



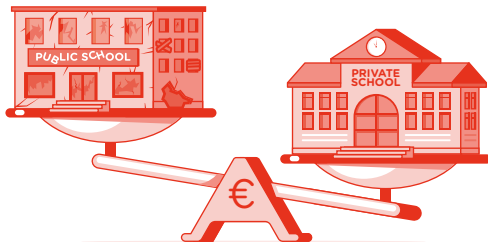
SOCIAL RIGHTS MONITOR 25

The Social Rights Monitor (SRM) analyses the state of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights at national level, as well as the situation of the just transition and civic space. The SRM builds on assessments carried out by National Strategy Groups. These groups are made up of national civil society organisations and are established to monitor the implementation of the EPSR in their countries. They are led by SOLIDAR members. In 2025, 13 countries were analysed (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain). The general trends that emerged are summarised below. A series of policy recommendations addressed to EU decision-makers are also listed in this summary.

Equal opportunities and access to the labour market

EDUCATION TRAINING AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Non-traditional learning gained momentum in 2024, with more policy support and recognition, alongside lifelong learning initiatives for green-economy skills. Vocational education and training expanded, with countries like Serbia, Spain, and Bulgaria adopting dual models and promoting STEM, though Spain faces teacher shortages. Despite progress, **inequalities persist** as public schools lack resources while private schools grow more elitist, and student segregation — both academic and social — remains evident across Europe.



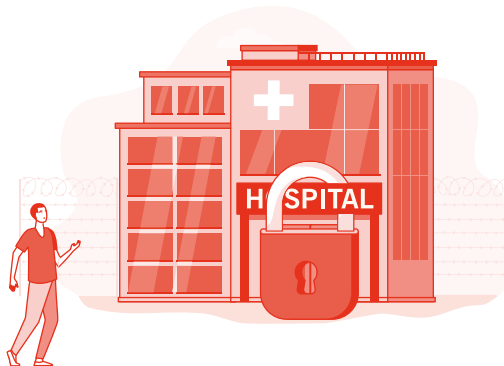
GENDER EQUALITY

The 2024 EIGE Gender Equality Index gave the EU a score of 71 out of 100, a 0.8-point rise from 2023, with highest scores in health (88.6) and money (83.4) and biggest gains in power (+2.3). Yet, disparities remain, with Spain (76.7) leading and Greece (59.3) lagging. **Persistent gender pay gaps, limited childcare, and cultural care expectations** continue to hinder women's employment, while gender-based and LGBTQI+ violence is rising across Europe.



INCLUSION OF MIGRANTS, REFUGEES, ASYLUM SEEKERS AND MINORITIES

Migration policy tightened in many EU countries, with **continued illegal pushbacks and return hubs** in countries like Greece and Italy, while migrants still face discrimination, and barriers to decent work and essential services. Portugal's administrative transition caused major delays in residence permits. Countries like Germany, Slovenia, Serbia, and Croatia made reforms to promote labour migration, regularisation, and fair treatment for foreign workers.



Fair working conditions

ADEQUATE WAGES AND JOBS SECURITY

Wages across Europe rose in 2024, but often failed to keep pace with inflation, reducing households' purchasing power and leaving 8.2% of workers at risk of poverty. Vulnerable groups — women, migrants, and those in low-income regions — remain most affected by pay gaps and wage disparities. Employment reached 75.8%, with growth driven by green economy jobs, yet temporary and informal contracts persist in low-wage sectors, especially in Southern and Eastern Europe, leaving many workers in precarious and insecure conditions.



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Occupational safety and health remain a concern across Europe, with countries like Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Spain still relying on outdated legal frameworks that obscure incident data. While Albania and Serbia implemented new OSH laws in 2024, enforcement remains weak overall due to limited labour inspections and insufficient capacity, allowing many employers to evade accountability.



SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Social dialogue remains uneven across Europe — relatively stable in Central Europe but weak in the Western Balkans. Tripartite institutions in Albania and Kosovo were largely inactive, no new collective agreements were reached in Serbia, and social dialogue in North Macedonia remains highly ineffective.

