to help SMEs to recruit, train and retain skilled workers (decent working conditions, including fair wages, standard employment contracts, social protection, lifelong learning, occupational safety and health, work-life balance, reasonable working hours, worker’s representation, democracy at work and collective bargaining);

- guarantee access to **quality education and training** to enhance employability, create quality jobs and facilitate career transitions, raise awareness of the importance of lifelong-learning-friendly work, support

the reallocation of workers to sectors offering better employment prospects and ensure that all formal qualifications and certifications provide clear pathways for further studies or career progression;

- take targeted action to **close the gender gap** in digital and AI skills and in STEM career pathways, from early education through to reskilling programmes;

- facilitate the transition of young people from education to employment through **accessible, paid, and high-quality traineeships and apprenticeships**. To guarantee the quality of traineeships, a written agreement should be concluded before the start of the traineeship, specifying its duration, remuneration, learning, rights and duties, and mentoring arrangements. Trainees should receive fair remuneration, social protection and equal treatment;

- put in place the series of measures to promote the employment of **people with disabilities** in the workplace, paying particular attention to retention strategies and the elimination of discriminatory practices;

- strengthen **women's participation in the labour market** by combating gender stereotypes, gender-segmented labour markets and systematic gaps between women and men in access to relevant education and training, by guaranteeing paid maternity and parental leave for all parents;

- ensure that **third-country workers** and mobile workers have accessible complaint tools, legal redress and contact trade union contact information and that labour migration does not result in a deterioration of existing working conditions for domestic workers;

- prevent, in accordance with Principle No 5 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, employment relationships that lead to **precarious working conditions**, including by prohibiting the abuse of atypical contracts;

- take concrete measures to ensure that **increasing AI-driven automation** does not lead to a reduction in labour's share of income and continue to adapt education and training pathways to the changing impact of AI across different occupations and the resulting shifts in occupational demand;

- promote **inclusive labour markets open to all** by putting in place effective measures to eliminate every form of discrimination and ensure equal opportunities, particularly for groups underrepresented in the labour market;

- introduce **pension reforms** supported by policies that aim to reduce the gender pension gap, including by adequately valued periods of maternity and parental leave, and to promote active and healthy ageing and decent working conditions to ensure that workers can actually remain in employment until they reach the statutory retirement age. At the same time workers who wish to remain active after they have reached the retirement age should have the possibility to do so.