

European Semester 2020 – Employment aspects

The European Semester sets a timetable and framework for EU countries to discuss economic policy coordination. The European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) adopted its report on the employment and social aspects in the 2020 Annual Sustainable Growth Survey on 20 February 2020. Parliament is expected to discuss an own initiative resolution at the March I plenary part-session.

Background

The '[European Semester](#)' is a socio-economic policy coordination process running from November to July, in which Member States discuss economic reform and budget plans before their adoption, while the European institutions monitor progress and make recommendations throughout the year. The Semester officially starts with European Commission publication of the annual growth survey and the alert mechanism report. In January, EMPL drafts a resolution on the annual growth survey.

European Commission communication: 'Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2020'

In naming its communication the '[Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2020](#)' (ASGS 2020), the new European Commission signalled a change in focus. It includes: (i) environmental sustainability, refocusing to include the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs); (ii) higher productivity and innovation, through investment in education, structural reform, standardisation and financial sector integration; (iii) fair and inclusive economic transition, tackling unfair working conditions, the gender gap and regional disparities; (iv) compliance with fiscal rules, improving public finance and deepening economic and monetary union.

European Parliament position

Parliament's EMPL committee adopted its [report](#) on 28 February 2020, focusing on employment and social aspects of the ASGS 2020. It calls on the Commission to identify EU-specific SDG targets and indicators, to measure policy effectiveness and to ensure funding is better targeted. It also welcomes inclusion of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) in the ASGS 2020 and calls for a reinforced [Social Scoreboard](#) and an action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights and the revised [European Social Charter](#).

To reduce high unemployment in some countries, EMPL stresses the importance of a strong [European Social Fund Plus](#) and [Just Transition Fund](#), and calls for greater investment in active labour policies and structural reform. It suggests the Commission take measures to promote social convergence, based on the [consultation](#) on an EU framework for a minimum wage. To reduce high numbers of persons at risk of poverty, EMPL proposes the Commission present an anti-poverty strategy and establish a European Child Guarantee. The report also demands improved quality, funding and accessibility in Member State education systems, as well as greater efforts on vocational education and training.

The EMPL committee underlines that Commission and Member State policy-making could better support labour and service mobility, take SMEs into consideration, and help enterprises pursue a more digital and green economy. To protect vulnerable workers, the report asks the Commission to assess working conditions in new forms of employment. It suggests using the [Gender Equality Index](#) as a European Semester tool. It asks the Commission and Member States to close the gender employment and pension gaps, and tackle disincentives for women to work. EMPL also calls on Member States to ensure access to affordable [high-quality healthcare](#), better access to quality care for children, the elderly and people with disabilities and requests that the Commission present a new EU strategy on occupational safety and health. Lastly, the report calls for social spending exemption from fiscal rules to ensure social and environmental investment for a true 'just transition', implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the SDGs.

Own-initiative report: [2019/2212\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: EMPL; Rapporteur: Klára Dobrev (S&D, Hungary).

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