



Brussels, 3.6.2026
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2026/0137 (NLE)

Proposal for a

COUNCIL DECISION

on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

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

While the broad economic policy guidelines are valid on an ongoing basis, the employment guidelines need to be drawn up each year. Both sets of guidelines were adopted together ('integrated package') in 2010 and underpinned the Europe 2020 strategy. Revised integrated guidelines were adopted in 2015. For the employment guidelines, a practice has developed since 2018 of alternating between a full update (covering both recitals and guidelines proper) every other year, and a 'reconduction' (updating the recitals while keeping the guidelines proper unchanged) in the intermediate year. Following a full update in 2024, a reconduction was carried out in 2025. Thus, this year both guidelines proper and recitals are being updated. New elements are brought into the guidelines, notably on: (i) job quality (related to the Quality Jobs Roadmap presented by the Commission in December 2025 and the work of the Employment Committee (EMCO) on the various dimensions of job quality and related monitoring framework); (ii) skills and education (in line with the new Council Recommendation on Human Capital put forward by the Commission in November 2025 and adopted by the Council in March 2026); and (iii) poverty reduction and social inclusion (in line with the Anti-Poverty Strategy put forward by the Commission in May 2026). The guidelines have also been significantly streamlined to avoid repetitions and improve readability. The recitals have likewise been updated to the current socio-economic context and the most recent policy initiatives.

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

The revised "Employment Guidelines" are the following:

Guideline 5: Boosting the demand for labour

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

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

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

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THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

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

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

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

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

After consulting the Committee of the Regions,

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

Whereas:

- (1) Member States and the Union are to work towards developing a coordinated strategy for employment and in particular for the promotion of a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce, as well as inclusive and resilient labour markets, with a view to achieving the objectives of full employment and social progress, and balanced economic growth laid down in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). Member States are to regard promoting employment as a matter of common concern and to coordinate their action in that respect within the Council.
- (2) The Union is to combat social exclusion and discrimination, and to promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and the protection of the rights of the child as laid down in Article 3 TEU. In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union is to take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health as laid down in Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).
- (3) In accordance with the TFEU, the Union has developed and implemented an integrated policy coordination framework for economic and employment policies in the context of the European Semester ⁽⁴⁾. The European Semester is aligned with the Competitiveness Compass, which provides a framework to boost competitiveness by

¹ Opinion of tbd DATE 2026 (not yet published in the Official Journal).

² Opinion of tbd DATE 2026 (not yet published in the Official Journal).

³ Opinion of tbd DATE 2026 (not yet published in the Official Journal).

⁴ Regulation (EU) 2024/1263 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2024 on the effective coordination of economic policies and on multilateral budgetary surveillance and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1466/97 (OJ L, 2024/1263, 30.4.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1263/oj>).

closing the innovation gap, decarbonising our economy, reducing excessive dependencies and increasing security. The Compass identifies skills, quality jobs and social fairness among the horizontal enablers. The European Semester also integrates the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission in November 2017 ⁽⁵⁾. It relies on the Social Scoreboard as its monitoring tool. The Social Scoreboard also provides the basis for an analysis of risks and challenges to upward social convergence in the Union, in the framework of the Social Convergence Framework ⁽⁶⁾. The European Semester provides for strong engagement with social partners, civil society and other stakeholders. The Semester is also complemented by the Digital Decade Policy Programme governance and recommendations.

- (4) As part of this framework, the guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (the ‘Employment Guidelines’), set out in the Annex to this Decision, together with the broad guidelines for the economic policies of the Member States and of the Union, set out in Council Recommendation (EU) 2015/1184 ⁽⁷⁾, form the Integrated Guidelines. The Employment Guidelines are to guide policy implementation in the Member States and in the Union, reflecting the interdependence between the Member States. The resulting set of coordinated Union and national policies constitutes an appropriate economic, employment and social policy mix. It should achieve positive spill-over effects for labour markets and society at large, strengthen economic and social resilience, and effectively respond to medium- and longer-term challenges, including the need to strengthen competitiveness, innovation and productivity and the Union’s strategic autonomy. The economic and employment policies of the Union and the Member States should go hand in hand with the Union’s fair transition to a climate-neutral, environmentally sustainable and digitally sovereign economy.
- (5) The Employment Guidelines are consistent with the revised economic governance framework of the Union, which entered into force on 30 April 2024 ⁽⁸⁾, and with existing Union legislation and Union initiatives. These include inter alia the Commission Communications on the Union of Skills, of 5 March 2025 ⁽⁹⁾, and on the European Union’s Anti-Poverty Strategy: addressing and preventing poverty from childhood to old age, of 6 May 2026, and the Council Recommendation on Human Capital in the European Union of 9 March 2026.
- (6) The European Pillar of Social Rights sets out twenty principles and rights to support well-functioning and fair labour markets and welfare systems. They are structured around equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, and social protection and inclusion. These principles and rights give strategic direction to the Union. The European Pillar of Social Rights, with its accompanying Social Scoreboard, also constitutes guidance to monitor the employment, skills and social performance of Member States and upward social convergence in the Union, in the

⁵ Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights (OJ C 428, 13.12.2017, p. 10).

⁶ See Art. 3(3)b and recital 8 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1263 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2024.

⁷ Council Recommendation (EU) 2015/1184 of 14 July 2015 on broad guidelines for the economic policies of the Member States and of the European Union (OJ L 192, 18.7.2015, p. 27).

⁸ Regulation (EU) 2024/1263 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2024 on the effective coordination of economic policies and on multilateral budgetary surveillance and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1466/97 (OJ L, 2024/1263, 30.4.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1263/oj>).

⁹ COM(2025) 90 final.

European Semester. The Pillar drives reforms and investments at national, regional and local levels, allowing to reconcile the ‘social’ and the ‘market’ in today’s modern economy.

- (7) On 4 March 2021, the Commission put forward an Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. This included ambitious yet realistic Union headline targets for 2030 on employment (at least 78% of the population aged 20-64 should be in employment), skills (at least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year) and poverty reduction (at least 15 million fewer people should be at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including 5 million children) (the ‘Union headline targets for 2030’). It also included complementary sub-targets, as well as a revised Social Scoreboard. The Union headline targets for 2030 were welcomed by the Heads of State or Government at the Porto Social Summit of May 2021 and by the June 2021 European Council. They support, together with the Social Scoreboard, the monitoring of progress towards the implementation of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights in the European Semester. Against this background, Member States also set ambitious national targets which, taking due account of the starting position of each Member State, constitute an adequate contribution to the achievement of the three Union headline targets for 2030.
- (8) The implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and progress on the Union and national headline targets for 2030 is monitored in the Joint Employment Report which was adopted by the Council in March 2026 and is integrated into the monitoring tools for the European Semester. The Joint Employment Report contains a ‘first-stage country analysis’ on potential risks to upward social convergence in line with the Social Convergence Framework. The latter identifies Member States which experience potential risks to be examined in a deeper ‘second-stage analysis’.
- (9) The Integrated Guidelines serve as a basis for the country-specific recommendations addressed by the Council to Member States under the European Semester. While the Integrated Guidelines are addressed to Member States and the Union, they should be implemented in partnership with all national, regional and local authorities, closely involving parliaments, as well as social partners and representatives of civil society. Labour market and social reforms should observe national practices of social dialogue and collective bargaining, as well as the autonomy of social partners. The importance of social dialogue in tackling challenges in the world of work was reaffirmed at the 2024 Val Duchesse Summit and in the Pact for European Social Dialogue signed in March 2025.
- (10) Member States should make full use of available EU funding, in particular the European Social Fund Plus and the Social Climate Fund, to foster quality employment and skills, fight against poverty and support employment and social reforms and investments. This includes fighting social exclusion, combatting discrimination, ensuring accessibility and inclusion, and promoting upskilling and reskilling opportunities for the workforce, lifelong learning and high-quality education and training for all. For the funding period post-2027, the National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) will continue promoting and strengthening integrated efforts in these areas. The Employment Guidelines should inform the programming of the NRPPs. In the context of the overarching decarbonisation objectives of the Union,

the Social Climate Fund ⁽¹⁰⁾ will be key in addressing the needs of vulnerable households, vulnerable transport users and vulnerable micro-enterprises.

