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European Commission

2026
ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT
Simplification, Implementation & Enforcement



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1. Introduction

This report summarises the key measures on simplification, implementation and enforcement, undertaken during the period **1 August 2025 – 31 July 2026** in the policy areas of Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness, in line with my mission letter. The Commission's efforts over the past year have been driven by the established objectives of reducing administrative burden, including reporting obligations and leveraging digital tools to deliver better and faster solutions. Against this background, particular emphasis has been put on simplifying implementation, supporting stakeholders and ensuring respect for social rights. These actions are also an integral part of the EU's joint interinstitutional commitment as set out in the "One Europe, One Market" Roadmap. The objective is to achieve a more integrated single market by the end of 2027 by removing barriers to competitiveness, thus helping European companies grow and access the skills they need, strengthening the effectiveness of public administrations and delivering tangible benefits to citizens.

2. Executive Summary

This report summarises the main achievements of my services – DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) and DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) – as regards simplification, implementation and enforcement. It also takes stock of the progress made in delivering the actions announced in last year's annual report.

During the reporting period, the Commission supported the successful completion of the negotiations on the revision of the social security coordination legislation. These improvements, including in relation to prior notification for the posting of workers, will have a significant impact on the simplification and modernisation of procedures across the EU. This objective will be pursued further through the planned adoption in 2026 of the upcoming Fair Labour Mobility Package, including the Skills Portability Initiative, thereby supporting competitiveness and helping to remove barriers to mobility in the Single Market. The upcoming Quality Jobs Act is also expected to contribute towards simplification. Stress-testing of the existing EU acquis has continued, in particular in the areas of occupational safety and health and workers' information and consultation. Further ideas for simplification and for enhancing the effectiveness of social and education policies have been collected through three implementation dialogues and other stakeholder meetings. Extensive support has also been provided to Member States and other relevant stakeholders for the transposition and effective implementation of existing rules, in particular through EU funding programmes, while EU agencies have developed a wide range of technical tools to support implementation, dissemination of good practices and data sharing. Moreover, particular emphasis was placed on enforcement, notably in areas with a significant impact on the functioning of the Single Market, namely labour mobility and the free movement of professionals.

The Commission continued to ensure the effective and strategic implementation of Erasmus+, as a key instrument for education, skills development and learning mobility. Simplification measures in the 2021-2027 programme, including simplified funding models, accreditation-based access to funding and lighter reporting requirements have helped reduce the administrative burden for national agencies and improve access for applicants and beneficiaries. Implementation support was reinforced through concrete follow-up to implementation dialogues, including the establishment of the European High-Level Skills Board. During the implementation dialogue on supporting the teaching profession, further actions to reduce administrative burden and improve the accessibility of funding were discussed and will be considered in the upcoming Education Package. At the operational level, improved IT, reporting and data tools, together with continued guidance to national agencies, supported more coherent and efficient programme delivery. To safeguard equitable access to education, the Commission initiated four pre-infringement dialogues in response to restrictive measures.

3. Delivering Results: Key Measures

A. Simplification and costs savings

Simplification efforts are a top priority for me throughout my mandate. I aim to achieve this while safeguarding the values and objectives of the European social model, including through the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), Erasmus+ and other relevant funding programmes supporting employment, social inclusion, education and skills development.

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Successful completion of negotiations on legislative files

In the field of labour mobility and social security coordination, the Commission supported the co-legislators in successfully reaching, in April 2026, a provisional agreement on **the revision of the social security coordination rules set out in Regulation (EC) 883/2004 and Regulation (EC) 987/2009**. The new rules, which will be formally adopted in the autumn of 2026, include the clarification of rules on prior notification for the posting of workers. This will reduce administrative burdens and legal uncertainty for both companies and national administrations.

In March 2026, the Parliament and Council reached a provisional agreement on the regulation that broadens the scope of the **European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers (EGF)**, extending support through anticipatory measures to workers facing unemployment and facilitating access to EU funding for workers and enterprises. The legal act entered into force in May 2026.

In June 2026, a provisional agreement was reached in trilogues on the establishment of a **public interface connected to the Internal Market Information System for the declaration of posting of workers (e-Declaration).** Once established, the public interface will simplify the procedure for declaring the posting of workers to the participating Member States, thus reducing administrative burden and compliance costs for businesses while supporting the protection of workers' rights and the enforcement activities by Member States.

