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*Plenary sitting*

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**A10-0014/2025**

21.2.2025

# **REPORT**

on the European Social Fund Plus post-2027  
(2024/2077(INI))

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

Rapporteur: Marit Maij

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the European Social Fund Plus post-2027

(2024/2077(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Articles 46(d), 149, 153(2)(a), 164, 175 and 349 thereof,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to the Regulation (EU) 2024/3236 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 December 2024 amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1057 and (EU) 2021/1058 as regards Regional Emergency Support to Reconstruction (RESTORE)<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which entered into force on 21 January 2011 in accordance with Council Decision 2010/48/EC of 26 November 2009 concerning the conclusion, by the European Community, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) proclaimed and signed by the Council, Parliament and the Commission on 17 November 2017,
- having regard to the La Hulpe Declaration on the Future of the European Pillar of Social Rights signed by Parliament, the Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Council on 16 April 2024,
- having regard to the Liège Declaration of 5 March 2024 entitled ‘Affordable, decent and sustainable housing for all’,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 27 March 2024 on the 9th Cohesion Report (COM(2024)0149),
- having regard to the Communication Commission of 20 March 2024 entitled ‘Labour and skills shortages in the EU: an action plan’,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 12 March 2021 on Roma equality, inclusion and participation<sup>4</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 21, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1057/oj>.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L, 2024/3236, 23.12.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/3236/oj>.

<sup>3</sup> OJ L 23, 27/01/2010, p. 35, ELI: [http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2010/48\(1\)/oj](http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2010/48(1)/oj).

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 93, 19.3.2021, p. 1.

- having regard to the Commission communication of 4 March 2021 entitled ‘The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan’ (COM(2021)0102) and its proposed 2030 headline targets on employment, training and reducing poverty,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 7 October 2020 entitled ‘A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation’ (COM(2020)0620),
- having regard to the annual reports of the European Court of Auditors on the performance of the EU budget for 2019 and 2021,
- having regard to its resolution of 23 November 2023 on job creation – the just transition and impact investments<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 21 November 2023 entitled ‘Children first – strengthening the Child guarantee, two years on from its adoption’<sup>6</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 December 2022 entitled ‘Towards equal rights for persons with disabilities’<sup>7</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 29 April 2021 on the European Child Guarantee<sup>8</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 February 2021 on reducing inequalities with a special focus on in-work poverty<sup>9</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 21 January 2021 on access to decent and affordable housing for all<sup>10</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 21 January 2021 on the EU Strategy for Gender Equality<sup>11</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 24 November 2020 on tackling homelessness rates in the EU<sup>12</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 October 2020 on the Youth Guarantee<sup>13</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 5 July 2022 entitled ‘Towards a common European action on care’<sup>14</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 18 June 2020 on the European Disability Strategy

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<sup>5</sup> OJ C, C/2024/4224, 24.7.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/4224/oj>.

<sup>6</sup> OJ C, C/2024/4212, 24.7.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/4212/oj>.

<sup>7</sup> OJ C 177, 17.5.2023, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> OJ C 506, 15.12.2021, p. 94.

<sup>9</sup> OJ C 465, 17.11.2021, p. 62.

<sup>10</sup> OJ C 456, 10.11.2021, p. 145.

<sup>11</sup> OJ C 456, 10.11.2021, p. 208.

<sup>12</sup> OJ C 425, 20.10.2021, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> OJ C 395, 29.9.2021, p. 101.

<sup>14</sup> OJ C 47, 7.2.2023, p. 30.

post-2020<sup>15</sup>,

- having regard to the report by Mario Draghi of 9 September 2024 on the future of European competitiveness,
  - having regard to the report by Enrico Letta of 10 April 2024 entitled ‘Much more than a market’,
  - having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Regional Development,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A10-0014/2025),
- A. whereas the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) supports, complements and adds value to the policies of the Member States in order to ensure equal opportunities, equal access to the labour market, fair and high-quality working conditions, social protection and inclusion, in particular focussing on quality and inclusive education and training, lifelong learning, investment in children and young people and access to basic services;
- B. whereas the ESF+ is the only EU fund primarily focused on social policies, and is therefore unique in itself and is strongly effective and necessary in achieving social inclusion, together with the cohesion policy; whereas the ESF+ must be used in the most efficient way in order to achieve systemic changes via structural reforms, focussing on its complementarity with Member States’ budgets in order to motivate the Member States to use the fund for these reforms, notwithstanding that it is crucial also to develop more holistic social policies at EU level to tackle inequalities and exclusion;
- C. whereas cohesion policy, the European Structural and Investment Funds and, in particular, the ESF+, are strong tools for cohesion between Member States, regions and areas, including urban and rural areas;
- D. whereas the situation and needs of each region in the EU are different; whereas local communities are the direct beneficiaries of the ESF+, and it is a precondition that regional and local stakeholders are directly involved in shaping this instrument; whereas community-led local development is a tool for involving citizens at local level in developing responses to the social, environmental and economic challenges faced today and thus it is an important tool to facilitate the implementation of the ESF+; whereas the implementation of the ESF+ at national level is often accompanied by unnecessary administrative burdens and complicated or ineffective rules;
- E. whereas different people in vulnerable situations have different needs, such as children, single parent and large families, women in poverty, unemployed people and those in precarious jobs, migrants, labour migrants and victims of human trafficking, children, persons with disabilities, young and elderly people, homeless people and Roma people; whereas the digital and green transition is much needed and brings many opportunities but also challenges for everyone, such as the digital skills gap and the digital gender

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<sup>15</sup> OJ C 362, 8.9.2021, p. 8.

divide, and the need to reskill the workforce, and whereas to succeed in this endeavour, the EU must ensure a just transition that does not leave anyone behind; whereas there are people in vulnerable situations in the EU who are left on the margins of social policies and ESF+ funded programmes; whereas extraordinary efforts and structural changes are needed to reach all people in vulnerable situations and to prevent the number of people in these situations from increasing;

- F. whereas around 100 million people in the EU have some form of disability; whereas only half of persons with disabilities are employed; whereas 28.8 % of persons with disabilities are at risk of poverty or social exclusion<sup>16</sup>; whereas persons with disabilities living in the EU continue to face multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination in all areas of their life, including the denial of decent accommodation; whereas persons with disabilities are entitled to enjoy their fundamental rights on an equal basis and are entitled to full and effective participation in all areas of life and society;
- G. whereas 22.3 % of women live in poverty, compared to 20.3 % of men, and whereas women continue to be more affected by poverty and the risk of social exclusion than men<sup>17</sup>; whereas women in the EU earn 12.7 % less than men on average and this gender pay gap has over decades resulted in a 29.5 % gender pension gap, creating an unequal level of economic independence between elderly women and men; whereas almost half of single mothers live in poverty or are at risk of poverty or social exclusion;
- H. whereas in 2023, 94.6 million people in the EU, some 21.4 % of the population, were living in households at risk of poverty or social exclusion, with an at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate of 24.8 % for the EU-27<sup>18</sup>; whereas in 2020, approximately 14 % of households with children (7.8 million households) consisted of single parents; whereas almost half (48 %) of single mothers and a third (32 %) of single fathers are at risk of poverty or social exclusion<sup>19</sup>; whereas almost one in four children in the EU as a whole is therefore at risk of poverty or social exclusion; whereas the youth unemployment rate in the EU is nearly 15 %; whereas being unemployed, in particular at a young age, can lead to financial problems, as well as social isolation, mental health issues and less happiness;
- I. whereas Europe's overall increase in life expectancy and demographic ageing is generating a growing demand for care across all age groups; whereas 80 % of long-term care is provided by informal carers, predominantly women; whereas the care sector faces a growing shortage of workers in all Member States; whereas the European care strategy aims to ensure quality, affordable and accessible care services with better working conditions and work-life balance for carers across the EU; whereas programmes, projects and actions that promote active ageing and intergenerational ties are supported through the ESF+; whereas the ESF+ is the main EU funding instrument to support the Member States in the implementation of the EU-wide rules on the work-

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<sup>16</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Disability\\_statistics\\_-\\_poverty\\_and\\_income\\_inequalities](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Disability_statistics_-_poverty_and_income_inequalities)

<sup>17</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender_pay_gap_statistics).

<sup>18</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Living\\_conditions\\_in\\_Europe\\_-\\_poverty\\_and\\_social\\_exclusion](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Living_conditions_in_Europe_-_poverty_and_social_exclusion)

<sup>19</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20210601-2>

life balance for parents and carers;

- J. whereas the availability and affordability of decent housing is decreasing because of reasons that may differ from one Member State to another, such as over-liberalisation of the market, real-estate speculation, unregulated short-term rentals, the drop in purchasing power of people in poverty and the lack of social and public housing, and is one of the major challenges Europeans are facing today; whereas we are far from reaching the target of ending homelessness by 2030; whereas the EU will have its first ever Commissioner for tackling the housing crises, and the first ever European affordable and sustainable housing plan is expected in 2025; whereas homeless children should be specifically targeted in this plan; whereas such proposals, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, need to go hand in hand with national measures in order to improve access to sustainable and affordable housing and the quality of everyday life, such as measures concerning short-stay rentals or other market interventions in highly stressed areas;
- K. whereas one child in four is still at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU<sup>20</sup>, and whereas the current trend will not meet the target of reducing the number of children in poverty by at least 5 million by 2030; whereas the European Child Guarantee aims to prevent and combat child poverty and the social exclusion of children in need, by guaranteeing effective and free access to high-quality early childhood education and care, education, school-based activities, at least one free healthy meal each school day, as well as healthcare, and effective access to healthy nutrition and adequate housing; whereas the Executive Vice-President of the Commission for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness is responsible for strengthening the Child Guarantee; whereas ESF+ resources alone are not sufficient for addressing the challenge of child poverty in the EU and, therefore, a significant increase in funding for the European Child Guarantee as well as synergies with other European and national funds are of the utmost importance;
- L. whereas the social and economic integration of migrants, including labour migrants, refugees and victims of human trafficking, should be improved in order to ensure that they are included in our societies; whereas successful inclusion requires not only equal access to the labour market, but also complete participation in society; whereas special attention should be given to migrants coming from non-EU countries and undocumented migrants; whereas different EU funds, including ESF+ and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, play their own role in this regard;
- M. whereas the population of the EU is decreasing; whereas depopulation is taking place in some regions and there is an increasing concentration of the population in certain urban areas; whereas efforts should be made to increase development and cohesion in these areas; whereas demographic changes will lead to a smaller workforce, requiring the upskilling, reskilling and expansion of the workforce;
- N. whereas the report on the future of European competitiveness by Mario Draghi warns of the significant skills gap the EU is facing, with 77 % of EU companies reporting that even newly recruited employees do not have the required skills, and 42 % of Europeans lacking digital basic skills; whereas the report deplores the insufficient number of

