



**2019/2188(INI)**

10/9/2020

# **OPINION**

of the Committee on Petitions

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on reducing inequalities with a special focus on in-work poverty  
(2019/2188(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Cristina Maestre Martín De Almagro

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## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Petitions calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Stresses that, in accordance with Article 31 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union ('the Charter'), the EU has an obligation to ensure that all workers enjoy working conditions that respect their health, safety and dignity and calls for attention to be given to the fact that poverty and exclusion from the labour market and society exacerbate inequalities and segregation; recalls the fact that in implementing their policies, the Commission and the Member States should further strengthen the EU's social model and take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of a decent standard of living and adequate social protection for all, the fight against poverty and social exclusion;
2. Recalls that the Member States should ensure a high level of education and training in accordance with Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU); underlines that early school leavers and low-educated young people are expected to remain vulnerable when it comes to future employment, where wage disparities between those who are poorly qualified and those who have received better qualifications, can be expected to increase; stresses that this could potentially generate in-work poverty challenges, and that investment in early childhood education and life-long learning is therefore key in order to improve employability; notes, in this regard, that Upskilling Pathways should offer further opportunities to boost the basic skills of adults and to ensure progress towards achieving the qualifications sought by the labour market;
3. Stresses that the Treaty on European Union sets out that the Union has the basic obligation to work towards Europe's sustainable development, on the basis of, inter alia, a highly competitive social market economy that sets out to achieve full employment and social progress and a high level of protection; stresses that the EU should combat social exclusion and discrimination, and should promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and the protection of the rights of the child;
4. Takes note of the high number of petitions received by the Committee on Petitions, which alert it to the abusive use of fixed-term contracts in both the public<sup>1</sup> and private<sup>2</sup> sectors and notes in this regard that the most frequently mentioned cause of work stress is job precarity; calls on the Commission to examine these petitions and to provide a better response, in line with its competences and those of the Member States in order to tackle in-work poverty, social exclusion and precarious work effectively;
5. Takes the view that precarious work must be combated through an integrated, multi-

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<sup>1</sup> These include petitions 0240/18, 0328/18, 0365/18, 0374/18, 0396/18, 0419/18, 0829/2018, 0897/2018, 1161/2018, 0290/19, 0310/2019, 0335/2019, 0579/19, 0624/19, 0652/19, 0683/2019, 0737/2019, 1017/19, 1045/2019, 1241/2019, 1318/2019 and 0036/2020.

<sup>2</sup> These include petitions 1378/2013, 0019/2016, 0020/2016, 0021/2016, 0099/2017, 1162/2017, 0110/2018 and 0335/2019.

level policy package that promotes inclusive and effective labour standards alongside effective measures to ensure that the principle of equality is upheld;

6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to monitor sectors liable to have a high degree of job insecurity and emphasises the importance of supporting labour inspections following common criteria throughout the EU, to ensure that working conditions are compatible with the Charter and in particular to combat precarious, abusive and irregular employment, including that of posted workers; calls on the Member States to take measures, in line with the 2018 Council recommendation, to ensure that all workers and self-employed persons have access to adequate social protection;
7. Notes that increasing digitalisation, robotisation, use of artificial intelligence and the development of the digital platform economy drive profound changes in the labour market; invites, therefore, the Member States to promote life-long learning policies, skills and competence development throughout life, and to provide education and adequate training programmes for low-skilled workers to prepare them for the challenges of the changing labour market; underlines, in this respect, that digital technologies can be better used to support employers, workers, labour inspectorates and in particular micro and small enterprises, when it comes to managing the changes in work organisation, so as to ensure that workers' best interests are protected;
8. Stresses that new forms of work, including platform work, present not only opportunities in terms of employability and access to the labour market, but also challenges in terms of fair working conditions and access to social protection; calls, therefore, on the Commission and the Member States to take special care to ensure that the relevant labour legislation is adhered to with regard to online platform work;
9. Notes with concern that, according to the European Social Policy Network, some 9.4 % of workers in the EU are at risk of poverty, representing some 20.5 million people; highlights the important disparities between the Member States, and underlines the need to establish policies and law at EU level to reverse this situation in order to prevent further social polarisation in the EU; warns that this situation will be aggravated as a result of the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 crisis, and urges the Commission and the Member States to protect these workers by taking the necessary measures to preserve their jobs and wages and also their working conditions; underlines, therefore, that while respecting the competences outlined in the TFEU, there is scope for more effective policy action by the Commission and the Member States, which is to be focused on the principles enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights; urges, therefore, the Commission to improve social convergence by introducing a legal instrument that guarantees every worker in the European Union the right to benefit from a fair minimum wage; welcomes the Commission's consultation with social partners on a European framework for minimum wages;
10. Urges the Commission and the Member States to pay particular attention to sectors with high numbers of precarious contracts;
11. Agrees with the Commission that income inequality in the EU as a world region is

lower than in some other major advanced economies, but it remains a concern; stresses that high inequality raises concerns about fairness, as entrenched inequality may result in inequality of opportunity and reduce potential growth; underlines that relatively high inequality may be linked to a higher risk-of-poverty rate and more pronounced social exclusion and a higher incidence of financial distress and, as such, may reduce social cohesion<sup>3</sup>;

12. Is of the opinion that more emphasis should be placed on values and policies that promote work and its link to improving people's quality of life, and that such values and policies should make meaningful contributions to improve their social and physical environment;
13. In the light of events linked to the COVID-19 crisis, strongly emphasises the need to guarantee cross-border seasonal workers' rights, and the urgent need to establish a monitoring mechanism for the implementation of sanitary and health measures, and therefore urges the Commission to protect all EU workers that may find themselves at any kind of risk – including direct or indirect discrimination;
14. Stresses that women continue to earn 16 % less than men in the EU and have higher rates of job insecurity; stresses, furthermore, that more women have part-time jobs than men and are the majority in sectors such as care, which are also highly undervalued and often unpaid; calls on the Member States to put strategies in place to ensure equality, to take effective measures to reduce the gender pay-gap by applying binding pay transparency measures, to promote equal access to quality employment and to take measures against all forms of discrimination and inequality in the labour market and urges the Commission to pay particular attention to the Member States' compliance with EU labour law;
15. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to make fighting unemployment and insecure employment of young people a priority and to make full use of financial instruments such as the Youth Guarantee and European programmes such as Erasmus+ in order to tackle youth unemployment and enhance the employability of young people;
16. Urges the Commission to monitor the implementation of the existing acquis and to review the relevant EU labour laws in order to improve the quality and working conditions of workers throughout the Union and to boost opportunities for job creation, while taking into account the fact that the current situation, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, will have a serious and long-lasting impact on the EU labour market, social justice and working conditions; emphasises the need to focus on the groups that are most vulnerable to job insecurity and that are therefore more likely to experience exclusion or social disadvantage;
17. Calls on the Commission to pay particular attention to the issue of job precarity, especially in the most vulnerable regions, by guaranteeing a swift and fair allocation of the Just Transition Fund and other available funds, including the European Social Fund +, in order to help with economic transformation, where upskilling, reskilling

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<sup>3</sup> Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2019,  
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&Id=en&pubId=8219>

and investment will be vital and investments in new activities would be of utmost importance;

18. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to launch a debate between employers and unions to make it possible for an in-depth analysis to be conducted in all Member States of the possible reforms needed in the European labour market to prevent workers continuing to be at risk of poverty.

## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

<b>Date adopted</b>	7.9.2020
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 31 -: 0 0: 3
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Alex Agius Saliba, Andris Ameriks, Marc Angel, Andrus Ansip, Jordan Bardella, Alexander Bernhuber, Markus Buchheit, Ryszard Czarnecki, Eleonora Evi, Agnès Evren, Gheorghe Falcă, Emmanouil Fragkos, Mario Furore, Gianna Gancia, Ibán García Del Blanco, Alexis Georgoulis, Peter Jahr, Radan Kanev, Stelios Kypouropoulos, Cristina Maestre Martín De Almagro, Dolors Montserrat, Frédérique Ries, Alfred Sant, Monica Semedo, Massimiliano Smeriglio, Yana Toom, Loránt Vincze, Thomas Waitz, Stefania Zambelli, Tatjana Ždanoka, Kosma Złotowski
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Pernando Barrena Arza, Ádám Kósa, Marie-Pierre Vedrenne

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

31	+
EPP	Alexander BERNHUBER , Agnès EVREN , Gheorghe FALCĂ , Peter JAHR, Radan KANEV, Ádám KÓSA, Stelios KYMPOUROPOULOS, Dolors MONTSERRAT, Loránt VINCZE
S&D	Alex AGIUS SALIBA, Andris AMERIKS, Marc ANGEL, Ibán GARCÍA DEL BLANCO, Cristina MAESTRE MARTÍN DE ALMAGRO, Alfred SANT, Massimiliano SMERIGLIO
RENEW	Andrus ANSIP, Frédérique RIES, Monica SEMEDO, Yana TOOM, Marie-Pierre VEDRENNE
ID	Jordan BARDELLA
Verts/ALE	Thomas WAITZ, Tatjana ŽDANOKA
ECR	Emmanouil FRAGKOS, Ryszard CZARNECKI, Kosma ZŁOTOWSKI
GUE	Pernando BARRENA ARZA, Alexis GEORGOULIS,
NI	Eleonora EVI, Mario FURORE,

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ID	Markus BUCHHEIT, Gianna GANCIA, Stefania ZAMBELLI

**Key to symbols:**

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention