



# Roxana Mînzatu

## Executive Vice-President: People, Skills and Preparedness

Confirmation hearing due to be held on Tuesday 12 November, at 14.30.

European Parliament committees responsible: Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), Culture and Education (CULT)

Roxana Mînzatu became a Member of the European Parliament in July 2024. She belongs to the Social Democratic Party in Romania, which is affiliated with the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament.

Mînzatu served as secretary of state in Bucharest, first at the Ministry of European Investments and Projects, then at the government's General Secretariat, where she had been coordinator for the Department for the integrated evaluation and monitoring of programmes financed from public and EU funds.

Mînzatu was a member of the Romanian Parliament from 2016 to 2020 and served as secretary of state at the Ministry of European Funds, and later as minister for European funds. She was also the president of the National Agency for Public Procurement. Mînzatu had previously served as Deputy Prefect in Braşov County.

Born in 1980, Mînzatu has a master's degree in European Integration from the Christian University Dimitrie Cantemir in Bucharest. Before entering politics, she gained professional experience in various roles, including within the Romanian Business School Foundation of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry.



*Roxana Mînzatu, Romania.*

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*This is one of a set of briefings designed to give an overview of issues of interest relating to the portfolios of the Commissioners-designate. All these briefings can be found at: [https://epthinktank.eu/commissioner\\_hearings\\_2024](https://epthinktank.eu/commissioner_hearings_2024).*



## Fundamentals of the portfolio

As the Treaties grant the EU limited competence in the areas of education, employment and social policy, Mînzatu's portfolio will focus on supporting Member States' reform and investment efforts to adapt to an evolving economic, industrial and demographic situation, to ensure overall prosperity and productivity, and to advance the digital and green transitions.

The [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), although legally non-binding, has become a guiding compass for the EU in its policies aimed at strengthening its social foundations. The related 2021 [action plan](#) sets out concrete initiatives. EU lawmakers committed to achieving three headline targets by 2030: ensuring that: (i) at least 78 % of people aged 20–64 are employed; (ii) at least 60 % of adults are engaged in training; and (iii) the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion is reduced by at least 15 million, including 5 million children.

The social pillar is implemented in [three ways](#). The first is through legislative and non-legislative measures focused on scrutinising and reinforcing the existing EU social *acquis*. The second is through specific funding mechanisms, such as the European Social Fund Plus ([ESF+](#)), supporting initiatives that directly contribute to the realisation of the social pillar's objectives. The third is through the integration of the social pillar's monitoring into the [European Semester](#), a key instrument of the EU's economic governance framework. The scope of the Semester has progressively expanded from economic and fiscal policies to include some social aspects. Delivering on the social pillar is a responsibility shared by EU institutions, Member States' national, regional and local authorities, social partners and civil society.

Having adequate skills sets is crucial for succeeding in a rapidly changing labour market and especially in the context of the green and digital transitions. However, the underachievement rate in [basic skills](#) has increased, and the quality and effectiveness of vocational training vary widely across the EU. At the same time, education and training policies have gained momentum at EU level, with efforts to make the European education area ([EEA](#)) a reality by 2025, implement the 2020 [European skills agenda](#) and the 2021–2027 [digital education action plan](#), with the [Erasmus+ programme](#) serving as a key building tool. Despite these efforts, much more needs to be done to achieve the EU headline target of adults in learning.

## Priority issues for the Vice-President

In her role as Executive Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness, Roxana Mînzatu will be responsible for the areas of skills and education, quality jobs and social rights. She must steer the overall work on strengthening the EU's human capital and, along with other Commissioners, seek to support people, strengthen EU societies and uphold the EU's social model.

In her [political guidelines](#) for the new Commission, President-elect Ursula von der Leyen recognised that the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights needed new impetus in several areas, to be jointly addressed with a new action plan. This plan should deal with the impact of digitalisation on the world of work and on people's mental health, but also address the related right to disconnect and advance equality.