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

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

The Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (the ‘Employment Guidelines’), as set out in the Annex, are hereby adopted. The Employment Guidelines shall form part of the Integrated Guidelines.

Article 2

The Member States shall take the Employment Guidelines into account in their employment policies and reform programmes, which shall be reported in accordance with Article 148(3) TFEU.

Article 3

This Decision is addressed to the Member States.

Done at Brussels,

*For the Council
The President*

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



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ANNEX

ANNEX

to the

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on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States

Guideline 5: Boosting the demand for labour

Member States should promote a sustainable social market economy. They should facilitate and support investment and foster innovation-led growth and productivity growth for quality job creation, notably in the context of the digital, green and demographic transitions as well as growing security and defence needs, and in light of the Union and national employment headline targets for 2030. Member States should pursue integrated approaches reflecting the specific challenges and development potential of the different regions and territories. To these ends, they should reduce the barriers that businesses face in hiring people, including by reducing administrative burden, and in scaling up, and foster responsible entrepreneurship and genuine self-employment. Member States should promote the development of the social economy, including social enterprises. They should develop and implement related measures and strategies, foster social innovation and encourage business models that create quality job opportunities, particularly including for people that are furthest from the labour market or underrepresented.

To strengthen resilience in the face of possible shocks, well-designed short-time work schemes and similar arrangements can, together with targeted training, help workers to remain employed during temporary downturns and companies' restructuring while facilitating the dynamic reallocation of labour in the economy. Well-designed hiring and transition incentives and upskilling and reskilling measures, developed in close cooperation with social partners, can also support structural transformations by facilitating restructuring processes and the reallocation of labour from declining sectors towards emerging ones. They can therefore help to modernise the economy, including via associated skills development.

Taxation should be shifted away from labour towards other sources more supportive of growth as well as climate and environmental objectives, while encouraging women's labour market participation, and protecting revenue for adequate social protection and growth-enhancing expenditure. A highly competitive and innovative economy, adequate earnings and fair wages and good working conditions should be pursued as key elements for ensuring job quality, which, together with skills development, career progression and job security, create a virtuous cycle of personal empowerment, productivity and economic growth. Member States should promote collective bargaining on wage setting. Respecting national practices and the autonomy of social partners, Member States and social partners should ensure that all workers have adequate wages by benefitting from collective agreements or adequate statutory minimum wages, taking into account their impact on competitiveness, quality job creation, purchasing power and in-work poverty.

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

In the context of the digital and green transitions, demographic change, and geopolitical shifts, and the growing importance of security and defence, together with the related need for greater strategic autonomy of the Union, including with regards to technological sovereignty, Member States should promote competitiveness, productivity, employability and human capital development. To this end, they should foster the acquisition of skills and competences in line with labour market needs, focusing on strategic sectors and value chains identified in Union and national industrial policy. They should address skills and labour shortages, including through better and timelier skills intelligence, also in light of the Union and national skills headline targets for 2030. Member States should also modernise and invest in their education

and training systems, also in rural and remote areas, and including related infrastructure, to provide high quality, accessible and inclusive education and training, and stimulate increased upskilling and reskilling. This should also ensure that the workforce has the right skills to develop and deploy solutions in view of the fast-changing deep tech development. Member States should work together with social partners, education and training providers, enterprises and other stakeholders to address structural weaknesses in their education and training systems.

Particular attention should be paid to addressing the decline in the educational performance of young people, especially in basic skills (literacy, mathematics, science, digital and citizenship skills), including with targeted support for disadvantaged groups. Action is needed to address the challenges faced by the teaching profession, including its attractiveness and working conditions, tackling teacher shortages, and investing in teachers' and trainers' digital skills and competences. To lay the foundations for adaptability and resilience throughout life, education and training systems should equip all learners with key competences, such as basic and digital skills, including artificial intelligence (AI) literacy, as well as transversal competences, entrepreneurship skills and critical thinking in light of the threat of disinformation.

