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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Social Fund as part of the National and Regional Partnership Plan set out in Regulation (EU) [NRPPlan] establishing conditions for the implementation of the Union support to quality employment, skills and social inclusion for the period from 2028 to 2034
- Partial general approach

Delegations will find attached the text of the partial general approach on the above draft Regulation, reached at the meeting of the Council (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumers Affairs) on 29 June 2026¹. Changes to the initial text of the Commission's proposal are marked in **bold** for additions and ~~striketrough~~ for deletions.

¹ The [provisions in brackets] are excluded from the partial general approach.

Proposal for a

REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

~~establishing~~on the European Social Fund as part of the ~~National and Regional Partnership Plan~~Fund set out in Regulation (EU)— [NRPP~~Plan~~NRPP Regulation] and establishing conditions for the implementation of the Union support to quality employment, skills and social inclusion ~~for the period from 2028 to 2034~~

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 164, and **the third paragraph of** Article ~~175(3)~~**175** thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

After transmission of the draft legislative act to the national parliaments,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions

Acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure,

Whereas:

- (1) On 17 November 2017, the European Pillar of Social Rights was jointly proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission as a response to social challenges in Europe. ~~The twenty key principles of the pillar are structured around three categories: equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; social protection and inclusion. The twenty principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights should guide the actions under the European Social Fund (ESF).~~ On 4 March 2021, the Commission put forward an Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights ~~(the ‘Action Plan’)~~, including ambitious yet realistic Union headline targets for 2030 on employment (that at least 78 % of the population aged 20-64 should be in employment), skills (that at least 60 % of all adults should participate in training every year) and poverty reduction (that 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’)~~ and complementary sub-targets, as well as a revised Social Scoreboard. In order to contribute to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights the ESF should support investments in people and reforms of the systems in the policy areas of employment, education and social inclusion, thereby supporting economic, territorial and social cohesion in accordance with Article 174 of the Treaty **on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).**

- (2) The guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States, as provided for in Article 148(2) of the Treaty TFEU (**‘the employment guidelines’**), adopted annually by the Council in the context of the European Semester, are a key instrument for coordination of Union and national employment and social policies. ~~They~~**The employment guidelines** provide common priorities and targets for employment, education, skills and social policies with a view to improving the Union’s competitiveness and making it a better place to invest, create jobs and foster social cohesion. The ESF is the Union’s main instrument for supporting the employment guidelines and achieving Union objectives in employment and social policies. The employment guidelines complement the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. In this context, the ~~scope of the ESF for 2028 to 2034 should be fully aligned with~~ Council Decision (EU) ... ² [Employment guidelines adopted by the Council at the latest by 1 January 2027] **should be used as a reference to inform the programming of the ESF [for 2028 to 2034].**
- (3) At Union level, the European Semester of economic policy coordination is the framework to identify ~~national~~**relevant** reform priorities and monitor their implementation. ~~Member States should submit annual progress reports on the implementation of their medium-term fiscal structural plans.~~ That framework should be the basis for the use of Union funding in a coherent manner, including with a view to maximise the added value of the financial support to be received.
- (4) The Union is confronted with structural challenges arising from economic globalisation, vulnerable supply chains, the management of migration flows and the increased security ~~threat~~**and hybrid threats caused by wars at the borders of the EU, in particular Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine**, the clean energy ~~transition~~**and digital transitions**, technological change and demographic change, an ageing workforce, **social inequalities, a considerable gender employment gap**, lack of social **and affordable** housing, **poverty, including child poverty**, and growing skills and labour shortages in many sectors and regions, **with special impact on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).**

