

Thursday 22 October 2020

P9_TA(2020)0284

Employment and social policies of the euro area 2020**European Parliament resolution of 22 October 2020 on the employment and social policies of the euro area 2020 (2020/2079(INI))**

(2021/C 404/10)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2, 3, 5 and Article 6(1) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU),
- having regard to Articles 4, 6, 9, 145, 148, 149, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 158, 165, 166, 168, 174 and 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 13 April 2016 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on Better Law-Making ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular Title IV (Solidarity) thereof, and Directive 2000/43/EC (the Racial Equality Directive),
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD),
- having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10 and 13,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EU) 2020/672 of 19 May 2020 on the establishment of a European instrument for temporary support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE) following the COVID-19 outbreak ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2020/559 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2020 amending Regulation (EU) No 223/2014 as regards the introduction of specific measures for addressing the outbreak of COVID-19 ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 2 April 2020 entitled ‘Coronavirus Response — Using every available euro in every way possible to protect lives and livelihoods’ (COM(2020)0143),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2020/460 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 March 2020 amending Regulations (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013 and (EU) No 508/2014 as regards specific measures to mobilise investments in the healthcare systems of Member States and in other sectors of their economies in response to the COVID-19 outbreak (Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative) ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 13 March 2020 entitled ‘Coordinated economic response to the COVID-19 Outbreak’ (COM(2020)0112),
- having regard to the Joint Research Centre Technical Report entitled ‘The COVID confinement measures and EU labour markets’ published in 2020 and, in particular, its analysis of the most recent evidence available on the patterns of telework in the European Union,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 12 June 2019 entitled ‘Deepening Europe’s Economic and Monetary Union: Taking stock four years after the Five Presidents’ Report — European Commission’s contribution to the Euro Summit on 21 June 2019’ (COM(2019)0279),
- having regard to the Five Presidents’ Report of 22 June 2015 entitled ‘Completing Europe’s Economic and Monetary Union’,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 123, 12.5.2016, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 159, 20.5.2020, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 130, 24.4.2020, p. 7.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 99, 31.3.2020, p. 5.

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- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 May 2020 on the 2020 European Semester: Country-specific recommendations (COM(2020)0500),
- having regard to the Commission communication on the activation of the general escape clause of the Stability and Growth Pact (COM(2020)0123) and the subsequent Council decision thereon of 23 March 2020,
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 26 February 2020 for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (COM(2020)0070),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 22 November 2017 for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (COM(2017)0677), and to Parliament's position thereon of 19 April 2018 ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to Council Decision (EU) 2019/1181 of 8 July 2019 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 17 December 2019 on the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2020 (COM(2019)0650),
- having regard to the proposal for a joint employment report from the Commission and the Council of 17 December 2019 accompanying the communication on the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2020 (COM(2019)0653),
- having regard to the Commission recommendation of 17 December 2019 for a Council recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area (COM(2019)0652),
- having regard to the Commission report of 17 December 2019 entitled 'Alert Mechanism Report 2020' (COM(2019)0651),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 November 2019 on the 2020 Draft Budgetary Plans: Overall Assessment (COM(2019)0900),
- having regard to the political guidelines for the European Commission 2019-2024 entitled 'A Union that strives for more — My agenda for Europe' by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen,
- having regard to the announcement by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, in 'A Union that strives for more: My agenda for Europe — Political Guidelines For The Next European Commission 2019-2024': 'to support every child in need, I will create the European child guarantee, picking up on the idea proposed by the European Parliament',
- having regard to the Commission communication of 26 April 2017 entitled 'Establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights' (COM(2017)0250), and in particular Principle 11, reinforcing the importance of promoting children's rights,
- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 8 June 2020 on 'Demographic challenges — the way ahead' ⁽⁷⁾,
- having regard to Council conclusions of 20 June 2011 on the reconciliation of work and family life in the context of demographic change (11841/11),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 26 April 2017 entitled 'An initiative to support work-life balance for working parents and carers' (COM(2017)0252),
- having regard to the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 480/2014 supplementing Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽⁸⁾,

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 390, 18.11.2019, p. 196.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ L 185, 11.7.2019, p. 44.

⁽⁷⁾ OJ C 205, 19.6.2020, p. 3.

⁽⁸⁾ OJ L 138, 13.5.2014, p. 5.

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- having regard to the Commission proposal for a Council recommendation of 13 March 2018 on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed (COM(2018)0132),
- having regard to the Commission's Social Investment Package of 2013, detailed in its communication entitled 'Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion — including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020' (COM(2013)0083),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 5 April 2011 entitled 'An EU Framework for Roma integration strategies up to 2020' (COM(2011)0173) and to its subsequent implementation and evaluation reports,
- having regard to the Commission recommendation of 3 October 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market ⁽⁹⁾,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU ⁽¹⁰⁾,
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 26 April 2017 entitled 'Taking stock of the 2013 Recommendation on "Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage"' (SWD(2017)0258),
- having regard to the Commission's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019, and to the European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020 and the Council conclusions thereon of 7 March 2011 ⁽¹¹⁾ and the Commission communication of 5 March 2020 entitled 'A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025' (COM(2020)0152),
- having regard to the Commission report of 29 May 2013 entitled 'Barcelona objectives -The development of childcare facilities for young children in Europe with a view to sustainable and inclusive growth' (COM(2013)0322),
- having regard to the 2002 Barcelona childcare targets, namely to provide childcare, by 2010, to at least 90 % of children between three years old and the mandatory school age, and to at least 33 % of children under three years of age,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 4 October 2016 entitled 'The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on' (COM(2016)0646),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 14 September 2016 entitled 'Strengthening European Investments for jobs and growth: Towards a second phase of the European Fund for Strategic Investments and a new European External Investment Plan' (COM(2016)0581),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 June 2016 entitled 'A new skills agenda for Europe — Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness' (COM(2016)0381),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 1 July 2020 entitled 'European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience' (COM(2020)0274),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 2 June 2016 entitled 'A European agenda for the collaborative economy' (COM(2016)0356),
- having regard to the Circular Economy Package (Directives (EU) 2018/849 ⁽¹²⁾, (EU) 2018/850 ⁽¹³⁾, (EU) 2018/851 ⁽¹⁴⁾ and (EU) 2018/852 ⁽¹⁵⁾),

⁽⁹⁾ OJ L 307, 18.11.2008, p. 11.