To enhance employability and quality job creation and transitions, Member States should support working-age adults in accessing training and increase incentives and motivation to seek training, including, where appropriate, through individual learning accounts, reliable training quality assessments and micro-credentials. They should enable everyone to anticipate and better adapt to labour market needs, in particular through continuous upskilling and reskilling and the provision of integrated career guidance and counselling.

Member States should foster equal opportunities for all by addressing inequalities in education and training, including territorial disparities in access. Children should be provided with access to affordable and high quality early childhood education and care, in line with the "Barcelona targets" and the European Child Guarantee. Member States should raise overall qualification levels, reduce the number of early leavers from education and training, support equal access to education for children from disadvantaged groups and remote areas. They should also increase the attractiveness, quality and labour market relevance of vocational education and training (VET), support access to and completion of tertiary education, and increase the number of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) graduates both in VET and in tertiary education, especially women. Top performance and excellence in educational outcomes should also be supported, given their role in fostering the future innovation potential of the Union and competitiveness. Member States should facilitate the transition from education to employment for young people through accessible and quality traineeships and apprenticeships, as well as counselling services, and increase participation of adults in learning, particularly among learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and the least qualified. Member States should upgrade and increase the supply and uptake of flexible initial and continuing VET, and strengthen work-based learning in VET systems. Furthermore, Member States should enhance the labour market relevance of tertiary education and, where appropriate, research; improve skills intelligence; make skills and qualifications more visible and comparable, including those acquired abroad, and ensure a more consistent use of EU-wide classifications (i.e. ESCO); increase opportunities for validating and recognising skills and competences acquired outside formal education and training, and promote faster recognition of qualifications for Union and third-country nationals, while maintaining quality standards.

Member States should provide unemployed and inactive people with effective, timely, coordinated and tailor-made assistance based on support for job searches, upskilling and reskilling and access to other enabling services, paying particular attention to vulnerable

groups. Comprehensive strategies that include in-depth individual assessments of unemployed people and validation of prior work experience should be pursued as soon as possible, at the latest after 18 months of unemployment, with a view to significantly reducing and preventing long-term unemployment. Youth unemployment and the challenge of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) should continue to be addressed through prevention of early leaving from education and training and improvement of the school-to-work transition, alongside the full implementation of the reinforced Youth Guarantee, notably by making an offer within 4 months for young people aged 15-29, to guarantee early intervention.

Member States should aim to remove barriers and disincentives to, and provide incentives for, labour market participation, in particular for low-income earners, second earners (often women), older people, persons with disabilities, and those furthest from the labour market, including people with a migrant background and Roma. Member States should contribute to fostering labour supply and address shortages, notably through promoting adequate working conditions, ensuring that the design of tax and benefit systems encourages labour market participation, and that active labour market policies are effective and accessible, respecting the role of social partners. Member States should also support a work environment adapted for persons with disabilities, offering quality non-segregated employment and career progression, including through targeted financial and technical support, information and awareness raising, and services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in society.

Member States should ensure gender equality and increased labour market participation of women, including in relation to career progression, by tackling gender stereotypes, eliminating barriers to leadership access at all levels of decision making, and by tackling workplace violence and harassment. Equal pay for equal work, or work of equal value, and pay transparency should be ensured. The reconciliation of work, family and private life for both women and men should be promoted, in particular through access to affordable, high quality long-term care and early childhood education and care. Member States should ensure that parents and other people with caring responsibilities have access to suitable family-related leave and flexible working arrangements to balance work, family and private life, and promote a balanced use of those entitlements between parents.

As a complementary solution to tapping the potential of the Union domestic workforce, Member States should attract talent and skills from outside the Union via legal migration pathways, while guaranteeing fair recruitment and labour and social rights. Member States should ensure that procedures to recognise qualifications of third-country nationals in the context of legal migration procedures are simple, efficient and facilitate fast access to regulated professions. Member States should further engage in Talent Partnerships to enhance legal migration pathways by launching new mobility schemes and provide for an effective integration policy for workers and their families, encompassing education and training, employment, social protection, health and housing.