² Insert publication reference

- (5) ~~Taking into account the changing realities in the world of work, the Union should be prepared for current and future challenges by investing in relevant skills, by making growth more inclusive and by improving employment and social policies, including in view of labour mobility and sectoral restructuring, paying attention to urban and rural areas that face particular social weaknesses.~~
- (6) ~~Between now and 2040, the Union labour market will comprise approximately 1 million fewer persons each year. Furthermore, in addition to a shrinking workforce, some regions are affected by a small and stagnant share of the population with tertiary education, making it difficult to compensate for the loss of labour through higher labour productivity. This will increase pressure on the social welfare model of~~**Therefore, the Union, putting its sustainability and adequacy under pressure. It will also should prepare for current and future challenges by investing in relevant skills, by making growth more inclusive and by supporting an** ~~increase labour and skills shortages in the~~**of** ~~labour market, putting strain on economic growth and competitiveness. For some sectors this will lead to labour cost pressures. This is why the ESF needs to support an increase in participation in the labour market, especially of women and, young people,~~**persons and** ~~persons with disabilities, Roma communities and to support employers in finding the right people for available jobs, empower older workers with appropriate labour market and workplace measures, ensure a skilled workforce able to tackle major societal challenges, and support~~**hence addressing the gender gap in employment and supporting** ~~a healthy work and life balance including by ensuring access to quality childcare.~~

- (7) On 29 January 2025, the Commission presented ~~the~~**its communication entitled ‘A Competitiveness Compass. The Compass sets a path for Europe to become the place where future technologies, services, and for the EU’, and on 26 February 2025 the Commission adopted its Communication entitled ‘The Clean products are invented, manufactured, and put on the market, while being the first continent to become climate neutral. It recognises five horizontal enablers****Industrial Deal: A joint roadmap for competitiveness and decarbonisation’.** **In light of these initiatives, it is vital to recognise the critical role of,** ~~including promoting skills and quality jobs, and highlights that the foundation of Europe’s~~**in ensuring** competitiveness is its people. **To beand facilitating a successful and just transition to a cleaner and more competitive and prepared for the****industrial future, within** the Union ~~needs to support and prepare its people with the skills and competences needed for success in learning, work, and life.~~
- (8) ~~In addition, on 26 February 2025 the Commission adopted the Communication “The Clean Industrial Deal: A joint roadmap for competitiveness and decarbonisation”. It is vital to recognise the critical role of skills in facilitating a successful transition to a cleaner and more competitive industrial future within the Union. Developing a highly skilled workforce is essential for driving innovation and advancing decarbonisation and circularity across vital industries. This focus on skill enhancement is crucial for achieving the Union’s objectives of a just transition and for sustaining and enhancing the Union’s global competitiveness. Furthermore, access to environmental resources and their benefits is unequally distributed across society, as are environmental hazards and health risks. It is more likely to fall disproportionately on vulnerable groups.~~

- (9) The Union of Skills aims to support the development of quality, inclusive and adaptable education, training and skills systems to increase the Union's competitiveness, preparedness, security and democracy. Therefore, in line with the Union of Skills, the Union should ensure sufficient funding to build solid skills foundations and promote lifelong and future-oriented upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all, in particular to address the challenges of the digital **transition, including driven by artificial intelligence, and the** and green ~~transition~~**transition**. This will contribute to ~~notably~~ digital skills and key enabling technologies **in particular** but also, skills to support emerging sectors, with a view to ~~providing~~**enabling** people ~~with~~**to obtain** skills adjusted to digitalisation, technologically and innovation-driven changes, social and economic change, **also reducing gender segregation in the labour market**, facilitating career transitions; **and** mobility, and supporting in particular low-skilled or ~~poorly~~**low** qualified ~~adults~~**persons**. In line with the Union of Skills, the challenges of the digital and green transitions need to be addressed by upskilling and reskilling workers, **and** aligning education **and training with labour** ~~with industry needs, and fostering partnerships among educational institutions, employers, and public authorities. It is also necessary to enhance circulation and adequate allocation of skills in the internal market, including through easier skills portability, and be able to attract and retain skills in the EU.~~ **needs.**
- (10) [Regulation (EU) [~~NRP~~**NRPP** Regulation] establishes the general rules on the National **and** Regional Partnership ~~Plan~~**Plans** (the 'NRP ~~Plan~~**Plans**') and lays down, in particular, the objectives to be supported by the ~~National Regional Partnership~~**NRP** Plans and the rules concerning the preparation, implementation, management ~~and~~, control **and audit** of such Plans. The ESF is one of the nationally pre-allocated funds grouped under the ~~National Regional Partnership Plan~~**NRP Plans**, in accordance with Regulation (EU) [...] [~~NRP Plan~~**NRPP** Regulation]. It is therefore necessary to clarify the scope of support of the ESF in relation to the objectives set out in the ~~NRP~~**NRPP** Regulation and lay down specific provisions concerning the implementation of the ESF.]

- (11) ~~Efficient and effective implementation of actions supported by the NRP Plan, including the ESF, depends on good governance and partnership between all actors at the relevant territorial levels and the socio-economic actors, in particular the social partners and civil society organisations.~~
- (12) ~~[In order to strengthen Europe's societies and Europe's Social model, Member States should allocate a minimum amount of resources under their National and Regional Partnership~~**NRP** ~~Plans adopted in accordance with Regulation (EU) [NRP Plan~~**NRPP** ~~Regulation] to the ESF.] The diverse nature and severity of different socio-economic challenges in~~**between and within** ~~Member States requires a more flexible approach to programming. Whilst a minimum level of support for social policies is necessary to ensure action commensurate to these challenges, it also needs to be closely corresponding to the national and regional characteristics. The underlying sources of, taking into account the social disparities or problems need to inform the relative importance given to investments and reforms within the realm of the Employment Guidelines and the ESF. This implies that policy safeguards through thematic concentration should result from engagement between~~**and challenges faced by Member States, whilst equally ensuring that** ~~Member States and the Commission. The minimum amount of ESF must also find the balance between the strategic interest the~~**allocate resources for measures addressing key social challenges at** ~~Union has in investing in its people, and thereby in the quality of labour supply as well as~~**level, namely youth employment, support to the most deprived persons, child poverty and social progress, and at the same time investment needs covered by other specific objectives enlisted in article 3 of the [NRP Plan** ~~Regulation]~~**inclusion.**

- (13) The ESF should support employment, **including self-employment**, equal access for all to the labour market, fair and quality working conditions and labour mobility. The ESF should support Member States in providing ~~support to~~ unemployed and inactive ~~people~~**persons** with effective, timely, coordinated and tailor-made assistance ~~based on~~**consisting of** support for job searches, training, up- and reskilling and access to other enabling services, paying particular attention to ~~people~~**persons** in vulnerable situations and ~~people~~**persons** negatively affected by the green and digital transitions or labour market shocks, as well as **to** those furthest away from the labour market. **The ESF may continue to make use of the potential of the social economy to create and retain quality jobs.** The ESF should continue to focus on youth unemployment and the issue of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), through ~~the prevention of~~**preventing** early leaving from education and training, and ~~structural improvement of~~**enhancing** the school-to-work transition, including through the full implementation of the reinforced Youth Guarantee, which should also support quality youth employment opportunities. ~~In addition, the ESF should continue to invest in skills crucial for the green and digital transitions.~~
- (14) The ESF should enhance labour supply and improve education and training and lifelong acquisition of skills. In particular, the ESF should help progression within education and training and transition to work, support lifelong learning, including formal, non-formal and informal learning that takes place at all stages in life, **recognition of qualifications**, and employability, and contribute to competitiveness and societal and economic innovation by supporting scalable and sustainable initiatives in these fields. ~~This could be achieved for example through work-based learning and apprenticeships, lifelong guidance, skills anticipation in cooperation with industry, up-to-date training materials, forecasting and graduate tracking, training of educators, validation of learning outcomes and recognition of qualifications.~~

- (15) **Support through** the ESF should facilitate access to services, including the strengthening of the modernisation, digitalisation and the resilience of both healthcare and long-term care services **be used to promote gender equality and equal opportunities for all, support strong social safety nets, foster social inclusion and intergenerational fairness, and fight poverty.** The ESF should support Member States in implementing measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination and ensure efforts to tackle poverty, including by addressing material deprivation, with a view to breaking the cycle of disadvantage across generations and promoting social inclusion by ensuring equal opportunities for all, and in particular for groups that are under-represented in the labour market, ensuring equal access to services. The availability of affordable, sustainable and high-quality services such as early childhood education and care, out-of-school care, education, training, and **tackling discrimination and addressing** health and long-term care, in particular family and community-based care services, is a necessary condition for ensuring equal opportunities and labour mobility. The ESF should ensure that everyone **inequalities. This implies mobilising a range of policies targeting the most disadvantaged people regardless of their age,** including children in line with the European Child Guarantee, have access to essential services of good quality. The specific needs of persons with disabilities **at risk of poverty or social exclusion, marginalised communities such as the Roma, third country nationals,** including accessibility **migrants, the working poor and the most deprived persons.** The ESF should be taken into account in relation to those services as well as independent living **promote the active inclusion of people far from the labour market with a view to ensuring their socio-economic integration.** The ESF should also contribute to the modernisation of social protection systems with a view in particular to promoting their accessibility **tackle homelessness, including with prevention and alleviation measures in line with the Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness of 2021.**

- (16) ~~Support through~~ The ESF should be used to promote equal opportunities for all, to support strong social safety nets, foster social inclusion, intergenerational fairness and fight poverty. The ESF should support Member States' efforts to tackle poverty **facilitate access to services**, including by addressing material deprivation, with a view to breaking the cycle of disadvantage across generations and promote social inclusion by **supporting the modernisation, digitalisation and resilience of healthcare and long-term care services**. **The availability of affordable, sustainable and high-quality services is a necessary condition for** ensuring equal opportunities for all, ~~tackling discrimination and addressing health inequalities~~ **and labour mobility**. This implies mobilising a range of policies targeting the most disadvantaged people regardless of their age **The ESF should ensure that everyone**, including children in poverty, marginalised communities such as the Roma, the working poor and the most deprived. The ESF **line with the European Child Guarantee, have access to essential services of good quality**. The specific needs of **persons with disabilities, including accessibility**, should promote the active inclusion of people far from the labour market with a view to ensuring their socio-economic integration **be taken into account in relation to those services as well as independent living**. The ESF should also tackle homelessness, including with prevention and alleviation measures in line with the Lisbon declaration of 2021. Support **to contribute to the modernisation of** social innovation plays an important role in achieving **protection systems with a view in particular to promoting access to** these objectives and should therefore be promoted **systems**.

- (16a) Between now and 2040, the Union labour market will comprise approximately 1 million fewer people each year. At the same time the life expectancy is increasing. This has implications for the Union's societies and labour markets. Taken together this will increase pressure on the Member States' social welfare systems, putting their sustainability and adequacy under pressure. It will also place different demands on health and long-term care systems, and the people working in those sectors. Labour and skills shortages will increase, putting strain on economic growth and competitiveness. The ESF should support mitigating the impact of demographic change through integrated approaches in the form of both policy reforms and investments in human capital, taking into account territorial disparities and regions particularly affected by demographic decline, such as islands, remote and sparsely populated areas and external borders. As highlighted in the European Commission's Communication on the EU's eastern regions bordering Russia, Belarus or Ukraine, challenges such as depopulation, ageing society, low population density, low youth retention, and labour shortages, coupled with security challenges, including hybrid threats and disinformation, are affecting growth and prosperity of Eastern border regions.**
- (16b) It is essential to support social innovation as a driver of upward social convergence. Social innovation may encompass the entire innovation process, from the identification of social needs and prototyping, through testing and validation, to the final scaling and institutionalisation of successful models into public policy.**

- (17) The principles of democracy, the rule of law and **the protection and strengthening** of fundamental rights are ~~fundamental~~**common** values of the Union, **as set out in the preamble of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the ‘Charter’)**. These values are fundamental for every single person, especially for those who are most vulnerable. Furthermore, they are ~~instrumental~~**essential** for the effective implementation of the ESF. Therefore, the ESF should also support the promotion and implementation of these values for all. The ESF ~~will~~**should** also continue to address the rights of persons with disabilities as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It ~~will~~**should** also ensure coherence with the Union of Equality and its related ~~Strategies~~**strategies** that aim ~~at combating~~**to combat** discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation and ensure social cohesion by sustaining and developing open, fundamental rights-based, democratic, equal and inclusive societies based on the rule of law. **The ESF should also support measures combatting gender-based violence, including through preventive measures.**
- (18) Regulation (EU) [~~National Plan~~**NRPP** Regulation] requires that Member States respect horizontal principles in the preparation and implementation of the ~~national and regional partnership~~**NRP** Plans. In this context, Member States should also be encouraged to use the ESF to ~~support~~**support** targeted actions to promote horizontal principles such as ~~the promotion of gender equality and ensuring the~~**, non-discrimination**, accessibility of services for ~~people~~**persons** with disabilities, **and active participation of persons** ~~and to enable people with disabilities to actively participate.~~

- (19) **With regard to ensure that the social dimension of Europe as set out in the processing of personal data within the framework of this Regulation, national data controllers should carry out their tasks for the purposes of this Regulation in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council³. The dignity and privacy of the most deprived persons receiving food and/or basic material assistance should allocate resources of the ESF to fostering social inclusion be guaranteed. In order to avoid any stigmatisation, and in line with the requirements of Regulation (EU) [NRPP Regulation] and of Regulation (EU) [Performance Regulation], the persons receiving food and/or basic material assistance should not be required to identify themselves when receiving support, unless this is necessary.**
- (20) ~~Due to the particular need to support children in poverty Member States should also programme resources of the ESF to address the measures under the Child Guarantee.~~
- (21) ~~The ESF should contribute to the reduction of poverty by supporting national schemes aiming to alleviate food and material deprivation and promote the social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion and the most deprived. Member States should allocate resources of the ESF to address the forms of extreme poverty with the greatest social exclusion impact, such as homelessness and food and material deprivation.~~

³ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) (OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1).

- (22) ~~In light of persistently high levels of youth unemployment and inactivity in a number of Member States and regions, in particular affecting young people who are neither in employment, nor in education or training, it is necessary that those Member States continue to invest sufficient resources of the ESF towards measures to promote youth employment, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. Member States should therefore allocate an appropriate amount of resources to this challenge. Member States seriously affected by youth unemployment should allocate resources of the ESF to support youth employability.~~
- (23) Efficient and effective implementation of actions supported by the ESF depends on good governance and partnership between all actors at the relevant territorial levels and the socio-economic actors, in particular the social partners and civil society. It is therefore essential that Member States encourage the participation of social partners and civil society in the implementation of the ESF. Member States that have received a country-specific recommendation in this area should ~~allocate resources of the ESF to~~ promote the capacity building of social partners and civil society organisations.} **The ESF should support modernising labour market, education, social and health institutions and services.**
- (24) Taking into account the special characteristics and constraints of the outermost regions, **in accordance with Article 349 TFEU**, the Member States should include in their Chapter for outermost regions; measures for enhancing employment and labour mobility, ~~in particular for young people,~~ education and skills, **and social inclusion, including through mobility measures.**

- (25) Since the ~~objective~~**objectives** of this Regulation, namely enhancing the effectiveness of labour markets and promoting access to quality employment, improving access to and the quality of education and training, promoting social inclusion and health and reducing poverty cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States but can rather, be better achieved at Union level, the Union may adopt measures, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union. In accordance with the principle of proportionality, as set out in that Article, this Regulation does not go beyond what is necessary in order to achieve ~~that objective~~**those objectives**.
- (25a) **In order to ensure continuity in providing support and allow for a coherent and timely implementation as of the beginning of the multiannual financial framework 2028 to 2034, this Regulation should enter into force as a matter of urgency on the day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union,**

HAVE ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

Article 1

Subject matter

- (1) [This Regulation lays down specific conditions for the implementation of the European Social Fund for the 2028-2034 programming period as part of the Union support in accordance with the general objectives laid down in Article 2 of Regulation XX [NRP Plan Regulation], and in particular point (b) and (e) thereof.
- (2) This Union support shall be provided under the National and Regional Partnership Plan, in accordance with the rules set out in Regulation (EU) [...] [~~NRP Plan~~ **NRPP Regulation**].]

Article 2

ESF support

- (1) The European Social Fund (ESF) shall support the **relevant** specific objectives set out in Article 3(1), and in particular in points (c)(i) to (c)(v) and point (e)(i) thereof, of Regulation ~~XX~~(EU) [~~NRP Plan~~ **NRPP Regulation**].
- (2) ~~For the purpose of paragraph 1, Member States use of the ESF shall,~~ For the purposes of Article 2, point (b) of Regulation ~~XX~~ [~~NRP Plan~~ **(EU) [NRPP Regulation]**], **Member States' use of the ESF shall, where relevant,** be based on the guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States, as provided for in Article ~~148 (2) of the Treaty~~ **148(2) TFEU**, set out in ~~the Decision (EU) xxxx [Employment guidelines adopted by the Council at the latest by 1 January 2027].~~

Article 3
Definitions

For the purposes of this Regulation, the following definitions apply:

- (1) ‘social innovation’ means an action, that is social both as to its ends and its means and in particular an action which relates to the development and implementation of new ideas concerning products, services, practices and models, that simultaneously meets social needs or challenges and creates new social relationships or collaborations between public, civil society or private organisations, thereby benefiting society and boosting its capacity to act;**
- (2) ‘most deprived persons’ means natural persons, whether individuals, families, households or groups of persons, including children in vulnerable situations and homeless people, whose need for assistance has been established according to the objective criteria which are set by the competent authorities in consultation with relevant stakeholders, and which may include elements that allow for the targeting of the most deprived persons in certain geographical areas.**
- (3) ‘basic material assistance’ means goods which fulfil the basic needs of a person for a life with dignity, such as clothing, hygiene goods, including feminine hygiene products, and school material;**
- (4) ‘accompanying measure’ means an action provided in addition to the distribution of food and/or basic material assistance with the aim of addressing social exclusion and contributing to the eradication of poverty, such as referrals to or providing social and health services, including psychological support, or providing relevant information on public services or advice on managing a household budget;**

Article 4

Social innovation

- (1) **Member States may support** social innovation ~~shall be supported~~ in the areas falling within the scope of the ESF, in particular with the aim of testing, evaluating and scaling up innovative solutions, including at the local or regional level, in order to address social needs in partnership with the relevant partners ~~and, in particular,~~ **including public authorities, the social partners, social economy entities, the private sector and civil society.**
- (2) The Commission shall use technical assistance at its own initiative, in accordance with Article 12 of Regulation (EU) [~~NRP Plan~~ **NRPP Regulation**] to facilitate capacity building for social innovation, in particular through supporting mutual learning, **engaging in** transnational cooperation, establishing networks, and disseminating and promoting good practices and methodologies.

Article 5

Support for demographic ~~transition~~ change

Member States and regions ~~shall, where appropriate,~~ **may** set out an integrated approach to addressing challenges stemming from ~~the demographic transition~~ **change** in one or more dedicated chapters of the National Regional and Partnership Plan.

Support for addressing material deprivation the most deprived persons

- (1) Member States ~~may~~**shall** provide support **to the most deprived persons** for addressing material deprivation through the distribution of food ~~and goods that are~~**and/or basic material assistance or through social inclusion activities aiming at the social integration of the most deprived persons. Support in the form of distribution of food and/or basic material assistance shall be** in conformity with the Union law on consumer product safety. **Support for the most deprived persons shall be additional to any social benefit that may be provided by national social systems or according to national law.**
- (2) Member States and beneficiaries shall choose the food and/or the basic material assistance on the basis of objective criteria related to the needs of the most deprived persons. The selection criteria for the food, and where appropriate for ~~goods~~**basic material assistance**, shall also take into consideration climate-related and environmental aspects, in order to ensure a fair and just green transition, ~~in particular with a view to reduction of food waste and single-use plastics.~~ Where appropriate, the choice of the type of food to be distributed shall be made having considered their contribution to the balanced diet of the most deprived persons. The food and/or basic material assistance may be provided directly to the most deprived persons or indirectly, for example, through vouchers or cards, in electronic or other form, provided that they can be redeemed only against food and/or basic material assistance. ~~Support for the most deprived persons shall be additional to any social benefit that may be provided by national social systems or according to national law.~~
- (3) The Commission and Member States shall ensure that aid provided in the framework of the support for addressing material deprivation respects the dignity and prevents stigmatisation of the most deprived persons. **In case of support through food and/or basic material assistance, the most deprived persons shall be excluded from controls and audits, unless a risk assessment establishes a specific risk of irregularity or fraud.**

- (4) Member States shall complement the ~~delivery~~**distribution** of food and/or basic material assistance by **undertaking** accompanying measures, ~~such as referrals to competent services or by promoting the social integration of the most deprived persons.~~

The first subparagraph, shall not apply where ~~the provision of~~**undertaking** such measures is not possible, for ~~instance~~**example**, where the support is provided in response to an emergency situation such as a natural disaster.

- (5) ~~For the purposes of this Article~~**Where appropriate**, ‘most deprived persons’ means ~~natural persons, whether individuals, families, households or groups of persons, including children in vulnerable situations and homeless people, whose need for assistance has been established according to the objective criteria which are set by the national competent authorities in consultation with relevant stakeholders while avoiding conflicts of interest, and which may include elements that allow for the targeting of the~~ **and in line with the requirements of Regulation (EU) [NRPP Regulation] and of Regulation (EU) [Performance Regulation], support for addressing material deprivation may be delivered without requiring the identification of most deprived persons in certain geographical areas at the point of delivery, where such identification is not necessary.**

Article 7

Partnership

Member States shall ensure meaningful participation of the social partners and civil society organisations in the delivery of support for quality employment, education and ~~skill~~**training** and social inclusion policies in accordance with Article 6 of Regulation XX [~~NRP Plan~~**NRPP Regulation**].

Committee set up under Article 163 TFEU

- (1) The Commission shall be assisted by the Committee set up under Article 163 TFEU ('the ESF Committee') with regard to the support provided for the ~~general objectives~~ **specific objectives** referred to in Article 3(1), ~~point (c) [specific objective — employment]~~ **points (c)(i) to (c)(v) and point (e)(i) thereof**, of Regulation ~~XX [NRPP Plan]~~ **(EU) [NRPP Regulation]**.
- (2) Each Member State shall appoint one government representative, one representative of the workers' organisations, one representative of the employers' organisations and one alternate for each member for a maximum period of seven years. In the absence of a member, the alternate shall be automatically entitled to take part in the proceedings. The **ESF Committee** shall also include one representative from each of the ~~organizations~~ **organisations** representing workers' organisations and employers' organisations at Union level. **The ESF Committee, including its working groups, may invite non-voting representatives of stakeholders to attend its meetings. This may include representatives of the European Investment Bank and the European Investment Fund as well as relevant civil society organisations.**
- (3) The **ESF Committee** may deliver opinions on ~~any issues regarding the implementation of the ESF~~ **:**
 - (a) **issues regarding the implementation of the ESF;**
 - (b) **questions related to the ESF's contribution to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, including country-specific recommendations and European Semester related priorities;**
 - (c) **issues concerning Regulation (EU) [NRPP Regulation] relevant for the ESF.**

The opinions of the ESF Committee shall be adopted by an absolute majority of the votes validly cast, and shall be communicated to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, for information.

The Commission shall inform the ESF Committee in writing of the manner in which it has taken account of its opinions.

Article 9

Entry into force and application

This Regulation shall enter into force on the ~~twentieth~~ twentieth day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

It shall apply from the date of application of Regulation (EU) [...] establishing the National and Regional Partnership Plan for the period 2028-2034.

This Regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States.

Done at Brussels,

For the European Parliament
The President

For the Council
The President
