



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2018)0432

Employment and social policies in the euro area

European Parliament resolution of 25 October 2018 on the employment and social policies of the euro area (2018/2034(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 3 and 5 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU),
- having regard to the Commission white paper of 16 February 2012 entitled ‘An Agenda for Adequate, Safe and Sustainable Pensions’ (COM(2012)0055),
- having regard to Articles 9, 145, 148, 149, 152, 153, 174 and 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 13 April 2016 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on Better Law-Making¹,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and, in particular, to Title IV (Solidarity) thereof,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,
- having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10 and 13,
- having regard to the Five Presidents’ Report of 22 June 2015 on ‘Completing Europe’s Economic and Monetary Union’,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 14 May 2018 on the economic policy of the euro area²,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 7 December 2015 on the promotion of the social economy as a key driver of economic and social development in Europe,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 23 May 2018 on the 2018

¹ OJ L 123, 12.5.2016, p. 1.

² OJ C 179, 25.5.2018, p. 1.

European Semester - Country-specific recommendations (COM(2018)0400),

- having regard to the Commission communication of 22 November 2017 entitled ‘Annual Growth Survey 2018’ (COM(2017)0690),
- having regard to the draft Joint Employment Report from the Commission and the Council of 22 November 2017 accompanying the Commission communication of 22 November 2017 on the Annual Growth Survey 2018 (COM(2017)0674),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 22 November 2017 for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (COM(2017)0677), and to Parliament’s position thereon of 19 April 2018¹,
- having regard to the Commission recommendation of 22 November 2017 for a Council recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area (COM(2017)0770),
- having regard to the Commission report of 22 November 2017 entitled ‘Alert Mechanism Report 2018’ (COM(2017)0771),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 22 November 2017 entitled ‘2018 Draft Budgetary Plans: Overall Assessment’ (COM(2017)0800),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 26 April 2017 entitled ‘Establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights’ (COM(2017)0250),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 26 April 2017 entitled ‘An initiative to support work-life balance for working parents and carers’ (COM(2017)0252),
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 26 April 2017 entitled ‘Taking stock of the 2013 Recommendation on “Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage”’ (SWD(2017)0258),
- having regard to the Commission’s Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019, and to the European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020 and the Council conclusions of 7 March 2011 thereto²,
- having regard to the 2002 Barcelona childcare targets, namely to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90 % of children between three years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33 % of children under three years of age,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 4 October 2016 entitled ‘The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on’ (COM(2016)0646),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 14 September 2016 for a Council regulation amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1311/2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 (COM(2016)0604),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 14 September 2016 entitled

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0181.

² OJ C 155, 25.5.2011, p. 10.

‘Strengthening European Investments for jobs and growth: Towards a second phase of the European Fund for Strategic Investments and a new European External Investment Plan’ (COM(2016)0581),

- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 June 2016 entitled ‘A new skills agenda for Europe – Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness’ (COM(2016)0381),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 2 June 2016 entitled ‘A European agenda for the collaborative economy’ (COM(2016)0356),
- having regard to the Circular Economy Package¹,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 1 June 2016 entitled ‘Europe investing again – Taking stock of the Investment Plan for Europe and next steps’ (COM(2016)0359),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 8 March 2016 on launching a consultation on a European Pillar of Social Rights (COM(2016)0127) and its annexes,
- having regard to its resolution of 11 September 2018 on pathways for the reintegration of workers recovering from injury and illness into quality employment²,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2018 on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: employment and social aspects in the Annual Growth Survey 2018³,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 November 2017 on combating inequalities as a lever to boost job creation and growth⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 26 October 2017 on the economic policies of the euro area⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 24 October 2017 on minimum income policies as a tool for fighting poverty⁶,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 September 2017 on a new skills agenda for Europe⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2017 on a European Pillar of Social Rights⁸,

¹ Directives (EU) 2018/849, (EU) 2018/850, (EU) 2018/851 and (EU) 2018/852.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0325.

³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0078.

⁴ OJ C 356, 4.10.2018, p. 89.

⁵ OJ C 346, 27.9.2018, p. 200.

⁶ OJ C 346, 27.9.2018, p. 156.

⁷ OJ C 337, 20.9.2018, p. 135.

