

What's next for the European Commissioner for Jobs & Social Rights



Social Platform is calling for the re-appointment of a European Commissioner for Jobs & Social Rights.

The European social model is unique and must be protected. There will be many challenges to social progress in the years ahead as Europe navigates the green and digital transitions, and with a growing emphasis on improving Europe's competitiveness we must safeguard our hard fought social rights. Already many in Europe have been left behind, with 1 in 5 at risk of poverty or social exclusion. We cannot lose focus on social progress and tackling inequalities. If Europe is to be the land of opportunities and protections, it must be supported by a Commissioner for Jobs & Social Rights.

During the 2019 – 2024 mandate, the European Pillar of Social Rights provided the framework to deliver on minimum wages, minimum income schemes, workers' rights, social economy, the Child Guarantee, and the European Platform for Combatting Homelessness, while promoting the Union of Equality to tackle discrimination. The European Pillar of Social Rights must continue guiding further efforts to strengthen the EU's social dimension which should be included in a revised European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan.

Challenges Ahead

Despite the progress made in social policies, there are significant challenges a future Commissioner for Jobs & Social Rights will have to navigate.

1. **Poverty & Inequalities:** Poverty has not reduced in the past three years, while energy poverty, financial distress, severe material deprivation and housing costs continue to increase. We are not making the progress required to lift at least 15 million, including 5 million children, out of poverty by 2030.
2. **Competitiveness Policies:** With increasing rhetoric to improve Europe's competitiveness, we must ensure improved productivity does not come at the cost of our social rights. Europe's social market economy must promote quality jobs, decent wages, improved living conditions, adequate social protection systems, work life balance and quality and education for all children to tackle social exclusion, inequalities and poverty.
3. **Twin Transitions:** Both the digital and green transitions have significant impacts on jobs and on living conditions and underline the importance of non-discrimination and strong social protection systems.
4. **Reform of the Single Market:** Reforms to the single market will have a significant impact on social policies. With momentum growing to re-open state-aid rules and the public procurement directive, along with the introduction of an Action Plan on Services of General Interest, the emphasis must be on delivering social progress, and not a race to the bottom. We need rules that help us achieve our social targets.
5. **Financing Social Investments:** The recently adopted EU fiscal rules bring an enormous risk of budget cuts and even austerity.¹ During the last recession we saw social spending was one of the first cuts made to national budgets, including social protection systems. Similarly, the fiscal rules represent a challenge to making much needed social investments, with the European Commission suggesting that Europe has a social investment gap of EUR192 billion per year.² The next MFF (2028-2034) must be increased to help Member States finance the twin transitions.

[1] 'Navigating Constraints for Progress: Examining the Impact of EU Fiscal Rules on Social and Green Investments', Sebastian Mang and Dominic Caddick, 2024

[2] 'Commission Staff Working Document, Identifying Europe's Recovery Needs', 2020

Priorities for a European Commissioner for Jobs & Social Rights

1. **European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan:** A top priority for the next Commissioner must be delivering an ambitious revision of the Action Plan for the Social Pillar, coming in 2025. We are not on course to meet all the headline targets, and so the revision of the Action Plan must deliver key legislative and policy initiatives to tackle poverty and social exclusion, while promoting quality jobs and quality inclusive education and training.
2. **Social Protection Systems:** Follow through on the Letta Report on the Future of the Single Market's call for robust social protection systems, supported with targeted policies that can address social inequalities. This should include the full implementation on the Adequate Minimum Income Recommendation and the pursuit of a framework directive on adequate minimum income schemes. An anti-poverty strategy, aligned to the European Pillar of Social Rights, should also be included that ensures we meet the SDG target of reducing poverty by 50% by 2030.
3. **Social Distributional Impact Assessments:** Prioritise the use of social distributional impact assessments to ensure EU economic, environmental or climate policies do not disproportionately burden low income or vulnerable groups.
4. **Just Transition:** The Commissioner must support the delivery of a Just Transition, to protect workers and people in vulnerable situations, ensuring no one is left behind in the green transition. This is necessary to break down the silos between green and social policies and to ensure climate action protects people's incomes and does not lead to a further strengthening of the far right.
5. **Action Plan for Social Services:** Create an enabling regulatory and financial framework for not-for-profit social service providers, ensuring policy proposals such as the revision of the Public Procurement Directive are reformed to support affordable, accessible and high quality social services.
6. **Framework for Universal Basic Services:** Europe needs to invest in high-quality, affordable, accessible and, in many instances free, services including social housing, care, education, public transport, energy and water. Building on principle 20 of the EPSR, this widened scope of UBS can help address the cost-of-living crisis by addressing everyday costs.
7. **European Care Strategy:** Further strengthen the implementation of the Council recommendation on Long-Term Care through development of quality indicators that help monitor progress and the establishment of a Care Platform, to support the implementation of the European Care strategy.
8. **Protecting Workers Mental Health:** Europe needs to put mental health on an equal footing to physical health when it comes to workplace safety in accordance with the approach in the Communication on a Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health. It should introduce a proposal for an EU directive on psychosocial risks at work. Current EU legislation makes no specific reference to psychosocial risks, inadequately addressing the new reality of work.
9. **European Child Guarantee:** Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Child Guarantee, ensuring Europe meets the revised Barcelona targets by improving childcare and tackling child and family poverty.
10. **Social Economy:** Conduct a mid-term evaluation of the Social Economy Action Plan with a view to strengthening its delivery, with a focus on enabling environments for social economy actors via public finance and public procurement and furthering the implementation of the Council Recommendations on developing social economy framework conditions.
11. **Job Guarantee:** Building on the existing pilot project, the European Commission should scale up existing Job Guarantee schemes and work towards its full implementation to improve the availability of decent work.
12. **Housing:** Establish an EU Taskforce on Housing to address Europe's housing crisis, ensure the implementation of the Energy Performance of Building Directive doesn't lead to increased evictions or housing costs. Promote green social housing and monitor the review of state aid rules to ensure the provision of social housing.



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