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

Member States should work together with social partners in ensuring fair, transparent and predictable working conditions. To enhance job quality, they should reduce and prevent segmentation in labour markets, fight undeclared work and bogus self-employment, and foster the transition towards open-ended forms of employment. Employment protection rules, labour law and institutions should provide both a suitable environment for recruitment and the

necessary flexibility for employers to adapt swiftly to changes in the economic context. At the same time, they should protect labour rights and ensure social protection. Promoting the use of flexible working arrangements such as teleworking can contribute to higher employment levels and more inclusive labour markets. A safe and healthy work environment should be ensured, and workplace wellbeing and job autonomy promoted as contributing to job quality.

Member States should support workers and employers in the digital transformation, including via promoting the effective, responsible, inclusive and ethical use of AI tools that boost productivity and complement human labour. To foster a trust-based approach to workplace technology and innovation, Member States should also monitor impacts on the labour market functioning, including recruitment practices, and leverage the role of social dialogue and collective bargaining. Precarious working conditions should be prevented, including in platform work and atypical work contracts, by ensuring fairness, transparency, non-discrimination and accountability in the use of algorithms, and by fighting abusive contractual arrangements. Access to effective, impartial dispute resolution and a right to redress, including adequate compensation, where applicable, should be ensured in cases of unfair dismissal.

Member States should effectively activate and enable those who can participate in the labour market, especially underrepresented groups, such as women and young people, as well as people in vulnerable situations, such as the lower-skilled, the long-term unemployed, persons with disabilities, people with a migrant background, people from Roma communities and older workers. Member States should strengthen the scope and effectiveness of active labour market policies by increasing their availability, outreach and coverage and by better linking them with social services, training and income support for the unemployed. Member States should enhance the capacity of public employment services to provide timely and tailor-made assistance to jobseekers, including through performance-based management and better capacity to use data and digital technology, and by making the best use of Union funding. Private employment services also play a role in this respect.

Member States should provide the unemployed with adequate unemployment benefits of reasonable duration, in line with their contributions and national eligibility rules. Unemployment benefits should not disincentivise a prompt return to employment and should be accompanied by active labour market policies.

Learning mobility, especially in VET and for apprentices and learners with fewer mobility experiences, and labour mobility of workers should be increased and adequately supported, with the aim of enhancing their skills and employability. Obstacles to intra-Union labour mobility should be tackled, including related to verifying the authenticity and understanding the content of qualifications from other Member States, complex and burdensome procedures to recognise professional qualifications, or difficulties in exercising or accessing social security rights. Fair working conditions for all those pursuing a cross-border activity, including third-country nationals, should be ensured by effectively enforcing national and Union legislation, stepping up enforcement efforts and administrative cooperation between national administrations, and enhancing information provision to mobile workers as well as companies, with the support of the European Labour Authority.

Member States should also strive to create the appropriate conditions for new forms of work, and working methods, delivering on their job creation potential while ensuring that they are compliant with social and labour rights. They should enforce applicable rules in the context of atypical contracts and new forms of work, such as work through digital labour platforms. In this regard, social partners can play an instrumental role and Member States should support

them in reaching out to and representing people in atypical and new forms of work. Member States should also strengthen enforcement through adequate capacities and dedicated training for labour inspectorates, concerning the challenges stemming from new forms of work, including the use of digital technologies and AI, such as algorithmic management, workers' surveillance and telework.

Member States should ensure an enabling environment for bipartite and tripartite social dialogue at all levels, including collective bargaining, in the public and private sectors, in accordance with national law and/or practice, after consultation and in close cooperation with social partners, while respecting their autonomy. Member States should involve social partners in a systematic, meaningful and timely manner in the design and implementation of employment, social and, where relevant, economic and other public policies, including in the setting and updating of statutory minimum wages. Member States should promote higher collective bargaining coverage, including by strengthening social partners' capacity, enable effective collective bargaining at all appropriate levels and encourage coordination between and across those levels. Social partners should be encouraged to negotiate and conclude collective agreements in matters relevant to them, fully respecting their autonomy and the right to collective action. Where relevant, and building on existing national practices, Member States should take into account the relevant experience of civil society organisations on employment and social issues.

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

Member States should modernise their social protection systems to provide adequate, effective, efficient and sustainable social protection for all, throughout all stages of life, fit to the needs of an ageing population. They should foster social inclusion and upward social mobility, support intergenerational fairness and a fair balancing of support across age groups, incentivise labour market participation, fight poverty and social exclusion and address inequalities, including through the design of their tax and benefit systems, assessing the distributional impact of policies, while tackling discrimination in all its forms. Complementing universal approaches with targeted ones can improve the effectiveness of social protection systems. Member States should enhance the transparency and uptake of social protection benefits, including through the ethical and safe deployment of digital tools, and paying due attention to the digital divide. Particular attention should be paid to vulnerable households that are most affected by the green and digital transitions, and by uneven impacts of climate change and increases in the cost of living, including housing and energy costs. Member States should take steps to close gaps in access to social protection for workers and the self-employed, as an integral component of ensuring job quality.

Particular attention should be given to fighting poverty and social exclusion, in a life cycle perspective from childhood to old age, in line with the Union and national poverty reduction headline targets for 2030. Member States are encouraged to ensure anti-poverty policy frameworks. With a view to further preventing and addressing poverty, discrimination and stigma, difficulties to afford basic needs, such as food, energy, a home and other basic goods, and the lack of access to quality services, should be tackled. Member States should develop and integrate the three strands of active inclusion (adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality enabling services) to meet individual needs. Social protection and inclusion systems should ensure adequate minimum income benefits for everyone lacking sufficient resources and promote social inclusion by supporting and encouraging people to

participate in the labour market and society, including through targeted provision of social services. Member States should ensure that everyone has access to essential services of good quality. The availability of affordable, accessible and quality services, such as early childhood education and care, out-of-school care, education, training, housing, health and long-term care, is a necessary condition for ensuring equal opportunities, including by alleviating food and material deprivation. To break the cycle of disadvantage, child poverty and social exclusion should be especially addressed by comprehensive and integrated measures, including through the full implementation of the European Child Guarantee.

Member States should also ensure access to affordable and sustainable housing, including social housing. Mobilising private and public investments for affordable and social housing, in a context where other supply bottlenecks are also addressed, will be key to achieve progress. In addition, Member States should provide well targeted housing assistance and other support measures, for people in need or in a vulnerable situation. Social economy housing providers, innovative financing models and targeted measures to mobilise vacant housing can be building blocks towards sustainable and inclusive housing solutions. Energy and transport poverty, as well as resilience to health risks and disasters, including those triggered by climate change and environmental degradation, should be addressed with targeted support measures for low-income households and disadvantaged groups. Member States should, where appropriate, make effective use of Union funding to invest in affordable and social housing, student housing, housing renovation and accompanying services. The specific needs of persons with disabilities, including accessibility, should be taken into account. Homelessness and housing exclusion should be tackled specifically by boosting the supply of affordable and social housing, prevention measures and promoting an inclusive, people-centred housing-led and integrated approach, ensuring that support meets real needs.

In a context of increasing longevity and other demographic changes, Member States should secure the adequacy and sustainability of pension systems for workers and the self-employed. Pension systems should ensure equal opportunities for women and men to acquire pension rights, including through providing pension credits for care breaks and enhancing saving in broad and inclusive supplementary schemes. Pension reforms should be supported by policies that aim to reduce the gender pension gap and measures that extend working lives, such as facilitating active ageing and the labour market participation of older adults to increase the effective retirement age. Member States should promote transparency of pension rights, including through pension tracking services.

Member States should ensure timely access to affordable preventive and curative healthcare, while safeguarding sustainability in the long term. In the context of an increasing demand for long-term care, also linked to demographic change, gaps in adequacy and availability of services, workforce shortages and poor working conditions should be addressed through comprehensive and integrated measures. Furthermore, Member States should work towards developing care models that are person-centred, ensure smooth transition between different care pathways (e.g. from hospital to home and/or residential care) and address health and long-term care needs in an integrated manner.