To ensure a just transition for all, a roadmap for quality jobs will be prepared with social partners, and supported with increased funding and a renewed focus on the European social dialogue. Von der Leyen wants the EU to take a coordinated approach to poverty and the scarcity of affordable housing, which will be addressed by a plan and supported by a pan-European investment platform that would attract more private and public investment. To reunite EU societies through education, von der Leyen wants to strengthen the Erasmus+ programme.

## Main projects

As set out in von der Leyen's [mission letter](#), Mînzatu will need to steer the work towards achieving the EU's 2030 social [headline targets](#), and take forward a **new action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights**, in 2025.

In order to ensure a just transition for all, she will need to work with the social partners to develop a **roadmap for quality jobs**. By increasing collective bargaining coverage, the roadmap should support fair wages, uphold high health and safety standards, improve working conditions and provide training for both workers and the self-employed.

This renewed commitment to social dialogue will be anchored in a **new pact for European social dialogue**, in 2025. Mînzatu is also expected to further improve EU standards for **health and safety at work**, with a focus on the impact of digitalisation on the world of work, and propose a **right to disconnect** as well as an initiative on algorithmic management.

To address the need for **long-term care workers** and the related challenges, Mînzatu is to develop a coherent framework for the recognition of skills and qualifications, making career progression easier and improving working conditions. Supported by the [European Labour Authority](#), she should also seek to further facilitate **labour mobility** and modernise social security coordination.

Mînzatu should prepare the first EU **anti-poverty strategy** to address the root causes of poverty, and contribute to the drafting of an **affordable housing plan**. She is to pursue EU efforts addressing poverty and social exclusion of children (through the EU **child guarantee** scheme) and oversee the implementation of EU **social funding**, notably the European Social Fund Plus ([ESF+](#)) and the [Social Climate Fund](#).

Another key task will be to build and develop a **union of skills**. Based on a strategy developed with stakeholders, this union should focus on investment, adult and lifelong learning, vocational education and training, skill recognition and retention, and on enhancing skills intelligence. This common approach should also be reflected in further work on the **European education area**, the **European degree** and **European universities alliances** and a **strengthened Erasmus+**. To ensure the recognition of qualifications acquired in another country, Mînzatu will prepare an initiative on **skills portability**. She should also contribute to EU efforts to attract people with the right skills for the EU labour market through legal migration (the **talent pool**).

Mînzatu should lead EU efforts to improve education and training, which should translate into a **European strategy for vocational education and training**, an **action plan on basic skills** and a **STEM education strategic plan** (STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and mathematics). She should build upon the large-scale partnerships established through the **pact for skills**, to ensure the upskilling and reskilling of more workers in key industries.

She should also work to improve the working conditions of teachers across the EU, and their training and career prospects (the EU **teachers' agenda**) and encourage better cross-border cooperation and mobility between schools across Europe, by setting up a **European schools alliance**.

Mînzatu should also ensure that social, education and employment policies are adequately reflected in the European Semester.

### Working with Commissioners

Glenn Micallef: Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport

Hadja Lahbib: Preparedness and Crisis Management, and Equality

Dan Jørgensen: Energy and Housing

Olivér Várhelyi: Health and Animal Welfare

Dubravka Šuica: Mediterranean, and Demography

## Parliament's priorities

Parliament [considers](#) that the EU could play a more active role in protecting citizens and ensuring social cohesion, in particular in the area of minimum wages, and in providing social services and supporting non-profit organisations that are essential for representing the interests of civil society. Furthermore, Parliament has proposed measures to ensure the free movement of workers, promote pathways for legal migration and improve access to employment, among other initiatives.