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<sup>20</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20240719-1>

workers benefiting from training and the lack of progress in this area, with more than 50 million workers requiring training to meet the headline target of adults participating in training every year; whereas vocationally trained professionals and people with practical skills are crucial to European societies; whereas the further building of European competitiveness cannot be achieved without strengthening human capital; whereas timely investments in the reskilling and upskilling of workers that are at risk of losing their jobs or whose skills have become obsolete can among others help prevent them from becoming trapped in poverty;

- O. whereas particular attention, including specific measures targeting the needs on the ground where relevant, should be paid to rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, the outermost regions and regions that suffer from severe and permanent natural, economic or demographic disadvantages, such as sparsely populated regions, islands, mountainous areas and cross-border regions;
- P. whereas the Commission has proposed minimum targets for 2030 to ensure progress towards Roma equality, inclusion and participation under the 10-year plan to support Roma in the EU; whereas these targets include, among others, reducing the gap in housing deprivation by at least one third, cutting the proportion of Roma children who attend segregated primary schools by at least half in Member States with a significant Roma population, and reducing the poverty gap between Roma and the general population by at least half; whereas the ESF+ will remain the main financial tool for reaching the 2030 Roma targets;

#### *Principles of the ESF+ post-2027*

1. Insists that the ESF+ must continue to be the key and primary instrument for supporting the Member States, regions, local communities and people in strengthening the social dimension of the Union and in pursuing socio-economic development that leaves no one behind;
2. Stresses that the ESF+ must address, contribute and adapt to tackling social challenges such as the consequences of climate change and digitalisation, while addressing social challenges such as the rising cost of living and wages that do not increase at the same speed, promoting social resilience, reducing inequalities and protecting the most vulnerable people; insists that the ESF+ should drive long-term investment and growth, focusing on social and territorial cohesion, while supporting structural transformation across the EU and enhancing convergence between the Member States;
3. Insists that the ESF+ must continue to enhance upward social convergence, especially for the most deprived people, and invest in human capital, employment, skills development and social inclusion, while boosting entrepreneurship and social innovation, investing in children, addressing the digital and green transition, demographic challenges and regions impacted by crises, among others Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine;
4. Insists that the ESF+ must continue to enhance employment opportunities, facilitate fair labour mobility, foster the creation of quality jobs, ensure decent working conditions and improve the employment participation rate, in particular of women, persons with disabilities and other people in vulnerable situations, to enhance social and economic



resilience and thus help to adapt to industrial changes, also through training, reskilling and upskilling;

5. Underlines the need for the ESF+ to be based on a social investment strategy and life-long approach by supporting measures that can provide medium- to long-term solutions for people;
6. Insists that the objectives of the ESF+ should be to achieve social inclusion, high employment levels with high-quality and sustainable jobs, adequate wages, decent working conditions, including the wellbeing of workers, healthy working environments, fair social welfare systems in the Member States, as well as vocational education and training opportunities, and lifelong learning for all, taking into account specific needs of people in vulnerable situations, in order to develop a skilled, competitive and resilient workforce, ready for the twin transition and the future world of work, and to build fair social protections and inclusive and cohesive societies, with the aims of eradicating poverty, combating inequalities and delivering on the principles and the headline targets set out in the EPSR;
7. Calls for a strong, reinforced and separate ESF+ with significantly increased public support for instruments in the Member States with the aim of providing for people in vulnerable situations and those most in need in our societies, investing in people and skills, helping to lift people out of poverty and social exclusion, and boosting social investment and social entrepreneurship; insists, therefore, that achieving the ESF+ post-2027 objectives would require an important and substantiated increase in the ESF+ budget in the 2028-2034 ESF+ financial envelope;
8. Calls on the Commission to provide increased, dedicated and well-allocated funding for attaining the objectives of the ESF+ and those of the EPSR and its action plan and headline targets; expresses concerns, therefore, over attempts to split or merge the existing ESF+ with other funds, since that could create serious risks for the implementation of its objectives and those of the EPSR, its action plan and headline targets; warns that unifying, streamlining, centralising or merging funds may not improve their effectiveness; stresses, in this regard, that any possible remodelling of the fund must preserve the effectiveness and the purpose of the ESF+ by serving the objectives of promoting employment, social inclusion, education, training and skill development, and must be managed as close as possible to the beneficiaries;
9. Believes that the ESF+ should remain in a shared management governance model and that therefore it needs to be avoided that a different ESF+ governance leads to losing the priority given to social aspects, including employment, education, skills, training and social inclusion projects, a potential loss of focus, and to the funding not reaching the local level, people in vulnerable situations and those most in need, while increasing the risk of the funds being reallocated for other purposes;
10. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the participation, provision of information to and consultation of social partners, civil society organisations (CSOs), including not-for-profit social services, social enterprises, education and training providers, and representatives of the target groups in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of the ESF+, to allocate adequate funding for this

purpose and to prevent the exclusion of smaller actors; calls on the Commission to respect the partnership principle at EU level, as it is essential to the success of the ESF+ and must be maintained under the next multiannual financial framework (MFF); calls for the CSOs to be involved in the ESF+ Committee, as they are the main implementing partners of the fund;

11. Highlights the need for the ESF+ governance model to allow, while keeping a high level of transparency, for national, regional and local specificities and challenges to be well-reflected in operational programmes, not least by taking due account of the expertise of national and regional stakeholders, including civil society, and by ensuring that the funding goes to organisations and activities that target people in need;
12. Highlights that the availability of and universal access to quality public services such as early childhood education and care, education and health, as well as access to adequate, affordable and decent housing and essential services such as affordable energy, sanitation, water and healthy nutrition, are necessary conditions for ensuring equal opportunities and improving employment levels, improving living and working conditions and fighting poverty and social exclusion; underlines the role that the ESF+ can play in this regard; draws particular attention to the situation of older people who, due to rising living costs and the declining purchasing power provided by their pensions, are living in or are at risk of falling into severe poverty, which often leads to them being deprived of basic needs, such as food, housing and access to care facilities, resulting in the loss of social dignity;
13. Notes that the current ESF+ programme was adopted before the emergence of the crises that have led to high inflation and an increased cost of living, and therefore require higher public and social investment, such that the existing ESF+ cannot meet current needs; calls on the Commission, therefore, to ensure that a comprehensive, stable and large-scale needs-and-rights based budget, which takes into account inflation, the increased cost of living, poverty rates and the need for access to affordable housing, is guaranteed for the ESF+ in the next MFF;
14. Underlines that the post-2027 ESF+ should invest in tackling enduring social challenges and stay close to the general and specific objectives set out in the current ESF+, while being capable of responding and adapting to changing socio-economic circumstances; emphasises the importance of the fund's principles of shared management, clear objectives and thematic concentrations, and that most of the fund should be spent as close as possible to those using the fund in close cooperation with local and regional authorities and organisations; highlights the need to share best practices on the most efficient and transparent implementation of the ESF+; highlights the need to continuously assess the impact and effectiveness of ESF initiatives;
15. Stresses that the post-2027 ESF+ should first and foremost address structural social and economic challenges; expresses its concern that the ESF+ has been repeatedly used as an emergency response tool and underlines that this approach poses a risk for the longer-term policy and investment objectives of cohesion policy and also poses the risk that the people for whom cohesion policy is intended cannot be sufficiently reached;
16. Calls on the Commission, therefore, to protect the budget allocation of the ESF+ so that

it can be used for its main objectives and beneficiaries and to propose a financial reserve instrument that enables the EU to respond rapidly and in a flexible manner to social emergencies and crisis situations, complementing the ESF+ and other cohesion funds, either built on the success of the temporary EU instrument launched in 2020, entitled ‘Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE)’, or be it an EU unemployment reinsurance scheme, or based on the EU Solidarity Fund, designed to be mobilised to repair damage caused by natural disasters or public health emergencies; calls on the Commission, therefore, to ensure its sufficient funding with a view to the increased risks in these areas due to climate change;

### ***Objectives, priorities and budget***

17. Underlines that horizontal principles, such as gender equality, anti-discrimination based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, nationality, or racial or ethnic origin<sup>21</sup>, and freedom of movement, should be integral to the ESF+; stresses the importance of an intersectional approach throughout the entire development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the fund;
18. Stresses the importance of the social inclusion of persons with disabilities and insists therefore that the ESF+ supports the employment of persons with disabilities through work and training placements, especially in facilitating transitions from sheltered workshops to the open labour market;
19. Stresses that more efforts are needed to ensure that persons with disabilities can access quality support and enjoy their rights as described in the UNCRPD; stresses that the upcoming ESF+ should keep prioritising independent living and the transition from institutional care to community-based care, and facilitate home support and personal assistance schemes; calls for the ESF+ to deliver on the European disability rights strategy 2021-2030, and in particular to facilitate the implementation of the upcoming EU Guidance on Independent Living and Inclusion in the Community, the upcoming Framework on Social Services of Excellence for Persons with Disabilities, and the Disability Employment Package;
20. Insists that the ESF+ should target disadvantaged people in our societies, in particular marginalised people and communities such as children in vulnerable situations and older people, ethnic minorities, Roma people, persons with disabilities or chronic diseases, homeless people, low-income groups, the long-term unemployed, as well as those living in rural areas, islands or remote regions who face unique socio-economic challenges; underlines that the ESF+ must be inclusive, with special attention given to all kinds of families, people and families in depopulated areas where access to services and opportunities can be more limited, and to children deprived of parental care; further stresses that the ESF+ should encourage the adoption of measures that prevent family separation for families in precarious situations, including parenting education programmes, family-focused therapy and employment training;
21. Stresses that the ESF+ should invest in projects targeting women’s employment and the social and economic inclusion of women, with special attention to single mothers and female-headed households; insists that the ESF+ supports women who are in vulnerable