⁸ OJ C 242, 10.7.2018, p. 24.

- having regard to its resolution of 26 May 2016 on Poverty: a gender perspective¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 25 November 2015 on the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020²,
 - having regard to the Commission’s 2018 Pension Adequacy Report: Current and future income adequacy in old age in the EU,
 - having regard to the Commission’s 2018 Ageing Report: Economic and Budgetary Projections for the EU Member States (2016-2070),
 - having regard to its position of 2 February 2016 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing a European Platform to enhance cooperation in the prevention and deterrence of undeclared work³,
 - having regard to the revised European Social Charter and the Turin Process, launched in 2014 with the aim of strengthening the treaty system of the European Social Charter within the Council of Europe and in its relationship with the law of the European Union⁴,
 - having regard to the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the initial report of the European Union (September 2015),
 - having regard to the European Court of Auditors Special report No 5/2017 of March 2017 entitled: ‘Youth unemployment – have EU policies made a difference? An assessment of the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative’,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on Culture and Education (A8-0329/2018),
- A. whereas in June 2018 the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in the euro area was 8,3 %, which was down from 9,0 % in June 2017 and constituted the lowest rate recorded in the euro area since December 2008; whereas the difference in unemployment rates among the euro area Member States is significant, with the lowest unemployment rates in June 2018 recorded in Malta (3,9 %) and Germany (3,4 %), and the highest – and still a matter of concern – observed in Greece (20,2 % in April 2018) and Spain (15,2 %), whose employment rates were 57,8% and 65,5 % respectively;
- B. whereas in June 2018 the youth unemployment rate in the euro area was 16,9 % compared with 18,9 % in June 2017; whereas, despite continually decreasing, this rate remains unacceptably high, and more than twice the total unemployment average, with approximately 1 out of every 3 young people unemployed in some countries; whereas the primary responsibility for tackling unemployment rests with the Member States in terms of developing and implementing labour market regulatory frameworks, education and training systems and active labour market policies in order to ensure, inter alia, the

¹ OJ C 76, 28.2.2018, p. 93.

² OJ C 366, 27.10.2017, p. 117.

³ OJ C 35, 31.1.2018, p. 157.

⁴ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/turin-european-social-charter/turin-process>

creation of decent job opportunities with decent wages;

- C. whereas the difference in youth unemployment rates among the euro area Member States is also significant, with the lowest youth unemployment rates in the euro area in June 2018 found in Malta (5,5 %) and Germany (6,2 %) and the highest in Greece (42,3 % in April 2018), Spain (34,1 %) and Italy (32,6 %);
- D. whereas other Member States are facing structural labour market challenges, such as low participation, and skills and qualifications mismatches; whereas there is a growing need for concrete measures for the integration or re-integration of the inactive workforce in order to meet labour market demands;
- E. whereas the total employment rate for the euro area in 2017 was 71,0 %, and the employment rate for women was 65,4 %; whereas the target for the European Union under the Europe 2020 Strategy is to achieve at least 75 % employment for persons aged 20-64, including through the greater involvement of women, older workers and the better integration of migrants in the workforce; whereas the euro area employment rate surpassed the pre-crisis high by the end of 2016 and grew by 1,5 % in the second quarter of 2018 compared with the same quarter of the previous year; whereas, however, it still falls short of levels recorded a decade ago in some Member States, bearing in mind that in Eastern countries this can be attributed to long-term decline in overall population rather than negative labour market developments; whereas the declining trend in hours worked per employee due, inter alia, to involuntary part-time work, remains a concern, with a slight decline (0,3 %) in 2017 on the previous year and a level still approximately 3,0 % lower than in 2008¹;
- F. whereas labour market segmentation particularly affects women, low-skilled, young and older people, people with disabilities and people with a migrant background, who are also more likely to be employed in part-time and temporary work, which, in addition to non-standard and atypical forms of employment, and bogus self-employment, continues to persist; whereas the employment rate of 55-64 year-olds was 57 % in 2017 in the EU, 10 percentage points lower than the general employment rate, with a gender gap of 13 percentage points – 3 points higher than the corresponding figure for the total working-age population; whereas demographics are forecasting a growing number of older workers;
- G. whereas universal access to quality healthcare is a basic need that Member States must secure and invest in;
- H. whereas in 2016, the percentage of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the euro area was 23,1 %, still higher than the 2009 figure, while the in-work poverty rate was 9,5 %; whereas 118 million European citizens are still at risk of poverty or social exclusion, 1 million more than the pre-crisis level; whereas the Europe 2020 target of reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion by 20 million relative to the 2008 benchmark is still far from being achieved; whereas while material deprivation rates are falling, monetary and at-risk of poverty rates are on the rise;

1

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8030&furtherPubs=yes>

- I. whereas in the euro area the long-term unemployment rate is decreasing (from 5 % in 2016 to 4,4 % in 2017), but whereas it still accounts for 48,5 % of total unemployment, which is unacceptably high;
 - J. whereas according to the Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE) 2018 annual review, the restrained pace of growth in productivity per person employed affecting wage growth is linked to factors such as the higher share of part-time jobs and the lower numbers of hours worked;
 - K. whereas the part-time employment and temporary work rate in the euro area has remained stable since 2013, albeit accounting for a high proportion of total employment, with part-time work comprising 21,2 % of all contracts in 2017; whereas the share of part time work among women (31,4 %) is significantly higher than it is among men (8,2 %), a phenomenon which can have significant repercussions for income and social protection entitlements; whereas in 2016 young people far and away accounted for the highest share of temporary contracts – 43,8 % of all employees aged 15 to 24;
 - L. whereas pension adequacy is still a challenge, as the risk of social exclusion increases with age, while the gender pension gap of 37 % still poses a challenge to many older women, increasing their risk of poverty and social exclusion; whereas the pension entitlements of people in non-standard and self-employment are lower than for employees;
 - M. whereas access to social services, such as childcare, healthcare and long-term care services, as well as to affordable services that support mobility, have a significant impact on the adequacy of income, particularly for people with low incomes or those reliant on social protection;
1. Notes that while the economic conditions in the euro area are currently favourable and overall employment is steadily growing, the economic recovery is not evenly distributed across the euro area, and there is still much room for improvement in terms of economic convergence, the fight against youth and long-term unemployment, gender imbalances, labour market segmentation and inequality, especially for vulnerable groups, and in terms of reducing the number of people working below their qualification level, poverty in general and in-work poverty in particular, eradicating child poverty, and fostering productivity and wage growth; notes that income inequality would have been much higher were it not for the redistributive effects of social transfers, which in 2015 reduced the share of people at risk of poverty by approximately one third (33,7 %); laments the fact, however, that its impact was insufficient and differed greatly across the Member States, reducing income inequality by more than 20 % in Belgium, Finland and Ireland, but by less than 10 % in Estonia, Greece, Italy, Latvia and Portugal;
 2. Emphasises that the enjoyment of social rights and a properly functioning and efficient social protection system which provides adequate protection for all workers, regardless of their type of employment relationship, contract or form of employment are, in addition to active and sustainable labour market policies, important preconditions for reducing poverty and social exclusion, particularly for the most vulnerable, ensuring inclusive national labour markets and strengthening the resilience and competitiveness of the euro area economy as a whole;

3. Welcomes the increased financial support, via the Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP), for Member States to pursue their reforms in creating quality jobs to boost employment, in reducing unemployment, with an emphasis on tackling long-term and youth unemployment, and in seeking to bring about wage increases; welcomes the Commission's proposal to enlarge the scope of the SRSP to cover countries whose currency is not the euro, with the aim of fostering economic and social convergence throughout the EU;
4. Takes note of the Commission's 2018 country-specific recommendations (CSRs), which are an important part of the European Semester process, and welcomes the special attention they devote to social challenges; encourages the Commission to ensure coherence between social and economic CSRs and to respect the flexibility clause in the Stability and Growth Pact, as stated in the Council's Commonly Agreed Position on Flexibility in the Stability and Growth Pact; notes with concern that only 50 % of the CSRs for 2017 were either fully or partially implemented and encourages the Member States, therefore, to step up their efforts to implement the recommendations, particularly in the following areas:
 - poverty and social exclusion, including child and in-work poverty, especially among vulnerable groups,
 - youth and long-term unemployment in line with the Council recommendation on the integration of long-term unemployed into the labour market¹,
 - income inequalities,
 - wage growth,
 - combatting early school leaving and the high number of NEETs,
 - education, lifelong learning, vocational education and training (VET),
 - the sustainability and adequacy of pension systems,
 - healthcare, including long-term care,
 - secure and adaptable employment
 - gender balances, namely labour market participation, and the gender pay and pension gaps;
5. Emphasises, therefore, that decent job creation, access to social protection, regardless of employment relationship or contract type, and wage growth have a significant impact on reducing inequalities, the risk of poverty and social exclusion, and will help to improve standards of living and support economic recovery; stresses that the Member States' reforms, as advocated by the Commission through the CSRs, should therefore focus in particular on policies that increase productivity and sustainable growth potential, support the creation of quality employment and reduce inequality and poverty, especially child poverty; encourages the creation of open-ended forms of employment, while ensuring adaptability, promoting an inclusive labour market and ensuring a fair work-life balance;
6. Welcomes the Commission communication of 13 March 2018 on monitoring the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) (COM(2018)0130), which aligns the Pillar with the European Semester cycle by reflecting the priorities of the EPSR in the analysis of measures taken and progress made at national level; emphasises that the EU's social goals and commitments should be as equal a priority as its economic goals; calls on the Commission and the Member States to reinforce social

¹ OJ C 67, 20.2.2016, p. 1.

rights by implementing the EPSR in such a way as to build a real social dimension for the EU (through legislation, policy-making mechanisms and financial instruments provided at the appropriate level);

7. Notes that the labour markets of euro area countries differ significantly, which constitutes a challenge to their proper functioning; calls, therefore, albeit without prejudice to the principle of subsidiarity, for well-designed labour market policies and reforms that create quality employment, promote equal opportunities, the equal treatment of workers, and the social and solidarity economy, facilitate equal access to the labour market and social protection, facilitate labour mobility, reintegrate the unemployed and tackle inequalities and gender imbalances; calls on the Member States to develop social and economic policies in line with the principles of the Commission recommendation of 3 October 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market¹, specifically ensuring the provision of adequate income support, accessible labour markets and access to quality services, all of which are deemed fundamental to sustainable outcomes;
8. Underlines the need to increase employment rates and promote decent job creation, particularly among the long-term unemployed, low-skilled, young and older workers, women, migrants, people with disabilities, minorities and marginalised communities such as the Roma, in order to achieve the Europe 2020 goal of an employment rate of at least 75 % and to mitigate the risk of poverty, especially child and in-work poverty, and the social exclusion these people face; underlines the need to reduce the number of people experiencing poverty in order to achieve the Europe 2020 goal of reducing poverty by 20 million people; underlines the need to reduce child poverty via the implementation of an EU-wide Child Guarantee;
9. Calls on the Member States to develop actions and strategies in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights to address the social needs of those for whom the labour market is inaccessible, namely those facing extreme deprivation, such as the homeless, children and young people and those with chronic physical and mental health conditions;
10. Calls for national strategies and EU-level coordination to fight ageism in labour markets as a response to an increasing number of older workers in the EU workforce, including by raising awareness of Council Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation², by aligning occupational health and safety regulations around the goals of sustainable employment and in the light of new and emerging occupational risks, and by securing access to life-long learning opportunities and improving policies supporting the reconciliation of work and family life;
11. Calls on the euro area Member States to take full advantage of the positive economic outlook and pursue labour market reforms that focus on the creation of jobs fostering predictable, secure and open-ended forms of employment, legally certain labour contracts that outline the terms and conditions of employment, by preventing and combating bogus self-employment and by ensuring adequate social protection, regardless of the employment relationship or the type of contract; calls on the Member States to adopt and implement the proposed Council recommendation on access to

¹ OJ L 307, 18.11.2008, p. 11.

² OJ L 303, 2.12.2000, p. 16.

social protection and to encourage people in non-standard employment to enrol in social protection schemes; stresses the importance of the ongoing negotiations on the directive on predictable and transparent working conditions;

12. Calls on the Member States to invest in care services throughout the life cycle, to continue to pursue the attainment of the 2002 Barcelona childcare targets and to develop care targets for the elderly and dependent persons; believes that the provision of care services within the family should not adversely impact social or pension benefits; calls on the Member States, in this context, to ensure that the accumulation of pension rights is sufficient;
13. Calls on the euro area Member States to reduce gender pension gaps and to ensure intergenerational equity through decent and sufficient retirement benefits, in order to eradicate poverty and social exclusion in old age and, in tandem, to ensure the long-term sustainability and adequacy of pension systems, to promote higher employment rates for decent jobs which provide greater pension contributions and do not overburden the younger generation; notes with concern that in most euro area Member States both the gender pension gap and the rate of early retirement remain high; points out that the sustainability of pension systems can be enhanced by reducing unemployment, tackling undeclared work effectively, and integrating migrants and refugees into the labour market, among other initiatives; welcomes the recommendation advanced by the Commission in the 2018 Pension Adequacy Report on the need for a holistic reflection on the adequacy of old-age incomes and the financial sustainability of pension systems; calls for more analysis to be undertaken on the situation of the ‘oldest old’, whose pension entitlements may have decreased over time as a result of inflation;
14. Believes that Member States’ reforms of their social protection systems must be designed to facilitate labour market participation for those who can work by making work pay; stresses, in this regard, that income support should target those most in need;
15. Notes that the job vacancy rate in the euro area was 2,1 % in the first quarter of 2018, up from 1,9 % in 2017; emphasises that adequate skills can be acquired and the skills mismatch tackled by improving the quality, availability, affordability and accessibility of education and training, including targeted quality training, by improving the mutual recognition of qualifications, by reinforcing upskilling and reskilling measures, with particular attention to basic skills, and by providing non-formal adult education opportunities, which require appropriate support, including EU funding, without prejudice to Article 149 TFEU, and funding at national and regional levels; calls, in this regard, for targeted measures to support vulnerable groups, including Roma, people with disabilities, early school leavers, the long-term unemployed, and migrants and refugees; asserts the need to increase the relevance of vocational training to the labour market and to take steps to enhance its attractiveness vis-à-vis academic pathways; supports the continued implementation and monitoring of the Upskilling Pathways initiative to help people acquire fundamental skills for the 21st century; calls on the Member States to prioritise comprehensive training in digital and entrepreneurial skills and to take into account the shift towards the digital economy in the context of upskilling and retraining;
16. Expresses concern at the fact that in the EU19, the average rate of general government

expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP fell year-on-year from 2009 to 2016¹; stresses that well-resourced public education systems are vital for equality and social inclusion;

17. Notes with great concern the persistently high number of European citizens with poor literacy skills or literacy difficulties, including functional and media illiteracy, which gives rise to serious concerns in terms of meaningful and effective participation in public life and the labour market;
18. Encourages the promotion of dual education systems and other similar policies; stresses that an effective link between education, research, innovation and the labour market can make a decisive contribution to job creation;
19. Stresses that a safe and appropriate learning environment is vital for the well-being of students and teaching staff;
20. Calls on the Commission and Member States to develop specific measures within employment, educational and social policies to ensure the effective inclusion of people with disabilities and from disadvantaged backgrounds;
21. Points out the need to plan and promote organised and up-to-date vocational guidance programmes in schools, particularly in the countryside and in border, mountainous and island regions;
22. Supports the mobility of students, workers, athletes and artists in the EU and the euro area; is concerned, however, that substantial differences in living and working standards in the euro area trigger involuntary migration, further exacerbating the effects of the so-called brain drain; points out that a key prerequisite for tackling the phenomenon of the brain drain is the creation of decent jobs, as is the promotion of effective education, training and career guidance strategies; calls for future education and employment policies to effectively address this phenomenon, including by fully developing the European education area; stresses the need to develop a European student card to promote learning mobility and facilitate the mutual recognition of certificates, diplomas and professional qualifications, reducing administrative burdens and costs for students and for education and training institutes;
23. Stresses that, according to the Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) benchmarks, by the year 2020 fewer than 15 % of 15-year-olds should be under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science; welcomes the inclusion of the 'underachievement in education' benchmark for 15-year-olds (results for low achievement in mathematics from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey) in the new Social Scoreboard;
24. Recalls that, according to the ET 2020 benchmarks, by the year 2020, at least 95 % of children (from the age of four to compulsory school age) should participate in early childhood education; stresses that the area of 'early childhood care' in the Social Scoreboard includes only one indicator, for children aged under three in formal care; highlights that it lacks information on the coverage of older children below compulsory school age, as well as information about the extent of childcare provision as measured

¹ Eurostat data.

by the number of hours provided;

25. Takes into account the positive role of open education and open universities in the process of acquiring knowledge and skills, particularly online training programmes for employees, as this is a dynamic form of learning that meets current needs and the interests of participants;
26. Reiterates its call for the Erasmus+ envelope to be at least tripled in the next multiannual financial framework (MFF), with the aim of reaching many more young people, youth organisations and secondary school pupils and apprentices across Europe; calls for particular attention to be paid to people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds to enable them to participate in the programme, as well as to people with disabilities, in line with the EU's and the Member States' obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD);
27. Recalls the strategic potential of the cultural and creative sector (CCS) as a generator of jobs and wealth in the EU; stresses that the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) constitute 11,2 % of all private enterprises and 7,5 % of all persons employed in the total EU economy, and generate 5,3 % of the total European gross value added (GVA); underlines the CCIs' role in preserving and promoting European cultural and linguistic diversity and their contribution to economic growth, innovation and employment, especially youth employment;
28. Highlights that adequate investment and planning in the field of education, particularly in digital skills and programming, is essential to secure the Union's competitive position, the availability of a skilled workforce and the employability of the workforce;
29. Calls on the Commission to provide incentives and technical assistance to young people to set up their businesses and to propose measures to promote entrepreneurship, including through school curricula in the Member States;
30. Underlines the need to pursue reforms that prepare the labour market and its workforce for the digital transformation for people of all ages and backgrounds through a flexible, learner-centric approach, in particular by ensuring adequate provision for lifelong learning and digital skills training, which is central to a knowledge-based economy;; emphasises the importance of lifelong careers guidance in ensuring people's participation in suitable, flexible and high-quality training and career paths; recalls, in this context, the limits of skills forecasting in view of the rapidly changing nature of the labour market and stresses the importance, in this regard, of transversal skills such as communication, problem-solving, creativity and the ability to learn, all of which boost people's resilience and enhance their ability to adapt to change and acquire new skills throughout their lives; highlights the need to ensure that national social protection systems provide adequate protection for all employees, including in new forms of work and with new kinds of contracts as well as adequate coverage for those who cannot work or are unable to find work; calls on the Member States to develop labour market policies that support cross-sector mobility and the re-training of workers, which will become increasingly important as our labour markets adapt to the digital transformation of our economies; stresses the need, in that respect, to secure the involvement of both trade unions and employers' organisations in order to ensure a fair transformation;
31. Calls on the euro area Member States to undertake the necessary reforms and to

increase social investment so as to ensure the accessibility, availability, affordability, quality and cost-effectiveness of their healthcare systems; calls for a renewed European target to significantly increase the number of healthy life years by making prevention a priority of EU health policies, in addition to curative measures; calls for the active pursuit of health promotion campaigns;

32. Calls for a European strategy for quality and accessibility of long-term care systems, by pursuing a rights- and community-based approach to long-term care and support; calls for significant investments in long-term care services in order to prepare for the greater needs anticipated in the light of demographic change; recognises that the long-term care sector offers inadequate working conditions and calls for care work and working conditions in care services to be re-evaluated so as to ensure the quality of long-term care;
33. Points out the need for well-designed policies for a better work-life balance, including by providing affordable childcare, early childcare and long-term care, by rebalancing the gender care role between men and women, and by promoting adaptable working arrangements and the take-up of advantageous and paid maternity, paternity, parental and carers' leave; considers, in this regard, that the adoption of a balanced directive on work-life balance for parents and carers is a necessary step towards improved work-life balance; calls, moreover, for a European initiative on social protection and services for informal carers;
34. Underlines the importance of enhancing structured dialogue and the participation of employers' organisations, trade unions and civil society organisations in contributing to the development and implementation of employment and social policies and reforms, and of their active engagement in the Semester process;
35. Believes that in order to maintain and increase global competitiveness, the labour market regulatory frameworks of the Member States need to be clear, simple and flexible and uphold high labour standards;
36. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.