⁽¹⁰⁾ OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, p. 79.

⁽¹¹⁾ OJ C 155, 25.5.2011, p. 10.

⁽¹²⁾ OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 93.

⁽¹³⁾ OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 100.

⁽¹⁴⁾ OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 109.

⁽¹⁵⁾ OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 141.

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- having regard to the Commission communication of 1 June 2016 entitled ‘Europe investing again — Taking stock of the Investment Plan for Europe and next steps’ (COM(2016)0359),
- having regard to the Commission white paper of 16 February 2012 entitled ‘An Agenda for Adequate, Safe and Sustainable Pensions’ (COM(2012)0055),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 October 2009 entitled ‘Solidarity in Health: Reducing Health Inequalities in the EU’ (COM(2009)0567),
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 7 December 2015 on the promotion of the social economy as a key driver of economic and social development in Europe (15071/15),
- having regard to its resolution of 10 October 2019 on employment and social policies of the euro area ⁽¹⁶⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2019 on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: employment and social aspects in the Annual Growth Survey 2019 ⁽¹⁷⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 11 December 2018 on education in the digital era: challenges, opportunities and lessons for EU policy design ⁽¹⁸⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 11 September 2018 on pathways for the reintegration of workers recovering from injury and illness into quality employment ⁽¹⁹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 November 2017 on combating inequalities as a lever to boost job creation and growth ⁽²⁰⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 24 October 2017 on minimum income policies as a tool for fighting poverty ⁽²¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 September 2017 on a new skills agenda for Europe ⁽²²⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2017 on a European Pillar of Social Rights ⁽²³⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 26 May 2016 on poverty: a gender perspective ⁽²⁴⁾,
- having regard to its position of 2 February 2016 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing a European Platform to enhance cooperation in the prevention and deterrence of undeclared work ⁽²⁵⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 25 November 2015 on the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 ⁽²⁶⁾,
- having regard to the initiative by the OECD and the European Commission on the ‘State of Health in the EU’ and to the related report ‘Health at a glance: Europe 2018’,
- having regard to the Commission’s 2018 Pension Adequacy Report: Current and future income adequacy in old age in the EU, published on 26 April 2018,

⁽¹⁶⁾ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2019)0033.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2019)0202.

⁽¹⁸⁾ OJ C 134, 24.4.2020, p. 16.

⁽¹⁹⁾ OJ C 433, 23.12.2019, p. 9.

⁽²⁰⁾ OJ C 356, 4.10.2018, p. 89.

⁽²¹⁾ OJ C 346, 27.9.2018, p. 156.

⁽²²⁾ OJ C 337, 20.9.2018, p. 135.

⁽²³⁾ OJ C 242, 10.7.2018, p. 24.

⁽²⁴⁾ OJ C 76, 28.2.2018, p. 93.

⁽²⁵⁾ OJ C 35, 31.1.2018, p. 157.

⁽²⁶⁾ OJ C 366, 27.10.2017, p. 117.

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- having regard to the Commission's 2018 Ageing Report: Economic and Budgetary Projections for the EU Member States (2016-2070), published on 28 May 2018,
- having regard to the revised European Social Charter and the Turin Process, launched in 2014 with the aim of strengthening the treaty system of the European Social Charter within the Council of Europe and in its relationship with the law of the European Union,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 March 2011 on reducing health inequalities in the EU ⁽²⁷⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 July 2020 on the EU's public health strategy post-COVID-19 ⁽²⁸⁾,
- having regard to the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of September 2015 on the initial report of the European Union to the Committee of June 2014,
- having regard to Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (the Equal Treatment Directive) ⁽²⁹⁾, and to Article 141 of the Treaty establishing the European Community (1992), regarding the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value,
- having regard to the Commission report on equality between women and men 2014,
- having regard to the EU Youth Strategy for 2019-2027, based on the Council resolution of 26 November 2018, and to the Europe 2020 target of reducing early leaving from education and training to less than 10 %,
- having regard to the Commission's 'Feasibility Study for a Child Guarantee — final report' of March 2020,
- having regard to the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 5/2017 of April 2017 entitled 'Youth unemployment — have EU policies made a difference? An assessment of the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative',
- having regard to the Commission communication of 1 July 2020 entitled 'Youth Employment Support: a bridge to jobs for the next generation' COM(2020)0276),
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services (the European Accessibility Act) ⁽³⁰⁾,
- having regard to the Commission's Spring 2020 European Economic Forecast,
- having regard to the European Social Policy network study entitled 'In-work poverty in Europe: A study of national policies' published in May 2019',
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 2018 on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed (14582/18),
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2019/1152 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on transparent and predictable working conditions in the European Union ⁽³¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 June 2020 on European protection of cross-border and seasonal workers in the context of the COVID-19 crisis ⁽³²⁾,

⁽²⁷⁾ OJ C 199 E, 7.7.2012, p. 25.

⁽²⁸⁾ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0205.

⁽²⁹⁾ OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p. 23.

⁽³⁰⁾ OJ L 151, 7.6.2019, p. 70.

⁽³¹⁾ OJ L 186, 11.7.2019, p. 105.

⁽³²⁾ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0176.

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- having regard to the Commission's Economic Forecast Summer 2020,
 - having regard to the Commission Staff Working Document entitled 'Identifying Europe's recovery needs' (SWD(2020) 0098),
 - having regard to the Council conclusions on the revised EU list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes of 18 February 2020 (6129/20),
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A9-0183/2020),
- A. whereas the EU has entered the deepest economic recession in its history, with economic activity in Europe dropping at an unusually fast speed; whereas according to the Summer 2020 Economic forecast, EU GDP is forecast to contract by about 8,3 % and the euro area by 8,7 % in 2020;
- B. whereas the COVID-19 crisis produced a symmetric shock affecting all Member States, though the impact of the crisis is set to be uneven, having a stronger impact on the more than 109 million people who were already at risk of poverty before the pandemic; whereas the crisis has put social protection systems under severe pressure to mitigate the social impact of the crisis and ensure decent living conditions for all, as well as access to essential services such as health, education and housing; whereas the COVID-19 crisis is likely to increase existing inequalities, and requires a coordinated European response ensuring social and territorial cohesion;
- C. whereas the current crisis also entails a risk of widening regional and territorial disparities across and within Member States;
- D. whereas effective European economic, social and health policy coordination with the European Semester and the European Pillar of Social Rights at its core is crucial for mitigating the effects of the crisis and ensuring a recovery which is economically innovative, socially fair and environmentally responsible; whereas greater involvement of Parliament strengthens the democratic oversight of the Semester;
- E. whereas the Council decision of 23 March 2020 activated the general escape clause of the Stability and Growth Pact allowing for the flexibility needed to take all necessary measures to support the economies and health systems; whereas social investments are essential to ensuring sustainable development, poverty eradication and inclusive societies;
- F. whereas certain policy choices and restrictive investment in the wake of the financial and economic crisis had regrettable consequences on the level of protection provided by in some cases underfunded social and healthcare systems, which were unable to adequately reduce poverty and inequalities, and aggravated the effects of the pandemic in certain Member States;
- G. whereas decisive measures and investment are needed for a speedy recovery that should focus on mitigating the economic and social effects of the pandemic, restart economic activity, foster sustainable development, the green transition, the digital transformation and implement the United Nations SDGs, the objectives of the Green Compact and the Paris Agreement, as well as the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) in order to achieve more effective and stronger welfare states;
- H. whereas to benefit from the proposed Recovery and Resilience Facility, Member States should prepare recovery and resilience plans which should be annexed to their national reform programmes, taking into account the findings of the European Semester, as well as national energy and climate plans and just transition plans, and report on their progress in implementing the plans in the context of the European Semester; whereas Member States should establish specific social progress plans with clear targets outlining where social investment will be targeted and how the principles of the EPSR will be implemented following the adoption of the Action Plan for the implementation of the EPSR announced by the President of the European Commission;

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- I. whereas socially sustainable reforms are those based on solidarity, integration, social justice, a fair distribution of wealth, gender equality, a high-quality public education system for all, quality employment and sustainable growth — a model that ensures equality and social protection, empowers vulnerable groups, enhances participation and citizenship and improves living standards for all; whereas reinforced social protection systems are crucial for the fight against poverty and inequalities, as well as to support inclusive and sustainable growth;
- J. whereas according to the accompanying Staff Working Document 'Identifying Europe's recovery needs', the most pressing social need is addressing unemployment; whereas, the Commission in this document estimates that the investment needed for social infrastructure will be EUR 192 billion;
- K. whereas the euro area unemployment rate is expected to increase from 7,5 % in 2019 to about 9,5 % in 2020, with substantial differences among Member States; whereas unemployment is set to rise unevenly across sectors, genders, age and socio-economic groups; whereas national short-time working schemes, wage subsidies and support for businesses, backed by European measures, enable jobs to be maintained and salaries to be broadly kept unchanged; whereas many jobs remain at very high risk in the medium term, and significant effort will be needed to tackle unemployment; whereas, in the future, a European unemployment reinsurance scheme could limit such differences by assisting Member States to cover the costs directly related to the creation or extension of national short-time work schemes;
- L. whereas in the first half of 2020, the euro area labour market underwent a massive deterioration caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to contain it; whereas the decline in employment of about 4 % in 2020 hides a more substantial deterioration in the number of hours worked, as employees in short-time work schemes are de facto unemployed but remain employed for the purposes of statistics; whereas, to be counted as unemployed, a person has to be available for the labour market, which was not possible everywhere during strict lockdowns, and many persons with only a loose connection to the labour market were also discouraged from actively seeking a job, and therefore did not count as unemployed;
- M. whereas the burden of this labour market deterioration is borne unevenly across labour market categories; whereas workers with precarious working conditions and contracts, including contract workers and workers employed through temporary agencies, were the first to lose their jobs; whereas often they are unable to enforce their rights, have little or no job security and social insurance protection, and face greater health and safety risks; whereas the youth unemployment rate has increased more than the overall rate, and self-employed persons have also suffered massively from the lockdowns;
- N. whereas the primary responsibility for tackling youth unemployment rests with the Member States in terms of developing and implementing labour market regulatory frameworks, education and training systems and active labour market policies;
- O. whereas according to the Summer 2020 forecast, several factors are expected to slow the labour market's return to its pre-pandemic situation, for instance time-limited short-time work subsidy schemes; whereas in the case of a prolonged period of weak economic activity and with an increasing number of firms expected to downsize their activities or go out of business, schemes cannot fully prevent an eventual increase in unemployment; whereas the expected rise in unemployment rates across the EU may prove particularly hard to overcome in Member States where unemployment was already relatively high before the start of the pandemic, where the economic rebound is expected to be slow, or where labour markets and social safety nets lack efficiency and effectiveness;
- P. whereas according to Eurostat, in 2018, there were 8,3 million underemployed part-time workers in the EU-28, 7,6 million persons were available for work, but did not look for a job, and another 2,2 million persons were looking for jobs, without being able to start working within a short time period; whereas in 2018 in the EU-28 a total of 18,1 million persons experienced situations with some resemblance to unemployment;
- Q. whereas between 2002 and 2018, the EU share of middle income jobs declined by 13 percentage points;

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- R. whereas Member States are faced with structural challenges in the labour market, such as low participation, as well as skills and qualification mismatches; whereas there is a growing need for concrete measures for the integration or re-integration of inactive workforce to meet labour market demands;
- S. whereas the deterioration in the labour market situation is projected to limit increases in wages and salaries, and weakened the bargaining power of workers; whereas social dialogue and collective bargaining are key instruments for employers and trade unions to establish fair wages and working conditions, and strong collective bargaining systems increase Member States' resilience in times of economic crisis;
- T. whereas the right to establish collective bargaining is an issue that concerns all European workers, with crucial implications for democracy and the rule of law, including the respect of fundamental social rights and collective bargaining; whereas collective bargaining is a European fundamental right, and European Institutions are bound to respect it by Article 28 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights; whereas, in this context, policies that respect, promote and strengthen collective bargaining and the workers' position in wage-setting systems play a critical role in achieving high quality working conditions;
- U. whereas collective bargaining coverage deteriorated in 22 of 27 Member States since 2000; whereas the average level of union membership across the European Union is around 23 %, with great differences among Member States, ranging from 74 % to 8 %;
- V. whereas wages that ensure a decent standard of living, strong collective bargaining systems, democracy at work, wage transparency, predictable working hours, flexible work arrangements, adequate social protection, and investment in public services can reduce in-work poverty, decrease health and social inequalities, and generate demand and improve health and wellbeing;
- W. whereas the United Nations 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises the need for workers to earn a living wage, as does the International Labour Organisation Constitution, founded in 1919; whereas, according to the Eurofound definition, a living wage is the amount of income needed to provide an employee with a basic but socially acceptable standard of living; whereas minimum wages in the majority of countries remain below the poverty line;
- X. whereas the crisis will have a significant impact on social conditions, affecting in particular women, low income households and families, the elderly, minority and other vulnerable groups, resulting in increased inequalities, fragility, poverty, unemployment and social divergences, as well as undermining social and employment standards in Europe; whereas, among others, young people, workers with precarious working conditions, on non-standard and temporary contracts, persons with low qualifications, involuntary part-time and self-employed workers, and platform and migrant workers are at greatest risk of losing their jobs and falling into poverty; whereas many workers in essential occupations in the frontline response to the COVID-19 pandemic belong to these vulnerable categories;
- Y. whereas the crisis has shown that every worker is essential, and that if our societies are functioning in confinement, it is not only thanks to healthcare workers, researchers and security forces, but to a large extent also to cleaners, transport workers, supermarket cashiers, care workers, delivery workers, domestic workers, platform workers, workers in call centres, food and agricultural workers, fishermen and many others whose contributions are indispensable; whereas too often these workers have poor working conditions and low wages and in many sectors the majority of them are women;
- Z. whereas the pay and pension gaps between men and women remain and are likely to widen with the COVID-19 crisis; whereas across the EU, women still earn on average 16 % less than men, and the gender gap for pensions is around 37,2 % in the EU;
- AA. whereas in the EU, workplace discrimination on the grounds of age, sex, gender identity, disability, ethnic or racial origin, religion or belief, or sexual orientation, is banned, and everyone is entitled to equal treatment in recruitment, working conditions, promotion, pay, access to training and occupational pensions;

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- AB. whereas in the next decade, job polarisation is expected to grow further, and jobs in the higher and lower skills spectrum are expected to increase; whereas this trend is likely to be further reinforced by the pandemic; whereas progressive taxation is a necessary precondition for reducing overall inequality, and financing well-functioning welfare states;
- AC. whereas the world of work is undergoing transformative change driven by technological innovation, digitalisation, demographic shifts, climate change, and globalisation; whereas, in addition, the current crisis has had a huge impact on our working habits; whereas the use of digital technologies and their promotion in an inclusive way are economically and socially beneficial in the long run, can increase competitiveness and create job opportunities, but they also create challenges, such as social isolation, digital exclusion, increased inequalities, data protection, deterioration of workers' health and working conditions, as well as of the protection of their rights; whereas investment in digital skills, qualifications and formal training for adults strengthens the employability of workers, wage developments and business competitiveness; whereas the aforementioned global challenges require a just transition so as to leave no one behind;
- AD. whereas the free movement of workers is a fundamental principle of the European Union and essential to the proper functioning of the Internal Market;
- AE. whereas implementation of the 2013 EU Recommendation on investing in children has not delivered the results promised; whereas the European Semester has not sufficiently prioritised tackling child poverty and social exclusion, and EU funds have not been used as extensively or strategically as they could have; whereas the introduction of an EU child guarantee with concrete targets would be an effective way to ensure that Member States make a high-level political commitment to guaranteeing the social rights of children, in particular those in vulnerable situations, and to combating child poverty and social exclusion;
- AF. whereas health inequalities are rooted in social inequalities, and are linked in particular to gender, educational standards, employment, income, housing conditions and unequal access to medical assistance, sickness prevention and health promotion services;
- AG. whereas a high level of human health protection must be ensured in the definition and implementation of all Union policies and activities;
- AH. whereas a variety of minimum income schemes exist in the majority of Member States in order to establish a safety net for those living at risk of poverty;
- AI. whereas homelessness has increased consistently in most Member States over the past decade; whereas at least 700 000 people are homeless on any given night in the EU, 70 % more than a decade ago; whereas COVID-19 has demonstrated that homelessness is both a social and public health crisis;
1. Calls on the Commission to develop a political strategy to replace Europe 2020 which aims to eradicate poverty, bringing together key instruments such as the European Green Deal, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Semester with a longer-term vision of an economy of well-being and the sustainability of our environment and social models, in line with the UN SDGs;
 2. Takes note of the Commission's 2020 country-specific recommendations (CSRs); expresses its concern that Member States have made limited or no progress in six out of 10 CSRs addressed to them in 2019, and that progress remains uneven across Member States and policy areas, with progress being particularly slow on broadening the tax base, as well as on health and long-term care; underlines that CSRs should be coherent with EU economic, social and environmental objectives; stresses that the implementation of CSRs is crucial for fostering social inclusion and improving social rights, and for achieving full and quality employment and a socially just transition; urges the Member States, therefore, regardless of

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their membership of the euro area, to better implement the recommendations, particularly those concerning employment and social issues; stresses that by learning the lessons from the previous crisis and responding to the COVID-19 economic and social crisis, the CSRs should promote labour market regulation, strengthen the resilience of our economic policies and support our public services;

3. Is concerned about the devastating social effects of the COVID-19 crisis, in particular on women, low income households and families and vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, persons belonging to minorities, refugees and migrants as well as workers who are in the front line during the crisis, which further increase pre-existing inequalities and create new ones, and could threaten social and employment standards in Europe; stresses that only a decisive and coordinated European response will help offset the social consequences of the current crisis and demonstrate that the EU is an indispensable project based on social justice, solidarity and integration; calls on the Member States to fully protect the people's social rights, and stresses the key role the Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (REACT-EU) package must play in helping the most disadvantaged by ensuring adequate funding from the European Aid Fund for the Most Deprived (FEAD), in supporting employment, especially for youth through the European Social Fund (ESF) as well as in fostering EU cohesion, including in the outermost regions;

4. Welcomes Member States' decision to activate the general escape clause to provide increased flexibility to take necessary measures to support the health of European citizens and civil protections systems, preserve jobs, support a robust recovery and stabilise the European social market economy; calls on Member States to make full use of this fiscal flexibility to prevent and mitigate the social consequences of the crisis, strengthen social welfare systems, finance quality jobs, public services, the fight against poverty and the green transition; welcomes the Commission's announcement of the launch of a wide public consultation with all relevant stakeholders to examine the possible directions of development of EU fiscal rules; invites Member States to participate in the discussion in order to encourage sustainable growth-enhancing social investment while maintaining fiscal sustainability;

5. Stresses the importance of a sound and responsible budgetary procedure, and calls on the Member States and the Commission to boost investment in response to the health crisis, especially investment in education, social and healthcare systems; points out that the European Semester still lacks an agenda to monitor and address the increase of inequalities in Europe; urges the Commission, therefore, to better assess the distributional impact of public policies, and the imbalances in terms of income and wealth distribution, also through individual in-depth review (IDR) reports if these imbalances are detected, as a way to link economic coordination with employment and social performance; calls on the Commission to study which should be the most accurate indicators of economic inequality, and to monitor the evolution of inequalities;

6. Welcomes Next Generation EU, the EU's recovery plan; calls for a balanced approach between the green and digital transitions on the one hand, and education, social and healthcare infrastructure on the other; insists that the recovery plan must be fully in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights, and contribute to achieving the UN SDGs and the European Green Deal; calls on the Member States to make use of the general escape clause to invest in people and welfare systems, and support viable companies in difficulties in order to safeguard jobs and wages; calls for specific social progress plans to ensure more effective, equitable and stronger welfare states; demands an ambitious multiannual financial framework (MFF), strengthened by new own resources, and rejects any reduction in funding for programmes focused on cohesion, such as the ESF+;

7. Stresses the importance of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and achieving the UN SDGs, including in the context of the European Recovery Plan, in order to ensure social fairness, social cohesion and prosperity for all; is concerned that in the current crisis welfare systems are experiencing unprecedented pressure, and that related public expenditure will exponentially increase; stresses that in order to fuel the recovery, the EU's investment effort through the Recovery Plan and the MFF should stimulate economic growth with a strong social dimension, particularly by strengthening welfare systems and investing in stable social security systems, healthcare, education, housing, employment, culture, justice, and adequate and accessible public social services in order to combat the social impact of the crisis and eradicate poverty;

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8. Welcomes the Commission's SURE proposal as an emergency measure to support Member States' short-time work schemes for the COVID-19 crisis, and, as a result, to increase the chances of companies obtaining the liquidity necessary for resuming economic activity and safeguarding jobs; takes note of the temporary nature of the instrument; invites the Commission, therefore, to examine the possibility of a permanent special instrument to be activated — upon request by Member States — in case of any unexpected crisis that leads to a steady rise in expenditure for short-time work schemes and similar measures;

9. Underlines the Commission's commitment to mobilising the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund in response to the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis on employment; calls on the Member States, therefore, to rapidly submit to the Commission applications for funding to support European workers who have lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19, to be used for their retraining, requalification and reintegration into the labour market;

10. Calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure that financial assistance is only provided to undertakings not registered in the countries listed in Annex 1 of the Council conclusions on the revised EU list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes; calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure that beneficiaries comply with the fundamental values enshrined in the Treaties, and that companies receiving public financial support protect workers, guarantee decent working conditions, respect trade unions and applicable collective agreements, pay their share of taxes, and refrain from share buy backs or paying out bonuses to management or dividends to shareholders;

11. Emphasises the central role of the Social Scoreboard in the European Semester; calls on the Commission to reinforce the scoreboard, reflecting all 20 principles of the EPSR, and to develop social targets, including on poverty reduction, as well as a method to integrate the social aspects of the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) factors; stresses the importance of ex ante evaluations as well as thorough ex post evaluations of National Reform Programmes;

12. Is concerned about impact of the COVID-19 crisis negatively affecting the European labour market, and about unprecedented job losses, especially in strategic sectors, as well as about the associated rise in poverty and divergences in living standards, which will especially affect youth, women and workers in low-skilled positions, in the informal economy and in precarious employment; recalls the President of the Commission's announcement that an EU unemployment benefit reinsurance scheme will be presented; calls on the Member States to implement employment retention measures and promote flexible work arrangements in order to preserve jobs; calls on the Member States to adequately invest in effective active labour market policies, education, training and life-long learning, and to make full use of existing and new EU funding instruments in order to prevent long-term unemployment, especially in those regions which suffer significant demographic disadvantages, such as rural areas; urges the Member States to also create new employment opportunities, including through public investment and employment programmes, and to strengthen the role of public employment services with a special focus on helping young people, persons with disabilities and people facing discrimination to enter the labour market;

13. Notes with great concern the high level of youth unemployment in a number of Member States, and the fragility of young workers' employment contracts, particularly in sectors seriously impacted by COVID-19; calls on the Member States and the Commission to take appropriate measures to tackle youth unemployment, making full use of current and new financial instruments such as the Youth Guarantee and Erasmus+; calls for a more effective and inclusive Youth Guarantee with a special focus on quality employment with decent remuneration, in particular targeting those furthest away from the labour market;

14. Calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure that the COVID-19 pandemic does not worsen the position of those groups furthest from the labour market, such as informal carers, people with long-term illnesses, disabilities, health problems or complex chronic diseases, migrants and refugees, and people from ethnic and religious minorities;

15. Stresses that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a key role in sustainable and inclusive development, economic growth and job creation in the EU; calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen their support for SMEs and their workers in the resumption of economic activity and the transition towards a more digital and greener economy;

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16. Calls on the Member States to actively promote the development of the circular and social economies, foster social innovation and social enterprises, strengthen their sustainability, and encourage forms of work which create quality job opportunities;

17. Believes that in order to maintain and increase global competitiveness, the labour market regulatory framework in Member States needs to be clear, simple and flexible while maintaining high labour standards;

18. Stresses that the successful implementation of the EU Recovery Plan requires a proper social dialogue at all levels with effective involvement of the social partners, the strengthening of workers' and trade union rights, as well as collective bargaining and workers' participation, which are fundamental tools for democracy and inclusion; calls on the Commission and Member States to support capacity building of the social partners, including through the ESF+ in order to strengthen trade union density, social dialogue, collective bargaining, and the involvement of workers in company matters, and to respect collective agreements in public procurement; calls on the Commission and Member States to also ensure that the social partners are fully involved in policy-making, including the European Semester;

19. Welcomes the Commission's second phase consultation of the social partners on an EU framework for minimum wages; notes that decent wages are important for fair working conditions and a thriving social market economy; calls on Member States to ensure decent living wages above the poverty threshold for all workers through collective agreements, or through national law; believes that strengthened collective bargaining is one of the best ways to promote decent wages within the EU; calls on the Commission to identify barriers to social dialogue within the EU, and to present a European framework for minimum wages to eliminate in-work poverty in line with national traditions and with due respect for the autonomy of national social partners and well-functioning collective bargaining models; stresses that any initiative must not harm the autonomy of the social partners or wage-setting in collective-bargaining systems; calls for a coordinated approach at EU level in order to avoid unhealthy labour cost competition, and to increase upward social convergence for all; stresses furthermore that wages should enable workers to meet their needs and those of their families, and that every worker in the Union should receive a living wage; asks the Commission, in this regard, to study how to identify what a living wage could encompass, and how it should be measured, which could serve as a reference tool for the social partners;

20. Calls for access to public, solidarity-based and adequate old-age pensions for all workers and self-employed persons that is above the poverty threshold; calls on the Member States to guarantee the adequacy and sustainability of the pension systems; believes that pension system reforms should focus on the effective retirement age and reflect labour market trends, birth rates, the health and wealth situation, working conditions and the economic dependency ratio, among other aspects, and be accompanied by active ageing strategies; considers that these reforms must also take account of the situation of millions of workers in Europe, particularly women, young people and the self-employed, suffering insecure and precarious employment, periods of involuntary unemployment and reduced working time; believes that Member States should establish a constructive dialogue with the social partners and other relevant stakeholders, and allow appropriate phasing in of reforms;

21. Calls on the Commission to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the working and employment conditions of frontline and essential workers, platform workers, non-standard workers and workers in precarious forms of employment, identifying the causes of their precarious situation, to present a European regulatory framework with clear and simple guidelines to ensure adequate working hours, decent working conditions for all workers, rights and universal access to social protection, and to strengthen collective bargaining coverage, combat precarious contracts, bogus self-employment, zero-hour contracts and the improper use of non-standard contracts; calls on the Commission to set strict limits on subcontracting practices, and improve social protection standards; as well as to provide guidelines for testing the employment status of independent contractors so as to combat bogus self-employment; stresses that workers subject to temporary or flexible contractual arrangements should benefit from the same protection as all other workers;

22. Notes with concern the lack of adequate access to social protection systems and the lack of such access for non-standard and self-employed workers; calls on the Member States to take measures to remedy these problems, in particular by following Council Recommendation of 8 November 2019 on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed; stresses the need to make access to social protection universal, especially in the current difficult situation;

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23. Underlines that the recent pandemic has proved the importance of digital solutions, particularly teleworking, and the need to establish guidelines and regulations in this regard at European level; believes that properly regulated flexible working arrangements, teleworking and location-less jobs can play an important role in preserving jobs, support better work-life balance, contribute to reducing CO₂ emissions related to the daily commute, enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities, and may serve as a tool to tackle rural depopulation; calls on the Commission, therefore, to propose an EU teleworking agenda, including a legislative framework to ensure decent working conditions including respect for working hours, leave, work-life balance and the right to disconnect; stresses that special attention is needed to the situation of parents with children, single parents and informal carers providing continuous care to dependent relatives, as the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated these groups have had the greatest difficulty in reconciling work and family life when teleworking; underlines, therefore, the importance of appropriate childcare solutions;

24. Is concerned about the working and living conditions of seasonal workers and other cross-border workers, especially in the low-wage sector; calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen the portability of rights and ensure fair and just working conditions for mobile, cross-border and seasonal workers in the EU; calls on the Member States to commit fully to the digitalisation of public services in order to facilitate fair labour mobility, particularly with regard to the coordination of social security systems; asks the Commission, therefore, to put forward, following a proper impact assessment, a proposal for a digital EU social security number which also has the potential of establishing a control mechanism for both individuals and relevant authorities to ensure that social security is paid in accordance with obligations; believes, moreover, that every worker must have access to a full overview of who their employers are and their own salary entitlements and working rights, either in accordance with collective agreements or national legislation where applicable; calls furthermore for EU-wide subcontractor liability in certain sectors such as agriculture and the meat industry, especially in the case of on-site work contracts, and for clear rules on subcontracting practices in general;

25. States that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in increased health and safety risks for millions of workers; welcomes the Commission's commitment to revise the Biological Agents Directive (2000/54/EC) with the purpose of adapting it to global pandemics and other extraordinary circumstances, and to secure the full protection of workers against the risks of exposure; calls on the Commission to present as soon as possible a new Strategic Framework for Health and Safety, a directive on work-related stress and musculoskeletal disorders, a directive on mental well-being at the workplace, and an EU mental health strategy in order to protect all workers at the workplace; calls for the role of EU-OSHA to be strengthened to promote healthy and safe workplaces across the Union; stresses that investments in occupational health and safety improve job quality and the wellbeing of workers, and contribute to the productivity and competitiveness of the European economy;

26. Is concerned about limited intergenerational social mobility and increasing income inequality; points out that high levels of inequality reduce economic output and the potential for sustainable development; calls on the Commission and the Member States to tackle inequalities and fight discrimination; stresses that Member States should design their national tax and benefit systems in a way that reduces inequalities, promotes fairness, protects households and families and provides incentives for education and labour market participation while at the same time ensuring the full alignment with the United Nations SDGs and the climate and environmental objectives defined in the European Green Deal; stresses that investment in education and skills, as well as better designed tax and benefit systems, are key policy tools for reducing inequality and promoting equal opportunities;

27. Calls on the Commission to meet international legal obligations in relation to children's rights that Member States (as well as the EU as a whole in the case of some rights) are committed to upholding; calls on the Commission to present an EU child guarantee in 2020; calls for making use of all opportunities in the 2021-2027 MFF for investing in children to be taken up, and for its funds to be deployed to develop the potential added value of the EU child guarantee when combating poverty as well as harmful negative trends related to demographic change in Europe; demands the Member States to establish European and national action plans to ensure children's access to the five key social rights — access to free healthcare, free education, free childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition;

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28. Calls on the Commission to present as swiftly as possible an EU child guarantee building on the three pillar approach of the Council recommendation of 2013 on investing in children, as well as a rights-based, comprehensive and integrated anti-poverty strategy with a designated poverty reduction target, and an EU framework on national homelessness strategies by adopting the 'Housing First' principle, as well as a post 2020 EU Roma Strategic Framework with concrete objectives and national funding; calls on the Commission to also conduct a comparative study on the different minimum income schemes in the Member States, which provide a social protection floor and safety net for those in need, and to highlight best practice cases with a view to presenting a framework in this regard;

29. Highlights the importance of the automatic stabilisation dimension of welfare systems to absorb social shock waves caused by external effects such as recessions; calls therefore on the Member States to introduce policies to re-establish employment security by providing social protection to all types of workers, including in cases of dismissals; calls also on the Member States, in view of ILO Recommendation No 202, which defines social protection floors, to ensure and increase investment in social protection systems in order to guarantee their performance in preventing and eradicating poverty and inequalities while ensuring their sustainability;

30. Welcomes the fact that during the COVID-19 pandemic, many Member States have taken extraordinary measures to prevent and address homelessness by stopping evictions and providing emergency housing; urges Member States to provide access to housing and to provide sustainable, proactive and reactive solutions in order to eradicate homelessness by 2030; urges the Commission and the Member States to collect better and more harmonised data on homelessness, and to mainstream homelessness in all relevant policies;

31. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to put forward specific proposals to ensure a just transition in terms of improving the energy efficiency of housing, and to adequately address the problem of energy poverty in relation to the objectives and principles of the Green Compact;

32. Underlines that pay transparency is crucial in counteracting unfair wage differentials and discrimination; welcomes therefore the Commission's intention to introduce binding pay transparency measures, which should include a male-female wage equality index and fully respect the autonomy of national social partners; urges the swift adoption of these measures in order to tackle the gender pay and pension gaps, and to avoid further gender-based inequalities and discrimination in the labour market; reiterates the need for gender mainstreaming across all budgetary and policy areas; calls on the Member States and the Commission to promote entrepreneurship among women, and facilitate access to financing for them; calls on the Member States to unblock the negotiations on the Women on Boards Directive in the Council; calls for better inclusion of maternity and parental leave periods in pension entitlements;

33. Is concerned about growing discrimination and racism in Europe; calls on the Commission and Member States to strengthen the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation, policy, and practice, and to end structural discrimination against minorities in access to employment and in the workplace; calls on the Commission to present a communication on guidelines to prevent labour market segregation of minorities, including ethnic minorities, as well as on standards for discrimination-free recruitment policies for Member States and employers, including recommendations for the adoption of equality plans at company level and in sectoral collective agreements and the establishment of diversity task forces in the workplace, which should tackle stereotypes, prejudice and negative attitudes, and prevent discrimination in recruitment, promotion, pay and access to training; highlights that these equality action plans should also be used to promote ethnic and cultural diversity in the workplace, develop internal regulations against racism, related discrimination and harassment in the workplace, monitor and review recruitment, progression and retention of the workforce by equality strand in order to identify direct or indirect discriminatory practices, and to adopt corrective measures to reduce inequality in each of these areas; calls for these equality action plans to include the collection of equality data in compliance with privacy and fundamental rights standards for these purposes;

34. Points out the need to fight ageism in labour markets, including by raising awareness of Council Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, and by securing access to life-long learning opportunities through customised courses and trainings;

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35. Calls on Member States to provide accessible and affordable quality childcare and early education services, as well as short- and long-term care and social services, including for the elderly and people with disabilities, in order to facilitate independent living and women's participation in the labour market; calls, in this regard, on the Member States to swiftly and fully implement the Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers; calls for the development of an EU framework for care services to set minimum standards and quality guidelines;

36. Acknowledges the crucial role of European carers during the pandemic; calls for a European carers' strategy to ensure fair labour mobility in this sector and improve working conditions for carers;

37. Points out that the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the living standards of people with disabilities; calls on the Commission to put forward a comprehensive and long-term post-2020 EU Disability Strategy based on consultation of persons with disabilities and their representative family members or organisations; calls on the Commission and the Member States to take crisis-mitigation measures in line with the UN CRPD in order to ensure the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, their full and effective participation and inclusion in society, and their equal opportunities and non-discriminatory access to goods, services and leisure activities; calls on the Commission and the Member States to also step up efforts to secure the access to the labour market for people with disabilities by removing barriers, harnessing the opportunities digital work offers and creating incentives for their employment;

38. Is concerned about the stagnating proportion of early school leavers, especially among marginalised groups, and the increasing proportion of underperforming pupils; stresses that gaps in basic numeracy, literacy and digital skills are severe impediments to meaningful participation in society and the labour market; calls on the Member States to guarantee that high quality, accessible and inclusive education, training and life-long learning are a right for everyone; calls on the Commission and the Member States to step up their efforts to invest in high-quality education, vocational education and training with tailored support, strengthening requalification and retraining measures, in particular the acquisition of digital skills, and to promote lifelong learning, in order to allow the workforce to adapt to changing labour market requirements; stresses that educational outcomes are negatively affected by social exclusion, discrimination, stereotyping, poverty and segregation, which must also be addressed; calls on the Commission to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the driving factors behind early school leaving, including its social aspects, and based on this present a proposal for tackling the problem;

39. Stresses that matching qualifications with skills and job opportunities, as well as the swift recognition and better certification of professional qualifications in the EU, can contribute to the creation of a well-functioning and inclusive European labour market, and that closer cooperation between education systems and businesses could contribute to this aim; calls on the Member States to make the most of digital solutions in the field of education, taking into account the rapid development of technology and future labour market needs;

40. Highlights that qualifications and certified competences provide added value to workers, improving their position in the labour market, and can be transferred in labour market transitions; calls for public policy on skills to be oriented to certification and validation of qualifications and competences; stresses that skills-based compensation systems should be established in companies accessing public funds for upskilling workers in agreement with workers' representatives, as this system would ensure that there is a return on that public investment;

41. Welcomes the updated European Skills Agenda, which aims to meet the skills requirements and future challenges of the EU labour market, society and the ecological and digital transition; underlines that supporting adequate skills, with emphasis on digital skills, will improve productivity, easing the ecological and digital transition towards a greener and smarter economy; calls on the Member States to address digitalisation, automation, skills shortages and mismatches, and digital exclusion; stresses that particular attention should be focused on young people, the long-term unemployed, victims of gender violence, people with disabilities, Romani people and other groups at risk of discrimination; stresses the urgent need to establish a skills guarantee in line with the principles of the youth guarantee so that all Europeans receive good quality upskilling and reskilling opportunities;

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42. Highlights the need to address the social, economic and environmental determinants of health; calls for the creation of a European Health Union, the stress-testing of EU healthcare systems, minimum standards for quality healthcare, a European Health Response Mechanism, as well as strengthened EU health agencies and civil protection capacities, all based on the principles of solidarity, non-discrimination, strategic autonomy and cooperation, placing public health considerations at the core of the definition and implementation of all Union policies and activities, as enshrined in the Treaty, with systematic health impact assessment of all relevant policies and special attention to the provision of healthcare and treatment for the elderly; calls on the Member States to ensure access to high-quality people-centred and accessible healthcare, including efficient and well-resourced universal preventative care and health promotion for all; welcomes the shift in the European Semester from cost-saving to performance orientation and health outcomes for healthcare; calls on the Commission to step up its efforts to tackle inequalities in health between and within EU Member States, to develop common indicators and methodologies to monitor health and the performance of healthcare systems with a view to reducing inequalities, identifying and prioritising areas in need of improvement and increased funding; considers that the Commission should evaluate the effectiveness of measures in order to reduce health inequalities resulting from policies covering social, economic and environmental risk factors;

43. Reiterates the importance of the rule of law — including independent and efficient justice systems, quality public administrations and public procurement, and robust anti-corruption frameworks — as the basis for a sound business environment, functioning labour markets and the proper use of EU funds; stresses that the assessment of the rule of law and the effectiveness of the justice system should thus continue to be included in the European Semester; calls on the Member States to ratify the revised European Social Charter;

44. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