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<sup>21</sup> Article 10 TFEU.

situations and need extra support to (re)integrate in societies and the labour market, including women who are victims of gender-based violence, including economic violence; calls for a cross-cutting gender approach<sup>22</sup> along the ESF+;

22. Calls on the Commission, in the light of current challenges, to include in the specific objectives of the ESF+ the promotion of the just transition, ending homelessness, the promotion of social enterprises in the social economy and the socio-economic integration of people in vulnerable situations, including migrants, young people, older people and those living in areas impacted by demographic decline and persons with disabilities or chronic diseases, as well as those coming back to the labour market after a longer absence;
23. Stresses that reaching the EPSR's targets on poverty becomes challenging, unless specific support is dedicated to developing medium to long-term solutions to lift people out of poverty and to tackle the structural causes of inequalities, making them more resilient to upcoming challenges, addressing current gaps in national social protection systems and therefore reinforcing welfare systems, and mitigating the social impact of crises in a targeted manner; insists on dedicating support to ensure decent living conditions leaving no-one behind, with access to high-quality essential public services; calls for the EU anti-poverty strategy, outlined in Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's political guidelines for the 2024-2029 term to go beyond policy proposals and to allocate better funding in the upcoming MFF dedicated to social justice across funds, and to ease the delivery of the ESF+ on the ground; underlines the role of the ESF+ in implementing the strategy;
24. Stresses that addressing child poverty requires appropriately funded, comprehensive and integrated measures, together with the efficient implementation of the European Child Guarantee at national level, and insists that it constitutes a central pillar of the EU anti-poverty strategy; repeats its previous demands for the ESF+ post-2027 financial envelope to include a dedicated budget of at least EUR 20 billion for the European Child Guarantee; insists that all the Member States should allocate at least 5 % of their ESF+ resources to tackling child poverty and those Member States with a rate of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion above the EU average should allocate a higher amount to tackle the problem more effectively; insists on transparent and efficient use of the European Child Guarantee budget as close to the target groups as possible and in cooperation with whole spectrum of stakeholders and local organisations;
25. Urges the Commission, in line with the two general objectives of the fund and to reflect their importance on an equal footing, to raise the earmarking for social inclusion beyond the current 25 % and the earmarking for food aid and basic material assistance for the most deprived persons to 5 %, in response to rising living and food costs;
26. Welcomes the Commission president's announcement the delivery of a European affordable housing plan and the launch of a pan-European investment platform on affordable and sustainable housing; shares the ambition to prioritise the tackling of the housing crisis, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, and emphasises that the post-

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<sup>22</sup> Commission communication of 5 March 2020, 'A Union Of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025', COM(2020)0620.

2027 ESF+ should enhance timely and equal access to affordable, decent, accessible, inclusive, sustainable and high-quality services promoting access to housing, including measures such as social housing and affordable rental schemes; believes that all Member States must invest a sufficient amount of their ESF+ resources into tackling homelessness and asks the Commission to propose a significant earmarking for this;

27. Emphasises the need to ensure sufficient financing of the ESF+ post-2027 for high-quality, accessible public education and training for all, as well as the social right for workers to participate in skills development, upskilling, reskilling and lifelong learning, and for the addressing of skills shortages and brain drain, ensuring that individuals can successfully navigate labour market transitions without facing any type of discrimination, particularly workers impacted by the digital and green transition, and promoting specific actions for older workers to make the most of senior talent and experience; calls in this context for close cooperation between key actors, including educational institutions, employers, workers, governments and local authorities;
28. Underlines the potential of the ESF+ in fostering innovation and digital skills, while supporting workers affected by the digital and green transition by aligning educational and training programmes in a targeted way with the evolving needs of key sectors and ensuring access to lifelong learning opportunities, so that workers of all ages can continuously adapt their skills to meet the new employment needs of a rapidly changing economy; stresses the need for more subsidies and development of programmes that support workers in the digital and green transition, including retraining and reskilling of workers;
29. Insists that measures aiming to improve access to the labour market and promote skills acquisition should be designed in a way that promotes and recognises the autonomy of individuals, anticipates future skills needs and targets employees at risk of future job-loss; recalls in this context the wide range of skills-enhancing initiatives undertaken at the EU level that can provide useful guidance to the development of education and training programmes at the national and regional level;
30. Calls for the strengthening of efforts to support the implementation of the Youth Guarantee; urges the Commission to propose an increased earmarking beyond the current 12.5 % of their ESF+ resources for all Member States to support the targeted actions and structural reforms to support quality youth employment, vocational education and training, in particular traineeships and apprenticeships, and the transition from school to work, pathways to reintegrate into education or training and second chance education; repeats, in this context, its call on the Member States to ban exploitative practices, including unpaid traineeships; emphasises the need for monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure its long-term impact and effectiveness;
31. Underlines the importance of the ESF+ in focusing on different groups with different needs; stresses, therefore, the importance of allocating support to, among others, projects on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities, Roma people, the ageing population in society, women and children, and female-headed and large households and families, and the socio-economic integration of migrants, including labour migrants, with special attention to migrant women; emphasises further that the ESF+ should

support projects for social and educational objectives and improving skills in regions experiencing significant depopulation; insists that the ESF+ post-2027 incorporates other aspects of social inclusion, such as housing, health and family circumstances and the support of public and community-based services; underlines that there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution and that ways to address those needs may vary from region to region;

32. Stresses that the Employment and Social Innovation strand of the ESF+ supports initiatives addressing the precarious situation of mobile workers and secures funding for trade union-related counselling, underlining the importance of workers’ representatives in collective bargaining; calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide stable funding for a European network of national and transnational trade union counselling services for such workers in order to enhance fair labour mobility;
33. Recalls that the ESF+ should also aim to provide a healthy and well-adapted working environment in order to respond to health risks related to changing forms of work, and the needs of the ageing workforce; stresses that the pandemic has accelerated new realities and the rise of new forms of work brought by digitalisation, including artificial intelligence (AI), that have affected workers’ occupational safety and health; calls, in this light, for support and sufficient funding for a directive on the right to disconnect and teleworking rules, a directive on AI in the workplace and a Directive on psychosocial risks and well-being at work, as well as increased funding to ensure effective work on the protection of workers against dangerous and harmful substances;
34. Calls for the ESF+ to boost the effective implementation of the European care strategy in all Member States by investing in quality community-based and home care services and infrastructure, long-term care and support for persons with disabilities and older persons with support needs, and quality early childhood education and care through community-based, child and person-centred, high-quality, affordable and accessible public care systems that promote the autonomy of persons in need of care as well as their dignity and that of carers; calls for further investment in support for carers, formal and informal, while at the same time ensuring decent working conditions for workers in the care sector, including adequate salaries, via a Care Deal; calls on the Member States to make full use of ESF+ funds to reinforce and finalise the deinstitutionalisation process so as to ensure that every person can live in a family or community environment;
35. Recalls that public expenditure is needed to ensure upward social convergence; stresses that the implementation of the EPSR and the reforms under the relevant country-specific recommendations in the European Semester are also dependant on the strong support of the ESF+ for certain policy measures, especially those related to strengthening social welfare systems, ensuring inclusive, accessible and high-quality public education and training, care systems and healthcare services, including for mental health, reducing child poverty and eradicating homelessness and those relating to equal treatment and opportunities for women and men, which must be guaranteed and strengthened in all areas, including labour market participation, terms and conditions of employment and career advancement;
36. Recalls that EU policies can deliver the biggest impact when they are coordinated with



funding instruments and other strategic frameworks, such as the European Semester and its country-specific recommendations; notes that the effectiveness of interventions funded by the ESF+ depends on the successful implementation of reforms;

37. Underlines that social dialogue and collective bargaining are pivotal for well-being at work and the reduction of in-work poverty, social exclusion and wage inequality; calls on the Commission to allocate consistent, adequate and sufficient financial resources to capacity-building, with the aim of empowering social partners to play a relevant role in areas of their competence, strengthening their capacity to engage in social dialogue both at EU and national level and of enhancing social partners' actions with an appropriate minimum obligation in all Member States, and to include technical assistance for these three purposes; further insists that CSOs and non-for-profit organisations should, on an equal basis, be guaranteed minimum access to funding to contribute to and pursue ESF+ objectives in the Member States; underlines at the same time the need to develop institutional capacity through strong and professional administration and to foster innovation in public sector management;
38. Stresses the importance of employee-owned cooperatives, social enterprises and other alternative business models in reaching EU goals of inclusion; underlines that it is of the utmost importance that small social enterprises, not-for-profit social services and CSOs have access to all aspects of the ESF+; calls for a co-financing rate of at least 90 % for measures targeting the most deprived, and at least 70 % for all other actions implemented by small entities with limited capacity, such as CSOs, not-for-profit social services and social enterprises, in order for them to have access to funding while preserving a minimum number of different co-financing rates;

### ***Functioning of the fund***

39. Calls on the Member States to ensure coordination between regional and local authorities and organisations and their involvement in projects financed from national budgets and insists on the need to maintain the partnership approach of the current ESF+, which is key to strengthening the quality of the programmes financed under the ESF+; reiterates the need to adopt rules to manage the fund in cooperation with local actors that are closest to people's needs and can develop place-based solutions that best suit their specific territories; highlights the need to involve regional and local actors in the implementation of the fund;
40. Insists that the rules governing the use and the implementation of the ESF+ must ensure and enhance compliance with the rule of law, the EU *acquis*, the highest EU social standards, social rights and democratic principles, and be aligned with the EPSR, the UN's sustainable development goals and fundamental human rights and workers' rights, as also included in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU;
41. Calls for rules governing the ESF+ to allow public money to be allocated only to those employers that respect workers' rights and the applicable rules on working conditions; calls, further, for more effective social conditionalities in rules on public procurement and concessions; encourages the Commission to create a comprehensive database, supplementing the Eurostat data, to allow for the timely and reliable monitoring of developments in employment, living conditions and industrial relations;

42. Notes with concerns that the national governments often hinder efficient implementation of the ESF+ by imposing unnecessary administrative burdens or preventing local actors from managing support under the fund or funding opportunities; calls for the reduction of the administrative burden and bureaucracy, notably by simplifying the application processes for accessing funds and the reporting procedures for organisations, in particular for civil society and social economy organisations, and those of a smaller size; emphasises that beneficiaries, including not-for-profit social service providers, should be consulted for the design of the simplification measures; urges that simplification uphold the fundamental principles of shared management, transparency, accountability and independent scrutiny, as well as the principles of partnership, ensuring the proper administration of public funds;
43. Recognises that excessive reliance on metrics such as the error rate may lead to a greater administrative burden; notes that different metrics, including measurements of inputs, outputs, performance or qualitative measures, may fit different objectives and interventions;
44. Calls on the Commission to provide consistent support and communication to the Member States in order to help them set up individual projects effectively and transparently, including transparent and predictable conditions, which provide legal clarity and predictability to applicants, as well as for the final beneficiaries of the funding;
45. Calls on the Commission to ensure more thorough evaluation of the effectiveness of individual interventions without imposing major new burdens on providers, for instance by simplifying the exchange of information between the Member States and the Commission and by creating evaluation desks at both EU and national levels;
46. Reiterates that digitalisation is one of the important tools to reduce administrative burden and streamline applications for funding opportunities, and that as such it should be promoted and people's digital skills strengthened; warns, however, that not all people are prepared for digitalisation and that certain groups of people, especially the most vulnerable, such as older people and those living in depopulated areas where access to services and opportunities can be more limited, and the projects targeting them, as well as CSOs, not-for-profit social services and social enterprises, could miss out on funding opportunities as a result;
47. Sees that more work needs to be done for organisations and people to know about all the opportunities that the ESF+ can bring; insists that the Commission and the Member States raise awareness, inform and advise organisations about the opportunities presented by the ESF+ by carrying out information campaigns; sees that there is still a significant knowledge and skills gap, especially for social services, in accessing the current ESF+ and running EU-funded projects; considers, in particular, that the future ESF+ regulation should reserve a technical assistance budget to set up a network of national helpdesks or low-threshold information points offering services such as walk-in job counselling, coordinated at cross-European level in order to effectively deliver the training, guidance and support to organisations on the ground;
48. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen synergies at all levels



between projects supported by the ESF+ and by other EU funds;

◦

◦ ◦

49. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the European Committee of the Regions.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

After successful use and continuation of the European Social Fund for decades, the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) was last established for the period 2021 - 2027. The ESF+ has the aim to contribute to the social agenda of the European Union and is the key instrument to deliver on the principles as set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights by supporting Member States and local and regional authorities to invest in people through measures supporting high employment levels, fair social protection and a skilled and resilient workforce ready for the future world of work. It has proven to be effective and millions and millions of people have benefited from the possibilities of the ESF+. 6.8 million people found a job, 14.2 million people benefited from food assistance, 10.3 million people gained a qualification and 3 million participants were in education or training with the contributions of the ESF+ fund.

The current programme will come to its end in 2027, which means that we have to think about the future of the fund. The aim of this report of the Rapporteur is to send a clear and strong message to the European Commission on how the future European Social Fund + should be shaped.

It became clear that, especially with the current crises in the world, it will be challenging to deliver on the headline targets set out by the European Pillar of Social Rights, being that by 2030 at least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 should be in employment, at least 60% of all adults should be participating in training every year and a reduction of at least 15 million in the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including at least 5 million children. In 2023, nearly 100 million people in the EU were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, which is more than 20% of the population of the European Union. Children and people with low level of education are even more likely to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion. More than 45% of third country nationals living in the EU and 28% of EU Citizens living in another EU country are at risk of poverty or social exclusion and around 10% of the people who do have work live in poverty. The rising prices and cost of living are a main topic of concern for European citizens. The ESF+ after 2027 should be designed taking this worrying reality into account.

In this context, the report underlines that it is of utmost importance that the ESF+ continues to be able to target and reach the people and groups who need the fund the most, such as people living in poverty, elderly people, migrants, women, children, people with disabilities, people in need of the just transition. Together with social partners and civil society organisations, the fund has to suit the needs of these people by investing in the social dimension of the European Union. The fund should be accessible, inclusive and have an intersectional approach. It is important that the ESF+ is there for all kind of social organisations and enterprises, in all Member States and in all regions. The partnership principle should be upheld and strengthened. To achieve all this, the report calls for a doubling of the ESF+ budget.

Furthermore, the report sets out the main objectives, principles, functioning and distribution of the fund, such as the repeated call for a dedicated budget for the Child Guarantee.

The ESF+ is unique in the landscape of European funds, because it specifically targets social policies and initiatives. We therefore urgently call upon the Commission to ensure that the

ESF+ continues to function as a fund of its own and will not be split or merged with other funds. A merge or split would complicate to prioritise on social investment, employment projects and social inclusion, and reach the ones that need it most, and with all the challenges ahead we should not let that happen.

## **ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS FROM WHOM THE RAPPORTEUR HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

Pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure, the rapporteur declares that she received input from the following entities or persons in the preparation of the report, prior to the adoption thereof in committee:

<b>Entity and/or person</b>
European Trade Union Confederation
FNV Nederland
Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund
European Disability Forum
PICUM
Save the Children
COFACE Families Europe
Red Cross
European Anti-Poverty Network
Caritas
Eurodiaconia
European Association for the Education of Adults

The list above is drawn up under the exclusive responsibility of the rapporteur.

Where natural persons are identified in the list by their name, by their function or by both, the rapporteur declares that she has submitted to the natural persons concerned the European Parliament's Data Protection Notice No 484 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/data-protect/index.do>), which sets out the conditions applicable to the processing of their personal data and the rights linked to that processing.

30.01.2025

## OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on the European Social Fund Plus post-2027  
(2024/2077(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Kathleen Funchion

### AMENDMENT

The Committee on Regional Development calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions:

#### Amendment 1

##### Motion for a resolution

##### Citation 1 a (new)

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

- ***having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy<sup>1</sup> (Common Provisions Regulation),***

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 231, 30/06/2021, p. 159, ELI:  
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1060/oj>.

## Amendment 2

### Motion for a resolution

#### Citation 2 a (new)

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

- **having regard to Regulation (EU) 2024/3236 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 December 2024 amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1057 and (EU) 2021/1058 as regards Regional Emergency Support to Reconstruction (RESTORE)<sup>1</sup>,**

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L, 2024/3236, 23.12.2024, ELI:  
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/3236/oj>.

## Amendment 3

### Motion for a resolution

#### Citation 14 a (new)

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

- **having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2021 on reversing demographic trends in EU regions using cohesion policy instruments<sup>1</sup>,**

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 15, 12.1.2022, p. 125.

## Amendment 4

### Motion for a resolution

#### Citation 14 b (new)

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

- **having regard to its resolution of 25 March 2021 on cohesion policy and regional environment strategies in the fight against climate change<sup>1</sup>,**

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 494, 08/12/2021, p. 26.

## Amendment 5

### Motion for a resolution Citation 19 a (new)

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

– ***having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular Articles 46(d), 149, 153(2)(a), 164, 174, 175 and 349 thereof,***

## Amendment 6

### Motion for a resolution Recital A

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

A. whereas the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) supports, complements and adds value to the policies of the Member States ***in order to ensure*** equal opportunities, ***equal*** access to the labour market, fair and high-quality working conditions, social protection and inclusion;

A. whereas the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), ***a key pillar of cohesion policy,*** supports, complements and adds value to the policies of the Member States ***aimed at achieving high employment levels, ensuring*** equal opportunities ***and*** access to the labour market, ***as well as*** fair and high-quality working conditions, social ***cohesion,*** protection and inclusion, ***and helps in developing a skilled and resilient workforce across all regions that is prepared for the green and digital transition;***

## Amendment 7

### Motion for a resolution Recital A a (new)

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

***Aa. whereas housing and energy prices are rising, showing the need for social and affordable housing and accelerated renovation projects to fight energy poverty;***

## Amendment 8

### Motion for a resolution Recital B

#### *Motion for a resolution*

B. whereas the ESF+ is the **only** EU fund **primarily** focused on social policies, **and is therefore unique in itself and is strongly effective in achieving** social inclusion, together with the cohesion **policy**;

#### *Amendment*

B. whereas the ESF+ is the **main** EU fund focused on social policies **that reinforces national policies in employment, education, social inclusion, convergence, fairness and the harmonious and sustainable development of all the EU regions**; whereas, together with the **European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and other cohesion instruments, the ESF+ contributes to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights**;

## Amendment 9

### Motion for a resolution Recital B a (new)

#### *Motion for a resolution*

#### *Amendment*

**Ba. whereas local communities are the direct beneficiaries of the ESF+; whereas it is therefore important that regional and local authorities are directly involved in shaping this instrument**;

## Amendment 10

### Motion for a resolution Recital B b (new)

#### *Motion for a resolution*

#### *Amendment*

**Bb. whereas the situation and specific needs of each region in the EU are different; whereas flexibility in adjusting the goals of the fund is therefore indispensable**;



## Amendment 11

### Motion for a resolution Recital B c (new)

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

***Bc. whereas particular attention must be paid to rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps, such as the outermost regions, the northern sparsely populated regions, islands, mountainous areas and cross-border regions;***

## Amendment 12

### Motion for a resolution Recital B d (new)

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

***Bd. whereas the implementation of funds under the cohesion policy framework should comply with the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the rule of law, and the European code of conduct on partnership;***

## Amendment 13

### Motion for a resolution Recital C

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

C. whereas different vulnerable groups have different needs, ***such as women in poverty, labour migrants, children, people with disabilities and elderly people;*** whereas the digital and green transition ***is much needed but also*** brings challenges for ***all people and all workers, and*** whereas to succeed in this endeavour, the EU must ensure a just transition that does

C. whereas different vulnerable ***and marginalised social and geographic*** groups have different needs; whereas the digital and green transition brings challenges ***to our societies, especially*** for workers; whereas, to succeed in this endeavour, the EU must ensure a just transition ***for all*** that does not lose sight of workers and vulnerable people ***and which***

not lose sight of workers and vulnerable people;

*re-empowers as many people as possible;*

#### **Amendment 14**

##### **Motion for a resolution Recital C a (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

***Ca. whereas 22 % of the EU population are at risk of poverty or social exclusion and whereas demographic changes such as ageing populations, migration and the depopulation of certain areas all have impacts that need to be taken into account in terms of labour markets and national policies;***

#### **Amendment 15**

##### **Motion for a resolution Recital D**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

D. whereas the availability and affordability of decent housing is decreasing because of ***over-liberalisation of the market***; whereas the EU ***will have*** its first ever Commissioner for tackling the housing crises, and the first ever European affordable housing plan, expected in 2025;

D. whereas the availability and affordability of decent housing ***and associated services*** is decreasing because of ***various factors including public policies that cause or exacerbate a lack of supply***; whereas the EU ***has appointed*** its first ever Commissioner for tackling the housing crises, and ***will launch*** the first ever European affordable housing plan, expected in 2025;

#### **Amendment 16**

##### **Motion for a resolution Recital D a (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

***Da. whereas addressing the housing***

*crises requires measures that take into account the needs of Europe's most affected people;*

## **Amendment 17**

### **Motion for a resolution Recital E a (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

*Ea. whereas every year, resources from the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund are invested in projects linked to the provision of housing infrastructure and services, and whereas investments linked to affordable and sustainable housing are expected to be one of the upcoming strategic priorities of the EU Cohesion Fund under the next multiannual financial framework;*

## **Amendment 18**

### **Motion for a resolution Recital E b (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

*Eb. whereas the EU Social Climate Fund (SCF) for the period 2026-2032 aims to provide targeted support to vulnerable households, micro-enterprises and transport users impacted by rising costs associated with the transition to a low-carbon economy;*

## **Amendment 19**

### **Motion for a resolution Recital E c (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

*Ec. whereas the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the*

*European economy is expected to serve as a fundamental driver of enhanced productivity and economic growth;*

#### **Amendment 20**

##### **Motion for a resolution Recital E d (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

*Ed. whereas the principle of partnership is a key feature of the implementation of the ESF+, building on the multi-level governance approach and ensuring the complete involvement of regional, local, urban and other public authorities, civil society, economic and social partners and, where appropriate, research organisations and universities;*

#### **Amendment 21**

##### **Motion for a resolution Recital E f (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

*Ef. whereas synergies in project implementation should be promoted at the national, regional and local levels;*

#### **Amendment 22**

##### **Motion for a resolution Recital E g (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

*Eg. whereas the war in Ukraine has given rise to a humanitarian and economic crisis in the region, directly affecting the stability and social security of the Member States bordering Ukraine; whereas the ESF+ should provide*

*additional support to these countries by funding initiatives to help retrain people who have lost their jobs because of the conflict, as well as measures to ease the pressure on local public services such as healthcare and education, all aimed at helping to maintain social and economic stability in the region;*

## **Amendment 23**

### **Motion for a resolution Recital E h (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

*Eh. whereas, as outlined in the Draghi report, the EU is facing an economic slowdown driven by declining productivity growth, underscoring the urgent need for a fundamentally new approach to skills development that guarantees all workers the right to education and retraining, thereby enabling them to transition into new roles as their companies integrate advanced technologies or to secure quality employment in emerging sectors;*

## **Amendment 24**

### **Motion for a resolution Recital E i (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

*Ei. whereas the ESF+ serves as a key financial instrument supporting projects in the areas of employment, education, social inclusion and poverty reduction, and is closely aligned with the recommendations and priorities outlined within the framework of the European Semester; whereas concerns persist regarding the European Semester's adherence to the partnership principle,*

*which mandates the active participation of local and regional authorities in the formulation and implementation of policies;*

## Amendment 25

### Motion for a resolution Recital E j (new)

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

*Ej. whereas the ESF+ plays a key role in supporting the post-pandemic recovery by promoting social inclusion, employment and fair working conditions;*

## Amendment 26

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 1

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

1. Insists that the ESF+ must continue to be *the* key *and primary* instrument for supporting the Member States, people and *regions in* strengthening the social *dimension* of the Union;

1. Insists that the ESF+ must continue to be *a* key instrument for supporting the Member States, *all regions, including the outermost and northernmost regions, and local authorities in investing in* people and strengthening the social *cohesion* of the Union *while reducing territorial disparities;*

## Amendment 27

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 1 a (new)

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

*1a. Recalls the unique position of Northern Ireland and calls for an open attitude towards the inclusion of Northern Irish residents and their ability to access the ESF+, especially for projects of a*

*cross-border nature;*

## Amendment 28

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 1 b (new)

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

***1b. Reiterates that EU funding programmes such as the ESF+ should stand first and foremost as positive examples of EU solidarity in their own right and should not be based on macro-economic conditionality;***

## Amendment 29

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 2

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

2. Insists that the objectives of the ESF+ should be to achieve high employment levels with adequate wages, decent working conditions, healthy working environments and social security coverage, in order to develop a skilled, competitive and resilient workforce, ready for the twin transition and the ***future world of work***, and to build fair social protections and inclusive and cohesive societies, with the aims of eradicating poverty and delivering on the principles and the headline targets set out in the EPSR;

2. Insists that the objectives of the ESF+ should be to achieve high employment levels with adequate wages, decent working conditions, ***good work-life balance***, healthy working environments and social security coverage, in order to develop a skilled, competitive and resilient workforce, ready for the twin transition and the ***underlying industrial transformation***, and to build fair social protections and inclusive and cohesive societies, with the aims of eradicating poverty and delivering on the principles and the headline targets set out in the EPSR; ***stresses the crucial role that investments in high-quality public services play in building social resilience and coping with economic, health and social crises;***

## Amendment 30

**Motion for a resolution**  
**Paragraph 3**

*Motion for a resolution*

3. Calls for a strong, reinforced, stand-alone ESF+ with significantly increased **public support for existing instruments aimed at** providing for the poorest in our societies; insists, therefore, on **doubling** the funding for the ESF+ post-2027;

*Amendment*

3. Calls for a strong, reinforced, stand-alone ESF+ with significantly increased support **in the next multiannual financial framework post-2027, as a key fund within cohesion policy for investing in social policies while improving economic, social and territorial cohesion**, providing for the poorest **and vulnerable groups** in our societies **and complementing national employment and social policies, as well as enhancing the EU's competitiveness**; insists, therefore, on **increasing** the funding for the ESF+ post-2027, **alongside a commensurate increase in regional funds; calls, furthermore, for enhanced access to EU funding for cities, regions and urban authorities**;

**Amendment 31**

**Motion for a resolution**  
**Paragraph 3 a (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

**3a. Stresses the importance of ensuring that the European Semester fully adheres to the partnership principle by strengthening national consultation mechanisms that actively involve local and regional governments prior to the validation of country-specific recommendations; underlines that such measures are essential to guarantee a transparent and equitable decision-making process that adequately reflects the diverse social needs and priorities across all regions, thereby upholding the principles of subsidiarity and multi-level governance and ensuring that policies and recommendations address the real needs of European regions;**



## Amendment 32

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 4

#### *Motion for a resolution*

4. Expresses strong concerns over attempts to split or merge the existing ESF+ with other funds, ***since that would create serious risks for the implementation of its objectives and those of the EPSR and its action plan, and the reaching of the ESPR's headline targets; warns that unifying or simplifying funds may not improve their effectiveness;***

#### *Amendment*

4. Expresses strong concerns over attempts to split or merge the existing ESF+ with other funds; ***expresses its commitment to further advancing, developing and modernising the ESF+ to make it fit for the future, more resilient and even more effective through further simplification, both for managing authorities and beneficiaries, and to reducing bureaucracy in the design, implementation and audit processes related to the partnership principles and multilevel governance;***

## Amendment 33

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 4 a (new)

#### *Motion for a resolution*

#### *Amendment*

***4a. Highlights the concern that a potential transformation of cohesion policy, including the ESF+, following the model of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), raises significant worries among regional and local authorities; emphasises that local and regional authorities have not been sufficiently involved in, and in some cases have been entirely excluded from, the process of implementing the RRF; stresses that the RRF fails to respect the principles of multi-level governance and partnership, which are fundamental to the ESF+ and cohesion policy, thereby calling into question the very principle of economic, social and territorial cohesion enshrined***

*in the Treaties;*

## Amendment 34

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 4 b (new)

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

**4b. Expresses its opposition to the adoption of a performance-based approach in the preparation of the next ESF+, emphasising that investments with a social dimension cannot be fully or adequately assessed solely through performance indicators, quantified objectives or short-term evaluation frameworks; stresses that, as underscored in European Court of Auditors Special Report 26/2023, the indicators designed within the framework of the RRF, while instrumental in monitoring the progress of implementation, are inadequate for evaluating the actual performance and long-term impact of the programme;**

## Amendment 35

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 5

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

5. Believes that a different ESF+ governance would lead to the loss of priority given to social aspects, including employment and social inclusion projects, and to the funding not reaching local levels and those most in need, while increasing the risk of reallocation of funds for other purposes;

5. Believes that a different ESF+ governance would lead to the loss of priority given to social aspects, including employment and social inclusion projects, **as well as access to services in rural areas,** and to the funding not reaching local levels and those most in need, while increasing the risk of reallocation of funds for other purposes;

## Amendment 36

**Motion for a resolution**  
**Paragraph 6**

*Motion for a resolution*

6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the participation of social partners, civil society organisations (CSOs) and representatives of the target groups in all design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of the ESF+, to allocate adequate funding for this purpose and to prevent the exclusion of smaller actors;

*Amendment*

6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the participation of ***local and regional authorities***, social partners, civil society organisations (CSOs), and representatives of the target groups in all design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of the ESF+, to allocate adequate funding for this purpose and to prevent the exclusion of smaller actors; ***urges the Commission to ensure that regional and local authorities are duly involved in decision-making and the implementation of strategies and projects, in line with the principles of subsidiarity and multi-level governance, in order to create a tailored strategy that serves the purpose of cohesion and leaves no one behind;***

**Amendment 37**

**Motion for a resolution**  
**Paragraph 7**

*Motion for a resolution*

7. Notes that the current ESF+ programme was adopted before the emergence of crises that have caused high inflation and increased costs of living, and therefore require higher public and social investment such that the existing ESF+ cannot meet current needs; calls on the Commission to ensure that a comprehensive, stable and large-scale needs- and rights-based budget is guaranteed for the ESF+ in the next multiannual financial framework;

*Amendment*

7. Notes that the current ESF+ programme was adopted before the emergence of crises that have caused high inflation and increased costs of living, and therefore require higher public and social investment such that the existing ESF+ cannot meet current needs; calls on the Commission to ensure that a comprehensive, stable and large-scale needs- and rights-based budget, ***targeted to address the needs and ongoing social issues in the regions, including the outermost regions***, is guaranteed for the ESF+ in the next multiannual financial framework;

## Amendment 38

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 8

#### *Motion for a resolution*

8. Underlines that the ESF+ post-2027 should invest in tackling enduring social challenges and stay close to the general and specific objectives set out in the current ESF+; emphasises the importance of the fund's principles of shared management, clear objectives and **thematic concentrations**, and that **most of the fund should be spent as close as possible to those using the fund**;

#### *Amendment*

8. Underlines that the ESF+ post-2027 should **continue to** invest in tackling enduring social **and demographic challenges, supporting the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and mitigating the socio-economic impact of the industrial transformation**, and stay close to the general and specific objectives set out in the current ESF+; emphasises the importance of **preserving** the fund's principles of shared management **and partnership with regional and local authorities**, clear objectives and **territorial dimension, and place-based approach**, and that **the allocation of funds should take into account the nomenclature of territorial units for statistics and final recipients**;

## Amendment 39

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 9

#### *Motion for a resolution*

9. Stresses that the ESF+ should not be **used** to respond to emergencies or crises; insists that a **social rescue** facility capable of reacting to social emergencies and **crisis situations** should supplement the ESF+; calls on the Commission to build on the success of the temporary EU instrument launched in 2020, entitled 'Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE)', in fighting temporary unemployment, and to put forward an EU unemployment reinsurance scheme without further delay;

#### *Amendment*

9. Stresses that the ESF+ should **focus on long-term strategic investments in European regions and should not be constantly revised** to respond to emergencies or crises; insists that a facility capable of reacting to **the social impact of** emergencies and **natural disasters** should supplement the ESF+ **and other funds in order to preserve the long-term objectives of cohesion policy; stresses the need for a reinforced financial framework that allows for the redistribution of funds to respond quickly to emerging social and climate crises in a way that does not compromise the basic objectives of the**

*fund but that makes it possible to adapt in a more efficient way to the current needs of Member States and affected communities; calls on the Commission to build on the success of the temporary EU instrument launched in 2020, entitled ‘Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE)’, in fighting temporary unemployment, and to put forward an EU unemployment reinsurance scheme without further delay; welcomes the Commission’s RESTORE proposal to aid the areas most affected by devastating natural disasters and asks for faster procedures in the event of natural disasters;*

#### **Amendment 40**

##### **Motion for a resolution Paragraph 9 a (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

**9a. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to enhance synergies between measures under the ESF+ and the SCF in order to ensure a cohesive and effective approach to addressing inequalities and promoting access to sustainable energy solutions;**

#### **Amendment 41**

##### **Motion for a resolution Paragraph 9 b (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

**9b. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen synergies between the ESF+ and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), promoting the development and implementation of multi-funded programmes aimed at addressing critical**

*challenges in rural areas, including combating rural depopulation, reducing youth unemployment, advancing digital inclusion, fostering rural entrepreneurship and innovation and improving the accessibility of transport services and education; highlights, in this regard, the specific role of women, in particular in remote areas, as they play a major role in civil society and sustainable economic growth and at the same time face difficulties in accessing the labour market, as well as equal pay and public services such as healthcare, mental health services and childcare; emphasises the role of young women, in particular in rural areas, and their tendency to occupy precarious roles in rural societies;*

#### **Amendment 42**

##### **Motion for a resolution Paragraph 10**

###### *Motion for a resolution*

10. Underlines that horizontal principles, such as gender equality, anti-discrimination, and freedom of movement, should be integral to the ESF+; stresses the importance of an intersectional approach throughout the entire development and implementation of the fund;

###### *Amendment*

10. Underlines that horizontal principles, such as gender equality, anti-discrimination, ***the promotion of a fair society with equal opportunities for all***, and freedom of movement, should be integral to the ESF+; stresses the importance of an intersectional approach throughout the entire development and implementation of the fund;

#### **Amendment 43**

##### **Motion for a resolution Paragraph 27 a (new)**

###### *Motion for a resolution*

###### *Amendment*

***27a. Highlights the importance of upholding the partnership principle in all programming, implementation and monitoring of EU cohesion policy and of establishing strong cooperation between***

*regional and local authorities, NGOs and stakeholders, including environmental NGOs; stresses that this process should also take into account the gender perspective;*

#### **Amendment 44**

##### **Motion for a resolution Paragraph 11**

###### *Motion for a resolution*

11. Insists that the ESF+ should target the most disadvantaged people in our societies, regardless of their sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, or racial or ethnic origin – *in particular* marginalised communities such as **Roma people**, people with disabilities or chronic diseases, homeless people, children and elderly people; underlines that the ESF+ must be inclusive, with special attention given to all kinds of **families, including single-parent families, families with more than two parents and rainbow** families;

###### *Amendment*

11. Insists that the ESF+ should target the most disadvantaged people in our societies regardless of their sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief or racial or ethnic origin **and be sensitive to the needs of households and different social groups, especially people at risk of social, energy, transport and economic poverty and victims of domestic and gender-based violence** and marginalised communities such as **young people, Roma and Traveller communities**, people with **physical and intellectual** disabilities or chronic diseases, homeless people, children and elderly people **and LGBTIQ+ community**; underlines that the ESF+ must be inclusive, with special attention given to all kinds of **vulnerable** families;

#### **Amendment 45**

##### **Motion for a resolution Paragraph 11 a (new)**

###### *Motion for a resolution*

###### *Amendment*

**11a. Acknowledges the severe impact of the war in Ukraine on employment and social protection in the EU's eastern border regions, including economic instability, supply chain disruptions, business closures, job losses and reduced**

*social cohesion; highlights the challenges posed by the influx of refugees fleeing the conflict for social services and public services such as healthcare and education;*

## Amendment 46

### Motion for a resolution

#### Paragraph 12

##### *Motion for a resolution*

12. Calls on the Commission, in the *light of current challenges*, to include *in the specific objectives of the ESF+ the promotion of the just transition*, the socio-economic integration of migrants, including labour migrants, *the social inclusion of women who are victims of gender-based violence and the integration of older people*;

##### *Amendment*

12. Calls on the Commission to include in the ESF+ *support for* the socio-economic integration of *marginalised people and* migrants, including labour migrants, *through appropriate measures to encourage* the integration of *such groups into the labour market through professional upskilling and reskilling focussed on long-term adaptation to the needs of the local labour market and by supporting specific programmes and models to help communities with limited resources deal with the integration of a large number of new arrivals*;

## Amendment 47

### Motion for a resolution

#### Paragraph 13

##### *Motion for a resolution*

13. Stresses that reaching the EPSR's targets on poverty becomes challenging, unless specific support is dedicated to alleviating the pressure on social protection systems and mitigating the social impact of crises; insists on dedicating support to ensure decent living conditions for all, with access to high-quality essential services; calls for the EU anti-poverty strategy, outlined in Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's political guidelines for the

##### *Amendment*

13. Stresses that reaching the EPSR's targets on poverty becomes challenging, unless specific support is dedicated to alleviating the pressure on social protection systems and mitigating the social impact of crises; insists on dedicating support to ensure decent living conditions for all, *no matter where they live*, with access to high-quality essential services; calls for the EU anti-poverty strategy, outlined in Commission President Ursula von der



2024-2029 term, to be implemented via the ESF+, with its binding poverty-reduction targets, national living wage indices and reference budgets used as benchmarks, applying a multidimensional approach;

Leyen's political guidelines for the 2024-2029 term, to be implemented via the ESF+, with its binding poverty-reduction targets, national living wage indices and reference budgets used as benchmarks, applying a multidimensional approach; ***underlines the important role an adequately financed ESF+ would play in implementing this strategy;***

## Amendment 48

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 14

#### *Motion for a resolution*

14. Stresses that addressing child poverty requires appropriately funded, comprehensive and integrated measures, together with the implementation of the European Child Guarantee at national level, ***and*** insists that it ***constitute*** a central pillar of the EU anti-poverty strategy; repeats its previous demands for the ESF+ post-2027 to include a dedicated budget of at least EUR 20 billion for the European Child Guarantee; insists that all the Member States should allocate at least 5 % of their ESF+ resources to the European Child Guarantee ***and at least 10 %*** for those Member States ***with*** a higher ***portion*** of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion;

#### *Amendment*

14. Stresses that addressing child poverty requires appropriately funded, comprehensive and integrated measures, together with the implementation of the European Child Guarantee at national level, ***in order to address child poverty with appropriate and integrated funding;*** insists that it ***constitutes*** a central pillar of the EU anti-poverty strategy; repeats its previous demands for the ESF+ post-2027 to include a dedicated budget of at least EUR 20 billion for the European Child Guarantee; insists that all the Member States should allocate at least 5 % of their ESF+ resources to the European Child Guarantee, ***with a higher percentage of up to 10 %*** for those Member States ***that request it and have a higher number*** of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion; ***in addition, proposes that an ESF+ contribution to the EU school fruit, vegetable and milk scheme be considered to complement existing funding, which is currently not adequate to extend the scheme to all children and young people, with a view to reducing disparities between different socio-economic backgrounds and contributing to social inclusion, giving everyone the chance to benefit from a balanced diet;***

## Amendment 49

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 15

#### *Motion for a resolution*

15. Urges the Commission to raise the earmarking for social inclusion beyond the current 25 % and the earmarking for food aid and basic material assistance for the most deprived persons to 5 %, in response to rising living and food costs;

#### *Amendment*

15. Urges the Commission to raise the earmarking for social inclusion beyond the current 25 % and the earmarking for food aid and basic material assistance for the most deprived persons to 5 %, in response to rising living and food costs, ***based on regional needs***;

## Amendment 50

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 15 a (new)

#### *Motion for a resolution*

#### *Amendment*

***15a. Underlines that the ESF+ should continue to support all regions and societies of the European Union; notes that social inequalities and grievances exist in all societies, in more and less developed areas; points out, moreover, that the sharp increase in the cost of living and housing shortages have put people of limited means in more developed regions in a particularly vulnerable position;***

## Amendment 51

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 16

#### *Motion for a resolution*

16. Shares the ambition to prioritise the tackling of the housing crises, ***and*** insists that the ESF+ post-2027 should enhance timely and equal access to affordable,

#### *Amendment*

16. Shares the ambition to prioritise the tackling of the housing crises ***in urban and rural areas and is committed to working towards mitigating them***; insists that the

decent, sustainable and high-quality services promoting access to housing; believes that all the Member States must invest at least 5 % of their ESF+ resources **into tackling homelessness**;

ESF+ post-2027 should enhance timely and equal access to affordable, decent, sustainable and high-quality services promoting access to housing, **including in rural areas where the shortage of housing is an additional difficulty to the demographic challenge**; believes that all the Member States must invest at least 5 % of their ESF+ resources **in initiatives aimed specifically at supporting the people most affected by housing insecurity**;

## Amendment 52

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 16 a (new)

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

**16a. Suggests there could be a role for the ESF+ in tackling the housing crises through the funding of apprenticeship schemes at local level, in order to help local authorities rebuild house building capacity;**

## Amendment 53

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 17

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

17. Emphasises the need to ensure sufficient financing of the ESF+ post-2027 for high-quality **and public** education for all, skills development, upskilling, reskilling and lifelong learning, and for the addressing of skills shortages, ensuring that individuals can successfully navigate labour market transitions;

17. Emphasises the need to ensure sufficient financing of the ESF+ post-2027 for **access to** high-quality education for all, skills development, upskilling, reskilling, **training** and lifelong learning, **particularly in regions with skills mismatches**, and for the addressing of skills shortages **and long-term unemployment**, ensuring that individuals can successfully navigate labour market transitions; **identifies the particular need to improve connectivity and boost digital skills in rural areas,**

*where there is an ageing population;*

#### Amendment 54

##### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 17 a (new)

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

***17a. Holds that the ESF+ should offer financial support and vocational training for workers affected by the green and digital transition, ensuring that no one is left behind in this process and that more vulnerable regions are able to benefit from resources for economic adjustment and reorientation;***

#### Amendment 55

##### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 18

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

18. Calls for a strengthening of efforts to support the implementation of the Youth Guarantee with an increased earmarking for all Member States that dedicate at least 15 % of their ESF+ resources; repeats in this context its call on the Member States to ban unpaid traineeships;

18. Calls for a strengthening of efforts to support the implementation of the Youth Guarantee with an increased earmarking for all Member States that dedicate at least 15 % of their ESF+ resources ***to supporting the targeted actions and structural reforms needed to support quality youth employment, vocational education and training, in particular traineeships and apprenticeships, but also the transition from school to work, pathways for reintegration into education or training and second chance education;*** repeats in this context its call on the Member States to ban ***exploitative practices, including*** unpaid traineeships, ***and to ensure the social security rights and contributions of trainees; emphasises the need for monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the long-term impact and effectiveness of these***

*measures;*

## **Amendment 56**

### **Motion for a resolution**

#### **Paragraph 19**

##### *Motion for a resolution*

19. Underlines the importance of the ESF+ in focusing on different groups with different needs; stresses, therefore, the importance of allocating support to projects on the socio-economic position of migrants, including labour migrants, the social inclusion of people with disabilities, the ageing population in society, women and children, **and** female-headed households; insists that the ESF+ post-2027 incorporate other aspects of social inclusion, such as housing, health **and** family circumstances and the support of community-based services;

##### *Amendment*

19. Underlines the importance of the ESF+ in focusing on different groups **and regions** with different needs; **underlines that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution and that ways to address those needs may vary from region to region**; stresses, therefore, the importance of allocating support to projects on the socio-economic position of migrants, including labour migrants, the social inclusion of people with disabilities, the ageing population in society, women and children, female-headed **and single-parent** households **and large families**; insists that the ESF+ post-2027 incorporate other aspects of social inclusion, such as housing, health, **mental health, and** family circumstances and the support of community-based services;

## **Amendment 57**

### **Motion for a resolution**

#### **Paragraph 19 a (new)**

##### *Motion for a resolution*

##### *Amendment*

**19a. Emphasises the importance of addressing the needs of the EU’s ageing population; calls for the ESF+ to allocate dedicated funding to support quality elder care services;**

## **Amendment 58**

### **Motion for a resolution**

#### **Paragraph 19 b (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

**19b.** *Emphasises that ‘middle-income trap’ regions need greater investment in education and training; urges the Commission to define these regions and to allocate higher amounts to them under the ESF+ in the next programming period;*

## **Amendment 59**

### **Motion for a resolution Paragraph 19 c (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

**19c.** *Calls on the Commission to strengthen ESF+ initiatives aimed at fostering access to education and lifelong learning opportunities, with the objective of ensuring that the advantages of AI adoption are equitably distributed and that potential adverse effects on social cohesion and inclusion are effectively mitigated;*

## **Amendment 60**

### **Motion for a resolution Paragraph 20**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

20. Stresses that the Employment and Social Innovation strand of the ESF+ provides support regarding the precarious situation of mobile workers and secures funding for trade union-related counselling; ***calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure permanent funding for national and transnational trade union counselling services for such workers;***

20. Stresses that the Employment and Social Innovation strand of the ESF+ provides support regarding the precarious situation of mobile workers and secures funding for trade union-related counselling;

## Amendment 61

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 21

#### *Motion for a resolution*

21. Calls for the ESF+ to boost the implementation of the European care strategy by investing in quality early childhood education and care through community-based, person-centred, high-quality, affordable and accessible care systems;

#### *Amendment*

21. Calls for the ESF+ to boost the implementation of the European care strategy by **increasing support for families and** investing in quality early childhood education and care through community-based, person-centred, high-quality, affordable and accessible care systems, **thus contributing to improving work-life balance and participation in the labour market; insists, furthermore, that synergies between the ESF+ and the ERDF should avoid financing institutionalisation services and promote community-based approaches;**

## Amendment 62

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 22

#### *Motion for a resolution*

22. Stresses that the implementation of the EPSR **and the reforms needed to comply with the country-specific recommendations in the European Semester are also dependant** on the strong support of the ESF+ for certain policy measures, especially those related to strengthening social welfare systems, ensuring inclusive and high-quality public education, reducing child poverty and eradicating homelessness;

#### *Amendment*

22. Stresses that the implementation of the EPSR **is dependent** on the strong support of the ESF+ for certain policy measures, especially those related to strengthening social welfare systems, **targeted support for regions with high youth unemployment**, ensuring inclusive and high-quality public education, **promoting traditional professions**, reducing child poverty and eradicating homelessness, **with special consideration for rural areas and islands;**

## Amendment 63

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 23

*Motion for a resolution*

23. Calls on the Commission to allocate consistent financial resources to capacity-building, with the aims of empowering social partners to play a relevant role in areas of their competence, of strengthening their capacity to engage in social dialogue both at EU and national level and of enhancing social partners' actions – and include technical assistance for these three purposes – with an adequate minimum percentage investment obligation from the Member States; further insists that social partners and CSOs should be guaranteed access to funding for social policy objectives in all the Member States on an equal basis;

**Amendment 64**

**Motion for a resolution  
Paragraph 24**

*Motion for a resolution*

24. Underlines that it is of the utmost importance that small social enterprises and CSOs have access to all aspects of the ESF+; calls for an increased co-financing rate of at least 90 % for measures targeting the most deprived implemented by CSOs, and at least 70 % for those implemented by social enterprises;

**Amendment 65**

**Motion for a resolution  
Paragraph 24 a (new)**

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*Amendment*

23. Calls on the Commission to allocate consistent financial resources to capacity-building, ***including for managing authorities and intermediary bodies***, with the aims of empowering social partners to play a relevant role in areas of their competence, of strengthening their capacity to engage in social dialogue both at EU and national level and of enhancing social partners' actions – and ***to*** include technical assistance for these three purposes – with an adequate minimum percentage investment obligation from the Member States; further insists that social partners and CSOs should be guaranteed access to funding for social policy objectives in all the Member States on an equal basis; ***underlines, at the same time, the need to develop institutional capacity through strong and professional administration, and to foster innovation in public sector management;***

*Amendment*

24. Underlines that it is of the utmost importance that small social enterprises and CSOs have ***meaningful*** access to all aspects of the ESF+; calls for an increased co-financing rate of at least 90 % for measures targeting the most deprived implemented by CSOs, and at least 70 % for those implemented by social enterprises;

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*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

**24a.** *Encourages the financing of specific measures for the outermost regions and regions with severe and permanent economic and demographic difficulties, aiming, in particular, at ensuring equal access to social projects and essential services, fostering economic diversification and job creation, and helping these regions by ensuring the right to stay and by responding to challenges such as rural desertification, ageing, depopulation, loneliness and isolation, and skills shortages, as well as insufficient healthcare and education opportunities;*

**Amendment 66**

**Motion for a resolution  
Paragraph 24 b (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

*Amendment*

**24b.** *Stresses the need for the ESF+ to support projects that create sustainable local employment opportunities in these regions, especially those that are in a talent development trap or at risk of falling into such a trap, particularly through investments in green jobs, renewable energy, the primary sectors and sustainable tourism, by boosting skills in the blue economy and fostering economic resilience; calls for increased support for community-based initiatives that enhance quality of life and foster social inclusion in these regions;*