To fight poverty and inequality, Parliament has sought to ensure adequate support to those in need and negotiated improvements to the relevant EU funds. For instance, during the negotiations on the long-term EU budget (2021–2027 [multiannual financial framework](#) (MFF)), it [obtained](#) a significant reinforcement for the flagship education programme [Erasmus+](#). In order to combat child poverty and exclusion, it has insisted that the EU [child guarantee](#) scheme be supported with sufficient resources while also monitoring its implementation and keeping it on the political [agenda](#). Parliament has [insisted](#) that [expenditure](#) to cover the [Next Generation EU](#) borrowing costs should not come at the expense of funding for existing programmes, and has also called for improvements to the use of EU structural and investment funds.

Parliament has [stressed](#) the importance of quality and inclusive education for all. To [meet](#) the job market's skills needs, it has [called](#) for more inclusive and lifelong education and training while also promoting modernised education and training systems to supply the required green and digital skills. It has also [advocated](#) increased digital literacy, and repeatedly called for supporting teachers and improving the recognition of their profession.

Parliament has put forward a number of resolutions demanding legislative action. To advance the issues of health and safety at work, it has called for a comprehensive strategy for [asbestos](#) removal and, in the context of workers' representation in multinational firms, for a revision of the [European Works Councils Directive](#), to ensure that EU employees of large multinationals receive information and have timely and meaningful dialogue with central management on key decisions that concern them. Considering the [right to disconnect](#) to be a fundamental right, Parliament has called for a directive setting minimum standards and conditions for workers. Parliament has further called for a directive on minimum requirements for quality standards and adequate remuneration for [traineeships](#) and for the establishment of an [EU framework](#) on the social and professional situation of artists and other professionals in the cultural and creative sectors (CCS).

## Executive responsibilities

Roxana Minzatu is tasked with coordinating the work that is primarily covered by several other Commissioners as a specific part of their portfolio. She should cooperate with the **Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport** in order to promote fairness between generations and support young people by giving them greater freedom. Jointly, they should support the mental health of children and young people and work on strengthening the EU sports model.

Minzatu and the **Commissioner for Preparedness and Crisis Management, as well as Equality** should work together to establish a new culture of preparedness that can help people in EU societies adapt to changes and risks, whether they be related to security, health or emergency threats. In this work, they should rely on strategic foresight and future-oriented policymaking. On another front, they should continue the efforts to build a union of equality that promotes a fairer social order.

Minzatu is expected to contribute to the European affordable housing plan, which will be prepared by the **Commissioner for Energy and Housing**. Her cooperation with the **Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare** should focus on matters of occupational health and safety. Her joint work with the **Commissioner responsible for demography** should help advance the implementation of the [demography toolbox](#) and seek to increase the participation of women, young people and other underrepresented groups in the EU labour market.

## Priorities and challenges

### Expectations/public opinion

In a [2024 Eurobarometer survey](#), 88 % of respondents considered a socially oriented EU personally important to them. Respondents agreed that living standards (45%), fair working conditions (44%) and access to quality health care (44%) were key to the EU's social and economic development. Participants felt that future EU action should target health care (38%), wages (34%), and old age income and pensions (30%). At national level, they considered their countries' main priority should be the high cost of living (48%), followed by wage adjustment (35%).

In a separate survey focused on [young people](#), respondents were asked about their expectations of the EU. Some 34% expected the EU to fight poverty, and economic and social inequalities, while 28% said they expected it to increase job opportunities for young people.

In the context of the EU's continued support for Ukraine, fast-moving international developments with uncertain outcomes, worsening climate issues, a cost of living crisis and slowing EU economic growth, the need to secure adequate **funding for EU policies without slowing down the implementation of the EU social acquis** is key.

The European Pillar of Social Rights [action plan](#) is to be reviewed in 2025, amid discussions on the next [long-term EU budget](#) (MFF), the insufficiency of EU [own](#) resources and the beginning of repayments for the EU's economic recovery debt under the [Next Generation EU](#) instrument in 2028. The EU's [revised economic governance framework](#), with its set of restrictive debt rules and tighter fiscal room for manoeuvre agreed upon by EU leaders in the spring of 2024, may lead to [cuts](#) in the social sector and a slow-down in public investment.

When EU leaders were asked to **renew their commitment to the European social model** through the [La Hulpe Declaration](#) of June 2024, not all supported this legally non-binding document. However, in the European Council's 2024-2029 [Strategic Agenda](#) of [June 2024](#) (also not legally binding), EU leaders committed to **upholding the EU's social dimension**. They affirmed the importance of investing in people's skills, training and education throughout their lives, as well as promoting talent mobility within the EU and beyond. They stated their wish for the EU and Member States to strengthen social dialogue, promote equal opportunities, reduce inequalities, increase labour market participation and promote youth employment. To improve economic and social wellbeing, they pledged to increase citizens' purchasing power, create good jobs and assure the quality of goods and services, thus enhancing economic and social cohesion.

In his September 2024 [report](#), Mario Draghi took a different approach to the EU's competitiveness, arguing that the **regulatory burden** on EU businesses is one of the obstacles standing in its way. Noting that this burden is high and continues to grow, the report points to a lack of a common methodology to assess it, and proposes ways to reduce and simplify existing regulations, as well as decrease the reporting obligations for businesses. Finding a coherent path between [better regulation](#) and deregulation may nevertheless prove challenging.

The Draghi report also identifies the causes of existing **skills shortages**, among them the deteriorating performance of the education system, a shrinking active labour population, limited adult learning, low labour mobility and poor working conditions. While education and training are in the remit of Member States, the report recommends a more strategic and future-oriented approach. Member States should better use the available 'granular' data to understand existing skills gaps and adapt their education and training systems with revised curricula. Particular attention should be given to adult learning and a reform of vocational training. Acute skills shortages in technical and STEM skills should be addressed with specific interventions. The report argues for a common EU system of certification for acquired skills and a redesign of the EU programmes dedicated to education and skills. EU funding should be linked to stricter accountability and impact evaluation.

In this respect, Draghi's recommendations confirm other findings, such as those of the [State of the Digital Decade 2024 report](#), which makes specific recommendations related to the digital transition.

For instance, to increase the unprecedented [shortage](#) of ICT professionals, the EU's [digital targets](#) seek to increase [women's participation](#) in ICT and the tech sector.

Among the initiatives in the area of **education**, the Commission is [preparing](#) to evaluate progress in the European education area in 2025, as a basis for its further development up to 2030.

While the EU has no direct competence in **housing**, its fiscal, competition, State aid and energy rules affect [housing provision](#). For instance, the revised [Energy Performance of Buildings Directive](#), transposing the EU [Climate Law](#), set new targets for achieving a net-zero housing stock by 2050. Significant public and private investment is needed to reach these targets. As housing affordability has become a [problem](#) for many EU citizens and is also seen as a [risk](#) for the sound functioning of the single market, the Commission is taking steps towards a coordinated EU approach to housing. The Commissioner for [Energy and Housing](#) will focus on the strategy, planning (with Mînzatu) and opening a path to investment, while the Vice-President for a [Clean, Just and Competitive Transition](#) must revise State aid rules to enable Member States to provide broader housing support measures.

Given the increased life expectancy, paralleled by a trend of declining birth rates and below-replacement fertility rates, the EU's population is [decreasing and ageing](#), with growth only sustained by [immigration](#) from third countries. The shrinking working-age group puts labour markets and welfare states under [pressure](#), raising the burden of the public debt. While mitigating and managing the impacts of **demographic change** is the task of national governments, the 2023 [recommendations](#) of the High-Level Group on the Future of Social Protection and of the Welfare State in the EU call for welfare state modernisation and reform. In his April 2024 [report](#), Enrico Letta meanwhile warns against the long-term impact of a shrinking and ageing population on the EU single market. As the population ages, demand for social care and **long-term care** also rises. Both issues are the Member States' responsibility. However, the EU has been offering [insights](#) into the implications of demographic change on health and long-term care needs. Mînzatu's tasks include creating a more coherent EU framework to address the shortage of long-term care workers.

In the new Commission, a common EU approach to [demography-related issues](#) will be dealt with by the Commissioner for the Mediterranean and guided by Mînzatu, who should also seek to facilitate **labour mobility**. This entails a [review](#) of the mandate of the European Labour Authority ([ELA](#)). Founded in 2019, the ELA contributes to ensuring that EU rules on labour mobility and social security coordination are enforced in a fair, simple and effective way. The ELA only reached full operational capacity in 2023, and the inspections carried out have revealed many violations involving both EU and third-country nationals as victims. However, to make a [real difference](#), the ELA would need to conduct many more inspections a year. As part of **legal migration** and to attract third-country nationals with the right skills, the Commission has proposed the establishment of an [EU talent pool](#), an IT platform based on voluntary participation, to allow third-country nationals to express their interest in and apply for work, while also enabling employers to search for potential employees.

## European Parliament

### Treaty basis and European Parliament competence

Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Articles 8-10, 19, 45-48, 145-166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). The common objectives of the EU and its Member States in the social and employment area are the promotion of employment, improved living and working conditions, proper social protection, dialogue between management and other members of staff, the development of human resources to ensure lasting high employment and the combating of exclusion (Article 151 TFEU).

Article 153 TFEU specifies the areas in which the EU can adopt directives through the ordinary legislative procedure, where Parliament acts as co-legislator. The Council can also adopt recommendations, but Parliament has no involvement in this process.

Policies in the area of education and vocational training are decided and implemented by the Member States (Articles 165-166 TFEU). The EU's role is one of support and coordination, with harmonisation of laws and regulations being specifically excluded. The Council can adopt recommendations, Parliament is not involved.

To Parliament, ensuring **adequate funding for EU programmes** to support employment and social policies in the next [long-term EU budget](#) is vital. Taking stock of the [progress](#) achieved since the Porto Social Summit of May 2021, Parliament [called](#) on the Commission to do more to dovetail the European Pillar of Social Rights action plan with the relevant EU strategies and to present a legal framework to anticipate and manage changes related to the green and digital transitions in the world of work. In its annual European Semester monitoring, Parliament advocated improvements to employment and social priorities. A key step related to the **world of work** was the adoption of the [Directive on Minimum Wages](#) in 2022. It establishes procedures to ensure the adequacy of statutory minimum wages (in countries where these exist) and improve access to minimum wage protection for workers entitled to a minimum wage under national law. It also promotes collective bargaining on wage setting. Further Parliament initiatives have focused on the areas mentioned below.

In terms of **health and safety at work**, the existing EU legal framework has been updated with the [fourth](#) set of rules to protect workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work to which reprotoxic substances have been added. Despite being banned in the EU since 2005, asbestos still presents risks to workers, which were highlighted by the Green Deal renovation wave. Following Parliament's call for action in 2021, new rules were proposed and adopted in 2023 to ensure more robust protection of workers from [asbestos](#) by reducing the exposure limits and providing for more accurate ways to measure exposure levels. New limit values for lead and diisocyanates were adopted as part of the fifth update of EU rules on carcinogens, mutagens or reprotoxic substances and of the EU rules on chemical agents.

Major steps towards **equality between men and women** in the EU include the 2019 [Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers](#), which aims to increase the participation of women in the labour market, the take-up of family-related leave and flexible working arrangements. It also provides opportunities for workers to take leave to care for relatives who need support. The 2022 [Directive on women on boards](#) addresses the imbalance between women and men in economic decision-making at the highest levels of companies. The principle of ['equal pay for equal work or work of equal value'](#) – an EU right since 1958 – has been strengthened with the 2023 [Directive on pay transparency](#). The new rules oblige EU companies to share information on salaries and take action if their gender pay gap exceeds 5%. The directive includes provisions on compensation for victims of pay discrimination and penalties, including fines, for employers who break the rules.

Following the Parliament's 2021 [call](#) for action on **legal migration policy and law**, the Commission proposed the establishment of an EU [talent pool](#). To help better enforce EU labour law, Parliament [called](#) for the European Labour Authority's mandate to be substantially strengthened to ensure its added value to national enforcement authorities. Both these initiatives will require further attention.

The Commission proposed to revise the [coordination of social security systems](#) in 2016 ([Regulation 883/2004](#)). Following difficult negotiations and two failed provisional agreements, most Member States seemed to support the Belgian Council Presidency's idea of splitting the regulation, and only concluding the four chapters where consensus already existed. As Parliament rejected this approach as 'selective', the fate of the file remains unclear. Related to the (national) rules on **social security**, and in line with one of the EU headline targets under the European Pillar of Social Rights to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion, is the idea of a coordinated EU approach to **minimum income**. Building on the initiative first formulated in a 2023 [Council recommendation](#), Parliament [called](#) on the Commission to consider a directive on adequate minimum income.

## Recent developments

To strengthen the role of national equality bodies (organisations that offer assistance in cases of discrimination), the Commission proposed two directives setting new standards in 2022. Identical in terms of their substance, [one](#) concerns equality between men and women in employment, [the other](#) concerns equality in terms of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation. Both proposals were adopted in the spring of 2024 and signed into law.

Following a pilot project conducted in eight EU countries, the Commission proposed a directive establishing a [European Disability Card](#) and the European Parking Card for persons with disabilities. New rules are to be [finalised](#) shortly, to facilitate travel in the EU for persons with disabilities. An extension to third-country nationals has also seen [progress](#).

In the post-COVID-19 context, Parliament called for a directive to set minimum standards for telework, (initiative on the [right to disconnect](#)). European social dialogue negotiations were launched in June 2022 and failed a year later, following which the Commission promised to initiate [legislative action](#). This outcome makes the Commission's intention to further strengthen EU social dialogue very topical, in particular as regards the introduction of new technologies.

The directive on improving [working conditions of digital platform workers](#), soon to be finalised, will set [rules](#) to facilitate the correct determination of platform workers' employment status and improve transparency, fairness and accountability in algorithmic management in the workplace. These new rules on algorithmic management join broader EU efforts to address the risks related to [artificial intelligence in the workplace](#) (the [General Data Protection Regulation](#) applied since May 2018 and the [Artificial Intelligence Act](#) adopted in May 2024). This first-ever set of AI-related legislation will require monitoring, evaluation and adjustments, while trade unions already [call](#) for an EU directive to define minimum standards for the design and use of algorithmic systems in the workplace.

To improve social dialogue in the EU further, this time in the context of large multinationals and in response to Parliament's [call for action](#), the Commission put forward a [revised directive](#) on European Works Councils in January 2024. The work on the file having [progressed](#), the new Parliament is expected to confirm formally shortly whether the file will be carried forward.

In response to Parliament's [call](#) for a stronger EU legal framework for traineeships, the Commission proposed a directive and revised recommendation. Work on both [files](#) is expected to resume soon.

Recent accomplishments in the area of education include the Commission presenting a [blueprint for a European degree](#) in March 2024, and the Council adopting a recommendation on [learning mobility](#) in May 2024. Currently, 64 [European Universities alliances](#) gather more than 560 higher education institutions from across Europe. Further steps will build on the ongoing [interim evaluation](#) of the European Education Area and the [review](#) of the [digital education action plan](#) launched in April 2024.

## FURTHER READING

Bassot E., [The six policy priorities of the von der Leyen Commission: An end-of-term assessment](#), EPRS, European Parliament, 2024.

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, [2019–2024 activity report](#), European Parliament, 2024.  
European Parliament, [Roxana Minzatu hearing documents and CV](#), 2024.

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