The **legal framework for worker involvement at transnational level** has been updated and improved by the 2025 revision of the European Works Councils Directive adopted in November 2025. While previously three different legal regimes applied to the Union-scale undertaking with regard to transnational information and consultation, the revision has improved legal certainty, by clarifying the concept of transnational matters, and by laying down more precise conditions on the transmission of information in confidence and on the non-transmission of information.

Screening and stress-testing of all my policy areas

Priority areas for stress-testing have been identified based on their relevance for competitiveness, as well as on existing implementation or enforcement issues. The priority areas are labour mobility, skills and qualifications, occupational safety and health, informing and consulting workers, and the green transition. The screening and stress-testing of these areas are expected to be completed by the end of 2026. The following section outlines how the results have been used. Stakeholders have highlighted some of these areas as a stress-testing priority, which have been emphasised in the Draghi and Letta reports (labour mobility, skills and qualification, occupational safety and health), by expert groups (e.g. for skills) and informed by evaluation findings and monitoring (e.g. evaluations of ELA, Europass and EQF).

Stress-testing in the areas of **labour mobility** and **skills and qualifications** looked in particular at digitalisation potential, how to facilitate implementation and enforcement, and to what extent EU rules deliver on their intended objectives. The screening results have informed the preparatory work on the proposals, including supporting impact assessments, that are part of the forthcoming **Fair Labour Mobility Package.**

In the area of **occupational safety and health (OSH),** stress-testing is looking for simplification possibilities and potential inconsistencies as well as insufficient clarity within the OSH acquis and with other EU legislation and policies. The results of the comprehensive ex-post review of the practical implementation of the EU OSH Framework Directive and 23 related EU OSH Directives in the period 2018-2022 build an essential element of the stress-testing. It also looks for possibilities to facilitate the implementation and application of the acquis, including good practices at EU and Member State level, and at the effects on businesses, including microenterprises and SMEs. The EU OSH acquis is also being screened to identify potential needs of non-legislative measures that can facilitate and improve the implementation of the EU OSH legislation.

Stress-testing in the area of **informing and consulting workers and employee involvement** looks at whether the existing acquis remains fit for purpose, verifying coherence and how to facilitate the implementation of Directives. The Commission has screened the EU Directives on workers' involvement (Directive 2002/14/EC on information and consultation, Directive 98/59/EC on collective redundancies and Article 7 of Directive 2001/23/EC on transfers of undertakings) by analysing national implementation and relevant case-law, as well by consulting Member States at the meeting of directors-general for industrial relations from Member States in November 2025. The findings were discussed at the Annual Labour Law Conference in Brussels in March 2026, in the presence of

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Member States' representatives, EU and national social partners, practitioners and businesses' representatives and academics. The general conclusion was that the Directives remain fit for purpose and provide the flexibility needed to accommodate the diverse national systems of industrial relations across the EU, and evolving economic, technological and social contexts. The Directives have been well-embedded into national legal systems. The manner in which these rules operate on the ground varies across Member States due to the differing social dialogue traditions. This does not stem from deficiencies of the EU instruments or their transposition, but from the interaction of the Directives with the diverse institutional and industrial relations across Member States. Stakeholders discussed how to make information and consultation more effective in practice and agreed on the need to build trust, strengthen cooperation, and further support capacity building

Stress testing in the area of **fair transition** concerns simplifying and supporting the monitoring of the 2022 Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality. In the scope of the biennial progress review of the Recommendation's implementation, the Commission proposed a new format for Member States' self-assessment with the aim of reducing and simplifying their reporting. In parallel, a new pilot tool using AI was developed to retrieve relevant information online regarding the state of the Recommendation's implementation. This pilot tool is under further development and planned to be used in future monitoring cycles.

Screening of empowerments for delegated and implementing acts for 2025-2026

Following an internal screening of the acquis under my remit, the lists of acts considered to be prioritised for 2025-2026 have been notified to the European Parliament and Council in January 2026, alongside existing empowerments for delegated and implementing acts under which no adoption of such acts is envisaged in 2026 (and they are thus considered as deprioritised). The planned adoption of prioritised acts in 2026 is on track.

Improving delivery and reducing administrative burden for applicants, beneficiaries and national agencies of Erasmus+

As regards **Erasmus+**, the **interim evaluation of the 2021-2027 programme**, presented in July 2025, confirmed that the simplification measures introduced in the current programme have been positively assessed by stakeholders. These measures have helped streamline funding rules, reduce the administrative burden associated with participation and management, and make the programme more accessible to applicants, beneficiaries and National Agencies. Stakeholders particularly welcomed the use of **simplified forms of grants**, notably lump sum contributions for cooperation partnerships, and the introduction of smaller and simpler grant formats, such as small-scale partnerships. Compared with previous arrangements, lump sums have simplified the preparation and management of applications, reduced the need for budget-related amendments during project implementation and shifted reporting towards the completion of activities and work packages rather than actual costs. Small-scale partnerships provide a simpler funding option alongside traditional cooperation partnerships, requiring fewer partners per project and having a shorter duration, thereby making the programme more accessible to smaller organisations and newcomers.

The **extension of the Erasmus+ accreditation scheme** beyond higher education to all education sectors, including youth, has also supported the simplification objective. Accredited organisations can access funding more predictably across the programme period, based on regular performance monitoring rather than repeated project-level quality assessments. This helps beneficiaries plan future mobility projects more effectively and allows National Agencies to focus on project content, monitoring and delivery.

Several further simplification measures were introduced during the reporting period to support the **management of Erasmus+ by National Agencies**. The annual reporting exercise to the Commission was significantly streamlined by removing reporting elements that were not strictly necessary or not effectively used for central programme oversight. In addition, a simpler budget structure for indirect management and the use of technical approvals instead of formal amendments to the contribution agreements with national agencies, already introduced in 2026 for certain budget items, are expected to reduce the number of amendments by an estimated 40-50% compared with the 2021-2027 cycle.

Additional simplifications to **budget transfers for Erasmus+** activities supporting the programme's international dimension and cooperation with partner countries took effect in January 2026. These changes further streamlined financial procedures through faster and simpler approval processes. **Digital tools were also developed** to reduce manual work and support more consistent programme management. (See Annex)

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B. Implementation

Driven by the key Commission priorities that frame my mandate: supporting people, strengthening our societies and upholding our social model, the implementation support provided to Member States and stakeholders to advance simplification has aimed to promote social fairness and high-quality standards in a rapidly evolving economy and world of work, while protecting the interests of both workers and employers and ensuring equal opportunities for all.

Implementation dialogues with key stakeholders

Following the requests made by stakeholders during my first-ever implementation dialogue on **the European Education Area** (EEA) held on 3 June 2025, we took concrete action. Participants called for stronger governance and better synergies between education, training and skills policies, which are too often addressed separately from priorities such as competitiveness and employment. In response, the European High-Level Skills Board was set up in 2026 and held its first meeting on 19 May. The Board brings together businesses, education and training providers, and social partners and advises the Commission on how to strengthen human capital within the European Semester and on possible priority actions to address current and emerging skills challenges. During the EEA dialogue, participants also called for education and skills to be more firmly embedded into the European Semester. To address this, a horizontal recommendation on human capital in the EU was adopted on 9 March 2026, helping to prioritise reforms and investment in education and skills while guiding Member States in preparing future policies.

An implementation dialogue on **fair labour mobility** was held on 16 September 2025 and referred to in my last year's report, brought together representatives of Member States, social partners, social security institutions, healthcare providers, public employment services and businesses. Participants called for a comprehensive and practical set of measures, building on existing tools, to foster equitable mobility while safeguarding workers' rights and supporting businesses. The findings of the dialogue have provided important input to the preparation of the upcoming Fair Labour Mobility Package, which will deliver on the priorities set out in my mission letter by strengthening the European Labour Authority and advancing the modernisation, simplification and digitalisation of social security coordination including through a proposal establishing a European Social Security Pass.

On 24 February I hosted an implementation dialogue in Brussels on **measures to combat poverty**, bringing together representatives from 19 stakeholders, including Member States, regional and local authorities, social partners, and civil society organisations. The dialogue focused primarily on the implementation of the two Council recommendations, on adequate minimum income and on the European Child Guarantee. It highlighted the need for activation support, improving stakeholder coordination, high-impact and evidence-based policies. This dialogue provided valuable input for the finalisation of the Commission's EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, as part of the Social Package adopted on 6 May 2026 and for the preparation of the upcoming initiatives announced therein, which will aim to respond to the challenges identified by stakeholders during the dialogue. Some of these challenges included fragmentation within and across different levels of government and policy areas, the non-take-up of social benefits and other social protection measures, insufficient early identification measures, and remaining gaps in access to early childhood education and care, to affordable housing, and to quality services, particularly in rural areas.

On 11 June I held my second implementation dialogue of 2026 on **supporting the teaching profession.** Teachers are instrumental in shaping student learning outcomes and equipping learners with the skills, competences and knowledge needed in a modern society and tomorrow's labour market. Together with 25 stakeholders, including practising teachers, representatives of Member States, regional and local authorities, social partners and civil society organisations, we assessed how EU support works in practice and how its impact could be further increased across education and training. Discussions covered teacher shortages, career progression and school leadership, and repeatedly highlighted the Erasmus+ programme as an effective EU tool. Stakeholders called for more accessible funding and mobility to be made more accessible and for reduced administrative burden on individual teachers and schools. The outcomes of the Dialogue will contribute to the upcoming Education Package[1], which will address some of the most pressing challenges faced by European schools and classrooms.

[1] The Education Package will aim to equip future generations with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in a modern, competitive society.

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Support to Member States and stakeholders for the transposition and implementation of existing rules

While a number of **expert groups** no longer considered relevant were discontinued, others were established in relation to new policy initiatives. Following the adoption of Directive (EU) 2025/2450 amending Directive 2009/38/EC as regards the establishment and operation of European Works Councils and the effective enforcement of transnational information and consultation rights, the Commission set up an informal expert group to establish cooperation between the Commission, the Member States and EU social partners to facilitate timely transposition and correct implementation of the Directive. The group has served as a forum for exchanging experience and good practices. Its report will be published to support the national authorities in their implementation work. Similarly, following the establishment of an informal expert group on the transposition of Directive (EU) 2024/2831 on improving working conditions in platform work, several meetings were held concerning the implementation of the Directive. A final report was adopted and is available online.

To support the implementation of Directive 2009/148/EC on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos at work, the Commission published, in December 2025, a Commission Communication and comprehensive guidelines. Developed in close cooperation with Member States and key stakeholders, including the Working Party on Chemicals, the guidelines provide practical support for the application of the recently revised Directive, notably the significantly reduced occupational exposure limits.

Tools and programmes supporting implementation, including the dissemination of good practices, peer support and coordination mechanisms

In the past year, the Commission's support to Member States in the area of professional qualifications included, in particular, technical upgrades to the Internal Market Information System (IMI), practical guidelines, and targeted online training for competent national authorities. These measures focused on improving the functioning of the alert mechanism and harmonising the application of prior qualification checks for temporary service provision under Article 7(4) of the Directive.

As indicated in the 2026 Annual Single Market and Competitiveness Report, the Commission, together with the European Labour Authority (ELA), is working to develop key performance indicators on posting of workers for inclusion in next year's edition of the report.

Drawing on exchanges with Erasmus+ national agencies, the Commission provided initial guidance in January 2026 on addressing the growing use of AI in funding applications and on the responsible use of AI-supported tools to streamline programme implementation, including the application-assessment process, while preserving the role of national agencies and ensuring compliance with applicable legal, data protection and quality safeguards.

Areas requiring further improvement and simplification.

Through its continuous dialogue with a broad range of stakeholders, the Commission regularly receives feedback and suggestions on possible areas for further improvement and simplification. For example, the recent Implementation report 2020-2024 (February 2026) on the Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications outlines, among other topics, the various ways in which the Commission actively supports the implementation of the Directive in the Member States, through the use of the Internal Market Information System and structured cooperation via the Group of Coordinators on Professional Qualifications. The report highlights that the Directive provides a robust and effective legal framework for the recognition of professional qualifications to access regulated professions across the EU, thereby facilitating labour mobility. However, it also notes that the overall user journey for mobile professionals seeking recognition in another Member State can be further improved by reducing administrative burden and accelerating recognition procedures. Moving forward, these key findings and areas for improvement will directly feed into the upcoming Skills Portability Initiative to further streamline and simplify cross-border professional recognition, including by leveraging digital tools.

As regards the European Social Fund (ESF), the ex-post evaluation of the ESF 2014-2020, published this February, noted that, although significant progress has been made in terms of simplifying processes, some stakeholders i.e. national and/or regional Managing Authorities as well as beneficiary organisations continued to identify administrative challenges, such as the complexity of project management processes. The Commission's proposals for the next MFF aim to further simplify access to funding for beneficiaries and authorities (see also below).

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Significant financial support and technical assistance for implementing the EU policies and legislation provided by EU spending programmes

The main actions during the reporting period are summarised as follows:

- *Erasmus+ support to national agencies:* Capacity-building and technical support particularly concerned the management of mobility projects and cooperation partnerships. This included in-person meetings with national agencies, targeted online information sessions on topics of mutual interest and webinars on technical issues, including improved guidance to support programme implementation. National agencies gave positive feedback on the Erasmus+ accreditation scheme, which supports implementation by giving accredited organisations more predictable access to funding throughout the programme period. Organisations noted that it allows them to focus more on project content, monitoring and delivery, instead of repetitive administrative tasks. Capacity-building also focused on developing a more stable and better performing IT environment and a more robust and comprehensive data analytics system, in close consultation with national agencies.
- *InvestEU Advisory Hub*: Technical support to Member States and other stakeholders includes activities to prepare social investments under the InvestEU Programme, as well as advisory services provided through Fi-compass to assist Member States under ESF+ and other shared management programmes in setting up financial instruments.
- *European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) support to the use of simplified cost options (SCO) and financing not linked to costs (FNLC):* In the current programming period, ESF+ has the highest uptake of SCOs and FNLC among cohesion policy funds. Almost 50% of the ESF+ budget is expected to be implemented through SCOs and FNLC. During the reporting period, several national workshops on the design and use of SCOs and FNLC were organised for programme authorities: in Malta (22 October 2025), in Czechia (26 November 2025), in Ireland (4 March 2026), in Italy (11 March 2026) and Bulgaria (22 April 2026). The ESF Transnational Network for Simplification convened twice: in Malta (23-24 October 2025), and Bulgaria (23-24 April 2026).
- *Social Climate Fund*: During the reporting period, the Commission services provided support to Member States in preparing their Social Climate Plans through various instruments and platforms. Support was provided via a Commission notice on guidance on the implementation of the Fund (October 2025) and a methodological note setting out common indicators, monitoring and reporting requirements (May 2026). Throughout this period, the Commission continued to facilitate exchanges with Member States via the Social Climate Fund sub-group of the Climate Change Expert Group and promoted a broader exchange with key stakeholders at the first Social Climate Fund conference (March 2026).
- *Action grant agreements supporting the implementation of Union rules on information, consultation and participation of employees' representatives in companies*: The supported actions raise awareness and facilitate the implementation of the relevant directives on collective rights (Directive 2002/14/EC on information and consultation, Directive 98/59/EC on collective redundancies, Directive 2001/23/EC on transfers of undertakings, and Directive 2009/38/EC on European Works Councils, as well as Directives 2001/86/EC and 2003/72/EC on employee involvement in the European Company and Cooperative Society). These actions support representatives of workers and employers from national (EU Member States and/or candidate countries) and European levels.
- *Financial grants supporting social dialogue:* Around 50 social partners projects were funded under the two annual social dialogue calls. These projects contribute to supporting social dialogue and collective bargaining to address and implement EU policy priorities as well as social dialogue outcomes such as autonomous social partner agreements.
- *Technical support through the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) programme, which provides tailor-made technical expertise and funding to design and implement economic and social reforms*: TSI has supported around 70 projects in the areas of labour market and social protection, skills, education and training, health, and long-term care. Further information on the projects supported is available on the *European Funding & Tenders Portal*.

EU agencies support the consistent implementation of EU law by providing technical expertise and coordinating cooperation between national authorities

EU agencies support in the implementation of EU policies by collecting and analysing data, issuing guidance, conducting operational activities, and assisting the Commission and Member States in specialised policy areas ranging from skills and vocational training, including through cooperation with third countries, to occupational safety and health, living and working conditions, and intra-EU labour mobility.

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In the area of occupational safety and health (OSH), EU-OSHA has developed guides and tools to support the practical implementation of OSH measures (see Annex). Furthermore, the ongoing 2026-2028 EU-OSHA Healthy Workplaces Campaign which focuses on mental health at work will raise awareness and disseminate good practices on this key topic of occupational safety and health, contributing to the effective application of OSH measures.

The Commission agencies in the employment area (EUROFOUND, CEDEFOP, EU-OSHA, ETF and ELA) contribute to the EU Inter-Agency Data Sharing Platform, which improves the discoverability and comparability of their data for policymakers and analysts by bringing it together in a single and secure place. It will enhance cooperation and coordination between the agencies and with the Commission, while also preventing overlaps and duplication across datasets. The platform was launched in November 2025 and is being developed by Eurofound as a pilot project over 28 months, focusing on the twin transitions, and on skills and labour shortages.

C. Enforcement

Supporting effective monitoring and enforcement, remains a key component of the Commission's approach to ensuring that the EU social acquis delivers tangible benefits for citizens, workers and businesses. In line with the objectives set out in the Communication 'A Simpler, Clearer and Better Enforced EU Rulebook', my services place particular emphasis on helping Member States apply EU labour and social legislation correctly and consistently, with a specific focus on removing barriers to the Single Market.

To this end, my services work closely with national authorities, social partners and other stakeholders to identify implementation challenges, promote legal certainty and facilitate compliance with EU rules. A wide range of preventive and cooperative tools are used, including legal expert networks, informal transposition groups, bilateral and package meetings, guidance documents and technical exchanges. The objective is to resolve issues at an early stage and avoid breaches of EU law wherever possible. However, where dialogue does not lead to compliance, infringement procedures remain an essential instrument to ensure the effective enforcement of the social acquis. By July 2026, a total of 112 infringements procedures are currently active under the lead of my services. The Europa webpage on infringement cases, pre-infringement dialogues and transposition of directives provides up-to-date statistical information on the Commission's enforcement activities and Member States' compliance with EU law, including trends per policy area, topic and Member State.

My services also actively promote exchanges of good practices and discussions on implementation challenges. On 4 March 2026, the Commission organised its third edition of the Legal Seminar on the Enforcement and Implementation of the EU Social Acquis, which highlighted the importance of combining robust enforcement with better legislation. These exchanges provide valuable insights into practical challenges and help shape future implementation and enforcement efforts.

Labour Law

The Commission continued to take targeted enforcement action to uphold EU rules on working conditions. In particular, letters of formal notice were sent to eight Member States for non-compliance with Directive (EU) 2019/1152 on transparent and predictable working conditions. Spain received two reasoned opinions on fixed-term work. Enforcement efforts also continued in relation to the working conditions of honorary judges in Italy: the Commission referred Italy to the Court of Justice concerning breaches of EU rules on fixed-term work, on part-time work, and on working time, and sent a letter of formal notice followed by a reasoned opinion in a separate infringement procedure. Furthermore, the Commission referred Greece to the Court of Justice in relation to the working conditions of fixed-term teachers. The Commission also opened new infringement procedures concerning the working conditions of honorary tax judges in Italy and fixed-term public employees in Portugal. More than forty petitions before the European Parliament relate to the issues under investigation in these infringement procedures. Moreover, the Court of Justice further confirmed, in case C-155/25, the Commission's assessment that Italy had failed to take effective measures to prevent the abusive use of successive fixed-term contracts for administrative, technical and auxiliary staff in State schools.

Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

The Commission decided to close two pre-infringement dialogues against Austria and Czechia after national transposing legislation was amended to align with the amending Biological Agents Directive (EU) 2019/1833. The Commission sent letters of formal notice to ten Member States for the non-communication of measures transposing the amending Asbestos at Work Directive (EU) 2023/2668. Following that, and as six Member States (Cyprus, Greece,

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Spain, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovakia) still did not notify measures transposing the Directive, the Commission sent them reasoned opinions, also reminding these Member States that the Court may impose financial sanctions. Moreover, the Commission sent letters of formal notice to 13 Member States for the non-communication of measures transposing the amending Directive (EU) 2024/869 on limit values for lead and its inorganic compounds and for diisocyanates.

Professional Qualifications

The Commission took targeted action to safeguard the free movement of professionals and ensure the consistent application of EU rules across the Single Market. Significant progress was made in relation to Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications, with four infringement cases concerning incorrect transposition or application successfully closed (France, Germany, Portugal, and Slovakia). At the same time, the Commission continued to address non-compliance issues, including by sending reasoned opinions to Denmark, Greece and Portugal for failure to notify transposition measures related to the recognition of Romanian-trained nurses, while closing other eleven cases. The Commission also launched infringement procedures against eight Member States for failure to transpose updated minimum training requirements for healthcare professionals. Further action was pursued against Belgium (additional reasoned opinion) and Spain (referral to the Court of Justice) in relation to measures incompatible with Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications (2005/36/EC).

Labour Mobility

The Commission continued to give high importance to the enforcement of labour mobility rules, which are essential for the proper functioning of the Single Market, the protection of workers and the freedom to provide services across the Union. In particular, it monitored the implementation of Directive 2014/67/EU on the enforcement of the Posting of Workers Directive and pursued enforcement action where necessary. In October 2025, the Commission sent an additional letter of formal notice to Austria concerning national measures that are not in conformity with the requirements of Directive 2014/67/EU.

Social Security Coordination

The Commission continued to enforce EU rules on the coordination of social security systems. In particular, it worked with Greece to address long-standing delays in the calculation and payment of retirement pensions. At the same time, two cases were successfully resolved through dialogue and legislative amendments, leading to the closure of infringement proceedings against France concerning the capping of seconded civil servants' pensions and against Italy regarding a residence condition linked to family benefits. Family benefits also remained at the centre of enforcement efforts: Greece was referred to the Court of Justice for non-compliance with EU coordination rules, while in C-642/24 the Court upheld the Commission's position regarding a family benefit indexing mechanism applied in Bavaria, Germany.

Labour market and wages

An important development was the Court's judgment in Case C-19/23 (Denmark v Parliament and Council), which provided further legal clarity regarding the scope of EU action in the area of minimum wage protection. The Court largely upheld the validity of Directive (EU) 2022/2041 on adequate minimum wages, confirming that the EU may establish a framework for minimum wage protection and promote collective bargaining, provided it does not directly determine pay levels. Following the judgment, the Commission continued to monitor transposition and launched infringement procedures against Cyprus and Luxembourg for failure to notify transposition measures.

Access to education

The Commission also remained vigilant in **safeguarding access to education**. During the reporting period, it opened three pre-infringement dialogues concerning measures considered to unduly restrict access to university studies: quotas restricting access to psychotherapy studies, priority quotas for admission to public higher education institutions and gender quotas limiting access to certain higher education institutions. In addition, following a petition to the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions, the Commission launched a pre-infringement dialogue on rules restricting eligibility for study grants to pursue online studies in other Member States.

4. Way forward

By the end of 2026, the Commission is expected to finalise the screening of the EU acquis in occupational safety and health (OSH) and publish its results, providing further insight into opportunities to simplify the EU acquis in this area and to improve its implementation and enforcement. Moreover, following the second phase consultation of the EU social partners on the upcoming Quality Jobs Act, the Commission will consider possibilities for simplifying the legislative framework in certain areas, including through the potential merger of the Workplace Directive and the Display Screen Directive, in line with the 'simplicity by design' principle. The Commission will also seek to improve the interface between the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) Regulation and OSH legislation (in particular the Chemical Agents Directive and the Carcinogens, Mutagens and Reprotoxic substances Directive), which are the primary pieces of legislation regulating chemicals in the EU. Finally, the Commission will also assess options to improve the enforcement of existing rules in this area.

Particular attention will continue to be devoted to enforcement, with a specific focus on areas that have a direct impact on the functioning of the Single Market, such as the posting of workers, as listed in the Communication 'A simpler, clearer and better enforced EU rulebook'. The Commission will continue to support Member States in implementing the EU social acquis, with particular attention to recently adopted directives, including those on occupational safety and health and on improving working conditions in platform work. Engagement with Member States and stakeholders will continue throughout the year through dedicated implementation activities, notably a legal seminar on the implementation and enforcement of the EU social acquis.

Based on the recent advancements in the field of social security coordination and labour mobility, the Commission will further examine the situation of highly mobile workers and teleworkers, with a focus on reducing administrative burdens and fostering fair labour mobility. Possible measures in this area could, for instance, have a positive impact for cross-border telework in startups, allowing them to apply the social security legislation of the employer as announced in the Commission Communication "Towards a 28th regime for EU companies".

As regards Erasmus+, the Annual Work Programme will be further streamlined from 2027 onwards. The new format will simplify its overall structure and more clearly demonstrate how Erasmus+ supports current Commission priorities, including the implementation of the Action Plan on Basic Skills and the STEM Education Strategic Plan under the Union of Skills Initiative. Actions will be merged and clustered by topic, while the number of topics for policy experimentation will be reduced from eleven to three. This will help focus the programme budget on more targeted activities in line with policy priorities, while preparing the transition to the future programme architecture currently being negotiated. Applicants will benefit from fewer, clearer and less fragmented opportunities.

Further efforts will also aim to ensure better proportionality between grant amounts and administrative requirements. This includes further simplifying grant management and improving access for very small projects under small-scale partnerships by lowering entry-level grant amounts and using the 'very low value grant' category under the recast Financial Regulation. The Commission will also explore the possibility of awarding grants with lighter administrative requirements, building on the approach and lessons learnt during the European Year of Youth 2022. Funding rules for the various actions will also be aligned across sectors to provide participating organisations with a simpler and more accessible project implementation framework.

My services will also continue to engage with national agencies to identify further operational tasks that could benefit from data analytics or AI-supported solutions. This includes further work on automated data retrieval and tools to support routine tasks such as data consolidation and document verification. A proof of concept is underway for an AI-based dashboard to help detect risks of double funding and plagiarism, while the full automation of national agency reporting is expected to enter its final stages in Q4 2026.

Annex: examples of simplification and implementation results

Cross-border recognition of professional qualifications: The Commission is actively supporting Member States, in fulfilling their obligation—under Directive 2005/36/EC—to alert other Member States about professionals unfit to practise, using the Internal Market Information System's dedicated module. The Commission continues working with the Member States to improve users' awareness of their legal obligations and of the functionalities offered by the IMI system. In December 2025 and March 2026, the Commission organised online training sessions for competent authorities (recordings are available on the IMI Learning Portal) and published Q&A guidelines.

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Fair Twin Transitions and AI: In light of the 2025 progress review of the 2022 Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality, the AI for Fair Transition Policies project developed an AI-based pilot tool to support the monitoring of the Recommendation's implementation. It includes indicators on implementation (or lack thereof) in 10 Member States and on related social, economic, and environmental impacts, collected in an automated manner and thereby reducing the reporting burden for the Member States covered. Following positive results, the pilot is expected to be scaled up to all 27 Member States to support the next progress review planned for 2027.

Occupational Safety and Health: The EU-OSHA OiRA project actively supports Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in meeting their OSH regulatory obligations by providing free, user-friendly online risk assessment tools developed through a collaborative process involving national and EU social partners. They are tailored to the unique challenges of different sectors and the particularities of national contexts, thereby simplifying the practical application of EU OSH requirements. As of May 2026, the platform has over 370,000 registered users and 637,000 risk assessments, demonstrating its widespread adoption and practical application within MSEs. As of May 2026, there are 375 OiRA tools accessible on the EU-OSHA website.

Simplifying Erasmus+ annual work programmes: Reducing the amount of information required and introducing lighter procedures cut information-gathering requirements by 30% in 2026, compared to 2024. Further streamlining will be introduced for the 2027 workplans. This will make planning easier for National Agencies and will help focus reporting on information that is necessary for programme management and oversight.

Erasmus+ multiple organisations dashboard: Supports Erasmus+ National Agencies in project selection, quality assurance and risk analysis by helping to identify links between organisations, representatives and contact persons more efficiently, replacing manual cross-checks across several files and systems. Following a webinar with National Agencies in September 2025 and feedback on the prototype, an updated version was published in December 2025. The tool reduces the manual workload for National Agencies and supports more consistent programme management, while respecting applicable data protection requirements and legal safeguards.

Clearer Erasmus+ communication: Plain language and practical examples were used in the reporting period to explain how the programme works and what it can offer. These included communication on the video Learning, working, or training – where will Erasmus+ take you?, promotion of the 2026 call for proposals, the Union of Skills social media campaign showcasing Erasmus+ projects supporting skills development, communication on the Erasmus+ Annual Report 2024, and participation in stakeholder events such as the European Climate Pact community and the European Youth Week.

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