**Amendment 67**

**Motion for a resolution  
Paragraph 25**

*Motion for a resolution*

25. Calls on the Member States to ensure that regional and local authorities and organisations ***have a say in*** projects financed from national budgets;

*Amendment*

25. Calls on the Member States to ensure that regional and local authorities and organisations ***are involved at all appropriate stages of*** projects financed from national budgets ***and to respect the partnership principle as well as the principle of subsidiarity, in order to ensure joint ownership of ESF+ projects and the development of place-based solutions best adapted to their specific territories;***

**Amendment 68**

**Motion for a resolution  
Paragraph 26**

*Motion for a resolution*

26. Insists that the rules governing the use of the ESF+ must ensure and enhance compliance with the rule of law, the EU acquis, the highest EU social standards, social rights and democratic principles, and ***be aligned with*** the EPSR, the ***UN's sustainable development goals and fundamental human and workers' rights;***

*Amendment*

26. Insists that the rules governing the use of the ESF+ must ensure and enhance compliance with the rule of law, the EU acquis, the ***partnership principle, convergence towards the*** highest EU social standards, social rights and democratic principles, and ***the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, while aiming at implementing the objectives of the EPSR and the European Green Deal, and promoting the UN Sustainable Development Goals;***

**Amendment 69**

**Motion for a resolution  
Paragraph 27**

*Motion for a resolution*

27. Calls for strong and more effective social conditionalities in rules on public procurement and concessions, ***with effective sanctions;*** encourages the

*Amendment*

27. Calls for strong, ***simplified*** and more effective social ***and environmental*** conditionalities in rules on public procurement and concessions ***governing***

Commission to create a comprehensive database, supplementing the Eurostat data, to allow for timely and reliable monitoring of the developments in employment, living conditions and industrial relations;

*the ESF+*; encourages the Commission to create a comprehensive database, supplementing the Eurostat data, to allow for timely and reliable monitoring of the developments in employment, living conditions and industrial relations;

## Amendment 70

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 28

#### *Motion for a resolution*

28. Calls *for the reduction of* the administrative burden, notably by simplifying the application processes for accessing funds and the reporting procedures for organisations, in particular for those of a smaller size; *warns* that simplification *must not compromise* the fundamental principles of shared management, transparency and accountability, ensuring the proper administration of *public* funds;

#### *Amendment*

28. Calls *for progress in the digital transformation and for the reduction of* the administrative burden, notably by simplifying the application processes, *including, among other things, by examining how, at the initial stage, personal data requests can be minimised and by removing unjustified gold plating* for accessing funds and the reporting procedures for *regional or local authorities and for beneficiaries, including organisations and enterprises*, in particular for those of a smaller size, *and working towards the removal of regulatory barriers; underlines* that simplification *should enhance* the fundamental principles of shared management, *multilevel governance*, transparency and accountability, ensuring the proper administration of *European* funds; *calls for the creation of a specific, simplified platform of information on accessing funds at EU level for citizens, small and medium-sized enterprises, councils and local and regional authorities*;

## Amendment 71

### Motion for a resolution Paragraph 29

*Motion for a resolution*

29. ***Warns that not all people are prepared for digitalisation, and that certain groups of people, especially the most vulnerable, could miss out on funding opportunities as a result;***

*Amendment*

29. ***Underscores that the digital divide is growing alongside the territorial divide, and that digital access challenges persist for many Europeans, such as people in vulnerable situations, elderly people or other disadvantaged groups, who could miss out on funding opportunities as a result, and that some regions lag behind in terms of digital connectivity; underlines the need, therefore, to put in place targeted measures to empower people in order to guarantee equal access to new technologies and to bridge the digital divide;***

**Amendment 72**

**Motion for a resolution  
Paragraph 29 a (new)**

*Motion for a resolution*

**Amendment 73**

**Motion for a resolution  
Paragraph 30**

*Motion for a resolution*

30. ***Sees that more work needs to be done for organisations and people to know about all the opportunities that the ESF+ can bring; insists that the***

*Amendment*

29a. ***Calls for the Common Provisions Regulation, the programmes and the budget negotiations to be finalised at least one year before the start of the new funding period so that Member States can develop their national funding strategies in good time to ensure a successful transition to the next funding period as well as the continuation of the many ESF+-funded projects;***

*Amendment*

30. ***Stresses that more work needs to be done to enable local and regional authorities and other stakeholders to reap the benefits of all the opportunities that the***

Commission and the Member States raise awareness of, inform and advise organisations about the opportunities presented by the ESF+;

ESF+ can bring; insists that the Commission and the Member States raise awareness of, inform and advise organisations about the opportunities presented by the ESF+, *as well as other funding possibilities and funds under the cohesion policy framework*;

#### **Amendment 74**

##### **Motion for a resolution Paragraph 31**

###### *Motion for a resolution*

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

###### *Amendment*

31. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, *the European Economic and Social Committee, and the European Committee of the Regions*.

**ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS  
FROM WHOM THE RAPPOREUR HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

The rapporteur for the opinion declares under her exclusive responsibility that she did not receive input from any entity or person to be mentioned in this Annex pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure.

## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION BY COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

<b>Date adopted</b>	28.1.2025
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 35 -: 0 0: 0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Pascal Arimont, Fredis Beleris, Adrian-Drağoş Benea, Daniel Buda, Andi Cristea, Klára Dobrev, Christian Doleschal, Kathleen Funchion, Raquel García Hermida-Van Der Walle, Gabriella Gerzsenyi, Sérgio Gonçalves, Krzysztof Hetman, Ľubica Karvašová, Elsi Katainen, Isabelle Le Callennec, Nora Mebarek, Ciaran Mullooly, Elena Nevado del Campo, Andrey Novakov, Valentina Palmisano, Vladimir Prebilič, Sabrina Repp, Marcos Ros Sempere, Antonella Sberna, Mārtiņš Staķis, Şerban Dimitrie Sturdza, Rody Tolassy, Raffaele Topo, Francesco Ventola, Marta Wcisło
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Maravillas Abadía Jover, Sofie Eriksson, Cristina Guarda, Elena Kountoura, Julien Leonardelli, Denis Nesci

## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

<b>35</b>	<b>+</b>
ECR	Denis Nesci, Antonella Sberna, Șerban Dimitrie Sturdza, Francesco Ventola
PPE	Maravillas Abadía Jover, Pascal Arimont, Fredis Beleris, Daniel Buda, Christian Doleschal, Gabriella Gerzsenyi, Krzysztof Hetman, Isabelle Le Callennec, Elena Nevado del Campo, Andrey Novakov, Marta Wcisło
PfE	Julien Leonardelli, Rody Tolassy
Renew	Raquel García Hermida-Van Der Walle, Lúbia Karvašová, Elsi Katainen, Ciaran Mullooly
S&D	Adrian-Drașoș Benea, Klára Dobrev, Sofie Eriksson, Sérgio Gonçalves, Nora Mebarek, Sabrina Repp, Marcos Ros Sempere, Raffaele Topo
The Left	Kathleen Funchion, Elena Kountoura, Valentina Palmisano
Verts/ALE	Cristina Guarda, Vladimir Prebilič, Mārtiņš Staķis

<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>

<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention



## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

<b>Date adopted</b>	19.2.2025
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+ : 42 - : 3 0 : 8
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Maravillas Abadía Jover, Marc Angel, Pascal Arimont, Konstantinos Arvanitis, Gabriele Bischoff, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Andrzej Buła, David Casa, Estelle Ceulemans, Per Clausen, Henrik Dahl, Marie Dauchy, Mélanie Disdier, Elena Donazzan, Chiara Gemma, Niels Geuking, Isilda Gomes, Alicia Homs Ginel, Irena Joveva, Martine Kemp, Katrin Langensiepen, Miriam Lexmann, Marit Maij, Marlina Małag, Jagna Marczałajtis-Walczak, Eleonora Meleti, Idoia Mendia, Maria Ohisalo, João Oliveira, Branislav Ondruš, Aodhán Ó Ríordáin, Dennis Radtke, Nela Riehl, Liesbet Sommen, Villy Søvndal, Romana Tomc, Raffaele Topo, Francesco Torselli, Brigitte van den Berg, Marie-Pierre Vedrenne, Marianne Vind, Mariateresa Vivaldini, Jan-Peter Warnke, Séverine Werbrouck
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Vivien Costanzo, Valérie Devaux, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Kathleen Funchion, Estrella Galán, Lara Magoni, Hristo Petrov, Andrea Wechsler
<b>Members under Rule 216(7) present for the final vote</b>	Virgil-Daniel Popescu

## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL BY THE COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

42	+
NI	Branislav Ondruš, Jan-Peter Warnke
PPE	Maravillas Abadía Jover, Pascal Arimont, Andrzej Buła, David Casa, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Niels Geuking, Martine Kemp, Miriam Lexmann, Jagna Marczułajtis-Walczak, Eleonora Meleti, Virgil-Daniel Popescu, Dennis Radtke, Liesbet Sommen, Andrea Wechsler
Renew	Valérie Devaux, Irena Joveva, Hristo Petrov, Brigitte van den Berg, Marie-Pierre Vedrenne
S&D	Marc Angel, Gabriele Bischoff, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Estelle Ceulemans, Vivien Costanzo, Isilda Gomes, Alicia Homs Ginel, Marit Majj, Idoia Mendia, Aodhán Ó Riordáin, Raffaele Topo, Marianne Vind
The Left	Konstantinos Arvanitis, Per Clausen, Kathleen Funchion, Estrella Galán, João Oliveira
Verts/ALE	Katrin Langensiepen, Maria Ohisalo, Nela Riehl, Villy Søvndal

3	-
PfE	Marie Dauchy, Mélanie Disdier, Séverine Werbrouck

8	0
ECR	Elena Donazzan, Chiara Gemma, Lara Magoni, Marlena Małag, Francesco Torselli, Mariateresa Vivaldini
PPE	Henrik Dahl, Romana Tomc

### Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention