



European
Commission



A strong Social Europe that protects

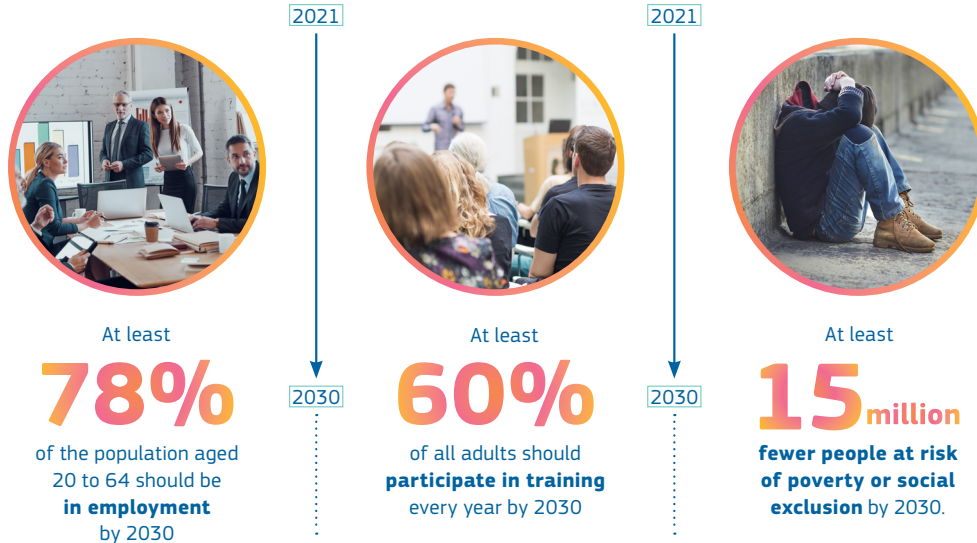
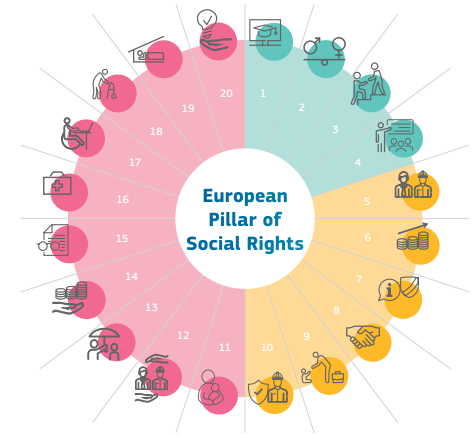
#SocialRights

Strengthening Social Europe

In 2019, the European Union set a new, ambitious course towards a **fair** and **inclusive** Europe that **protects** its citizens and creates **opportunities**.

At the 2021 **Porto Social Summit**, EU leaders, institutions and social partners agreed to **put social at the heart of our policies**.

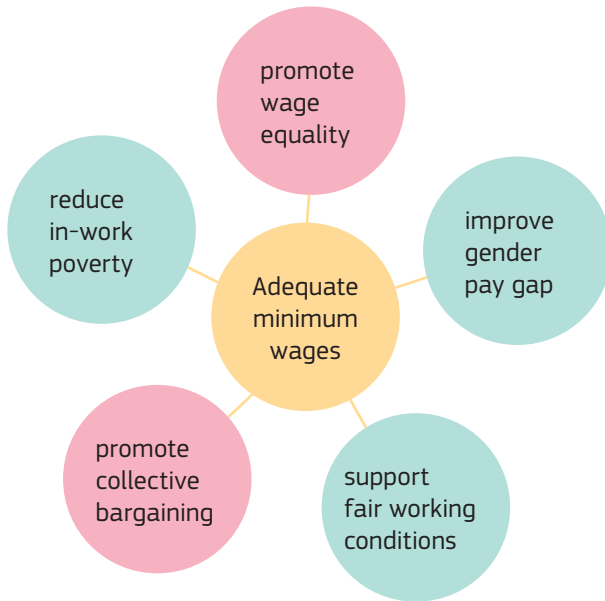
We set **three EU-wide social targets** to meet by 2030 on employment, training and poverty reduction... and set to work turning the principles of the Pillar of Social Rights into **actions that benefit citizens**.



Adequate minimum wages

The EU **Directive on adequate minimum wages**, in force since 2022, establishes a common framework to **combat in-work poverty and promote collective bargaining**.

Many Member States are already taking cues from the Directive, implementing measures to address this pressing issue.



Quality jobs and traineeships for young people

Young people deserve every possible means and opportunity to get a good start in life and find a quality job.

The EU is supporting Member States with **funding and policy guidance** to help young people get the **training** they need to get a good job and thrive in life.

Nobody should feel excluded from society. By reaching out to the most marginalised, we aim to build an inclusive Europe.

Moreover, the Commission has proposed a package of initiatives to **improve working conditions for trainees**, as well as the quality of and access to traineeships in the EU.



Youth Employment Support package

68%

68% of young trainees found a job after completing a traineeship.

50 mln

Since 2013, around 50 million young people in **Youth Guarantee** programmes have secured jobs, apprenticeships/traineeships, or continued education and training.

2.5 mln

Since 2013, the **European Alliance for Apprenticeships** has provided 2.5 million apprenticeship placements.

900

Over 900 organisations are involved in EU-funded Centres of Vocational Excellence, promoting **vocational skills** in sectors like renewable energy and AI.

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Boosting the Social Economy

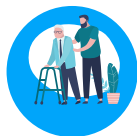
The **social economy** prioritises people, social and environmental causes over profit.

Social economy entities tackle key challenges in our societies, from social and care services to housing, recreation, and affordable energy.

There are **2.8 million social economy entities in Europe, which employ 14 million people**



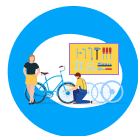
cooperatives



mutual benefit societies



associations
(including charities)



foundations



social enterprises

The EU launched an **Action Plan** and **guidelines to Member States** to help the social economy grow and thrive, gain access to funding, and raise awareness of its potential.

A new EU [Social Economy Gateway](#) is a clear entry point for anyone seeking information on relevant EU funding, policies and initiatives.



Closing the gender gap

In the EU, **women earn 13% less than men**

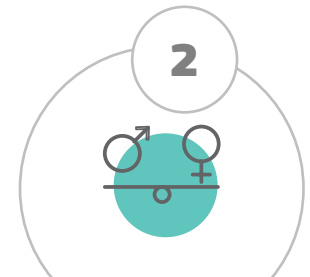
for the same job.

EU legislation is helping to close the pay gap by [increasing pay transparency](#).

- 1** Employers will have to provide information about the initial pay level or its range in the job vacancy notice or before the job interview
- 2** Employees will have the right to request information from their employer on their individual pay level and on the average pay levels
- 3** Employers with at least 100 employees will have to publish information on the pay gap between female and male workers

New EU rules will also [improve gender balance](#) in corporate decision-making positions, requiring that women hold at least 40% of non-executive director posts, or 33% of all director posts in big publicly listed companies.

By funding early child care projects, the EU is also helping women return to the labour market.



Strengthening social dialogue

Social dialogue is a cornerstone of Europe's social market economy

The Commission presented an [initiative](#) to **boost the involvement of social partners in EU policymaking**, and calling on **Member States to increase their capacity**.

Meaningful information and consultation of employees in multi-national companies' big decisions can help anticipate and manage changes, by including workers in the process.

The Commission proposed a Directive to strengthen [European Works Councils](#) - information and consultation bodies that ensure that employees are involved in decisions related to transnational issues and which affect them directly.

The Directive makes it easier to establish European Works Councils, improves their gender balance, ensures workers are consulted before decisions are taken, and promotes effective enforcement.

The EU and social partners convened a summit at **Val Duchesse** to [renew the joint commitment to European social dialogue](#).



Empowering workers with skills

More than three-quarters of EU companies say they have difficulties finding workers with the necessary skills.

[The EU is helping people get the skills](#) needed in today's and tomorrow's job market in particular those needed to drive the digital and green transition.

The Commission has launched several new initiatives to help shift attitudes towards lifelong learning.

By 2030, at least 60% of the adult population should take at least one training course per year.

In 2022, 2 million people benefited from training under the [Pact for Skills](#), where partners identify skills shortages in the EU and commit to providing training to meet this demand.

The [European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers](#) demonstrates EU solidarity by assisting dismissed workers and self-employed people who lost their jobs due to restructuring by funding advisory services, job search assistance, and skills training. In 2021 and 2022 alone, the EU allocated €51.8 million from the EGF to help over 13,000 dismissed workers and self-employed people from 9 Member States retrain and find a new job.



EU funds are investing around **€65 billion in training.**



Helping businesses find the workers they need

To address labour and skills shortages, the Commission introduced the **Effective Active Support to Employment (EASE)**, helping Member States and employment services to ease job transitions for workers, and modernising vocational training to meet labour needs.

The EU helps Member States in [transitioning towards climate neutrality](#) with guidance on how to ensure a fair transition.

It helps attract international talent and promote intra-EU mobility through the [Talent and Skills Mobility Package](#). The Commission also proposed the [EU Talent Pool](#) to help recruit non-EU jobseekers to address labour shortages.



Job markets in Europe will lose **one million** people every year between now and 2050, **due to an ageing society**.



There are 3x more labour shortages in **manufacturing and construction** compared to 10 years ago



Over 50% more labour shortages in **services** compared to 10 years ago



Over 90% of jobs require digital skills, but **only 56% of adults** in Europe possess basic digital skills.



Improving working conditions for platform workers

The platform economy is growing, but people working on digital labour platforms may not be getting the labour rights and social benefits they are entitled to, such as sickness and accident insurance, minimum wages, paid leave, and unemployment benefit.

Out of 28 million people, 5.5 million may be wrongly classified as self-employed.

A Directive on [improving the working conditions](#) of people working through platforms will soon become law.

The EU Directive aims to:

- 1 clarify the employment status of workers on digital platforms
- 2 increase transparency in the use of algorithms
- 3 ensure human monitoring of automated decisions
- 4 grant the right to contest automated decisions and rectify them where needed



More than 500 platforms in the EU

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Ensuring a safe workplace

EU laws guarantee workers a [safe working environment](#). In 2021, the Commission adopted the **EU Strategic Framework on health and safety at work**.

New rules have been adopted to reduce the exposure of workers to hazardous substances.

- **10x lower exposure limit** for **asbestos** which can cause cancer (from 0.1 fibres/cm³ to 0.01 fibres/cm³).
- **5x times lower exposure limit** for **lead** which can affect the reproductive system (0.15 milligrams per cubic meter to 0.03mg/m³)
- **First-ever occupational exposure limits** for **diisocyanates** which can cause respiratory diseases (6µg NCO/m³)



Supporting workers during the pandemic

To support workers and employers during the COVID-19 crisis, the Commission launched the EU-wide scheme [SURE](#) (Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency). It helped Member States ensure businesses stayed afloat and retained their staff, in turn helping workers keep their livelihoods.



Targeted at protecting people's jobs



Temporary financial support



Fast deployment



Complements national efforts



Solidarity between Member States

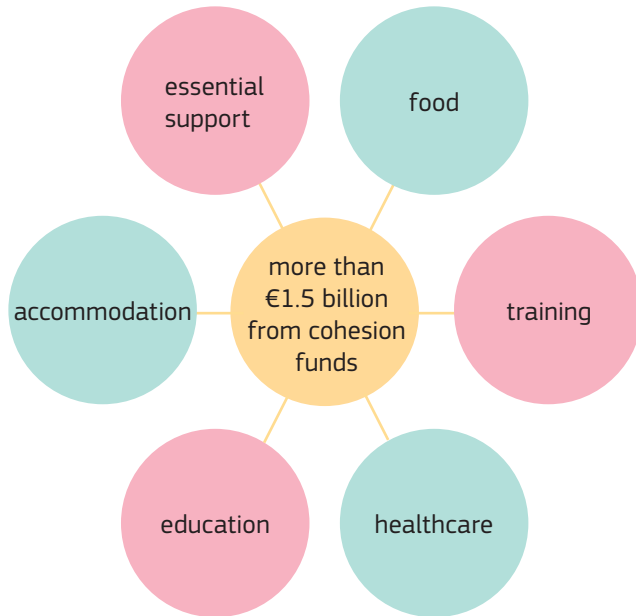


€98.4 billion of financial assistance disbursed to **19 Member States**.

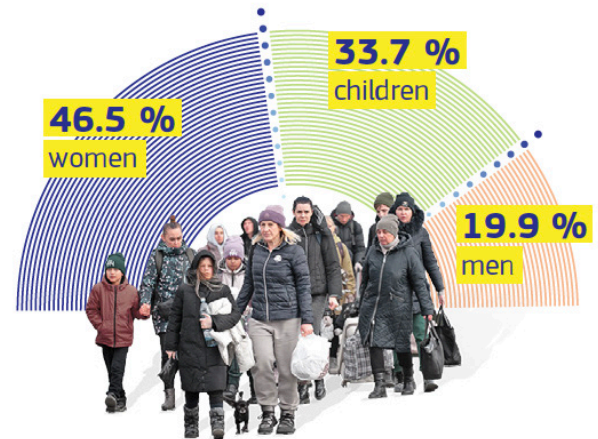
Supported some **31.5 million employees and self-employed people** and over **2.5 million businesses** in 2020.

Supporting people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

Since February 2022, the Commission has provided guidance to Member States on [helping people who fled Ukraine](#) integrate into EU life.



Temporary protection to over **4 million individuals**



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1.5 million employment contracts signed by Ukrainians in the EU

Fighting poverty and exclusion

At the **Porto Social Summit** in 2021, EU leaders committed to reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million by 2030, including 5 million children, compared to 2019 levels. Each Member State has set its own target to contribute to this EU ambition.

The EU has allocated over **€30 billion from the European Social Fund Plus** to help countries, regions and cities to overcome poverty and social exclusion. This includes more than €6 billion for supporting children in poverty.

More than 95 million people in the EU were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2022.



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Lifting up children at risk of poverty

20 million children in the EU face poverty or social exclusion.

Child poverty often leads to a vicious circle, where poor children become poor adults, which has long-lasting impacts.

The [European Child Guarantee](#) aims to break the cycle of disadvantage, ensuring that children from poorer households have access to key services and do not face social exclusion as adults.



Free and effective access for children in need to:



early
childhood
education
and care



education
and school-
based
activities



at least
one healthy
meal each
school day



healthcare

Effective access for children in need to:



healthy
nutrition



adequate
housing

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Tackling homelessness

An estimated
895,000 people sleep
rough or in a shelter every night
in Europe. A third of those in
emergency accommodation are
children.

In 2021, EU Member States and other stakeholders pledged in the **Lisbon Declaration** to work jointly towards ending homelessness by 2030.

The Commission launched the [European Platform on Combatting Homelessness](#).

The Platform facilitates the exchange of best practice among authorities from across the EU, as well as gathering data.

Many Member States now have a strategy to tackle homelessness.



**The European Social Fund Plus
finances projects to tackle
homelessness and support
affordable housing.**

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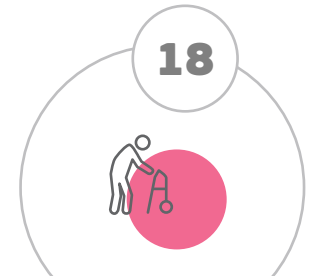
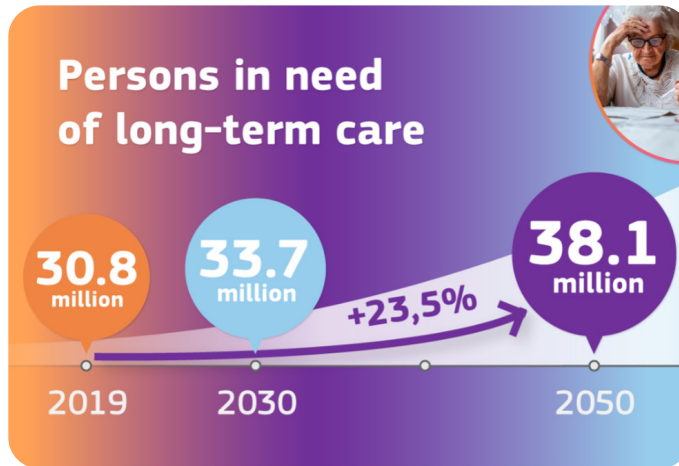
Prioritising long-term care

Europe is facing a major care crisis marked by severe staff shortages, a lack of appeal of the care sector, and an ageing workforce.

The EU has issued [new guidance](#) to make long-term care more widely available, accessible and of better quality. This includes ways to improve working conditions and **attract more people to the care sector** and complement national funding.



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Promoting equality for persons with disabilities

Around 100 million people in the EU have some form of disability. The EU's [Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#) aims to enable persons with disabilities to live independently, learn in inclusive environments, and work quality jobs.

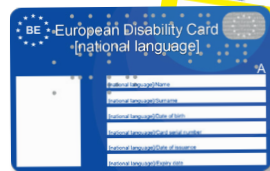
New EU rules will introduce a [European Disability Card and a European Parking Card](#) for persons with disabilities to facilitate access to special conditions, preferential treatment, and parking rights when visiting other Member States.

1 in 2 persons with disabilities feel discriminated against.



Only half of persons with disabilities are employed, compared to 3 in 4 without disabilities.

Persons with disabilities are 50% more likely **to face poverty or social exclusion.**



Only 29.4% of persons with disabilities attain a tertiary degree, compared to 43.8% of those without disabilities.

Persons with disabilities report unmet healthcare needs 4x more than those without disabilities.

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Improving minimum income schemes

Minimum income is the **safety net of last resort** for people out of work. They are cash payments that help households who need it to bridge the gap to pay the bills and live a life in dignity.

The EU has agreed on **new guidelines** to modernise **minimum income schemes**, making them more effective, lifting people out of poverty, while helping those who are able to work back into a quality job.

It can also support Member States financially in their investments and reforms related to minimum income schemes.



1 protect the most vulnerable by reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion



2 provide incentives and support to reintegrate those who can work back in the labour market



3 contribute to reaching the EU's 2030 employment and poverty reduction targets



4 preserve the sustainability of public finances

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Learn more about the EU's efforts to building a fair and inclusive Europe at ec.europa.eu/social

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