Social inclusion and protection

I HOUSING

The SRM highlights the severity of Europe's housing crisis, which affects social groups differently. Young people increasingly struggle to access adequate housing, with soaring rents forcing many into shared living; about 70% of Spanish youth rent, and 87% share apartments. Economically disadvantaged households, such as single parents and migrants, face similar hardship as wages fail to match rising housing costs driven by the **financialisation of the market and a shortage of social housing**. Coordinated EU and national strategies, including the European Affordable Housing Plan, are urgently needed to expand affordable housing and address homelessness and exclusion.



I POVERTY ERADICATION

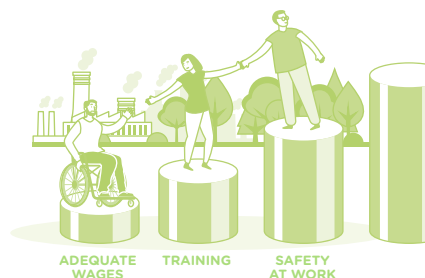
Poverty remains a major challenge in Europe, with 21% of the EU population at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2024. Rising living and housing costs have hit single parents, migrants, and low-income households hardest, showing poverty's deeply interconnected causes. Regional disparities persist—southern Italy's poverty rate, for example, is more than double that of the north. **A comprehensive EU anti-poverty strategy is urgently needed, built on human rights and intersectionality**, with targeted, region-specific measures. Access barriers to welfare also persist, though some countries, like France and Portugal, are taking steps to improve benefit accessibility.



Socially just green transition

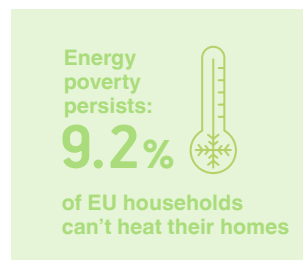
I QUALITY GREEN JOBS

Europe's green economy shows strong potential for social progress, creating jobs in Spain and Albania, with further opportunities in North Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia. To fully realise this potential, investment is needed in training for both workers and educators, along with public support to ensure jobs are high-quality, inclusive, and socially just. The proposed **Quality Jobs Roadmap** could drive this, but it **must prioritise workers and communities, fund just transitions, and integrate lifelong learning**.



I ENERGY POVERTY

Access to affordable energy remains a challenge in Europe, with 9.2% of EU households unable to adequately heat their homes in 2024, reaching nearly 19% in Bulgaria and Greece. High energy costs force many, especially poorer households, to rely on unsafe fossil fuels in inadequate housing. Measures to ease this include Germany's financial and counselling support and Bulgaria's development of energy communities under the EU Energy Community Initiative.



Civic space and civil dialogue

I ENABLING SPACE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Civic space in Europe remains under pressure, with several countries classified as “Narrowed” by the CIVICUS Monitor due to restrictions on protests and civil rights, and increasing intolerance toward divergent opinions. **CSOs face criminalisation, funding cuts, and limited participation in decision-making**, while excessive force and intimidation against protesters in countries like Greece and Serbia further restrict civic engagement. Barriers to meaningful civil dialogue discourages CSOs from participating, as seen in Croatia, where public consultation involvement dropped sharply from 2023 to 2024.



Policy recommendations

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET

(EPSR Principles 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16 & 19):

- **Combat segregation in education and foster inclusion.** To this end, give prominence to education in the frame of the **European Semester process**, promote lifelong learning systems at national level, establish ambitious European targets for equity in education systems, and a target for citizenship competences.
- Ensure real access to **national language courses** for migrants and the **recognition of competences of non-EU nationals** to increase their possibilities to participate in society and access the labour market. To this end, foster the validation of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal education environments by fully implementing the **2012 Council Recommendations on the validation of learning outcomes**.
- Systematically apply an **intersectional approach to social measures** at EU level, acknowledging and tackling the specific challenges encountered by minority groups, including migrants, in accessing social rights. Pay particular attention to their right to adequate housing, fight against poverty, and fair working conditions.
- Seize the **Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030** to push for ambitious measures to **close employment, pay and pension gaps, as well as foster work-life balance** of women.

FAIR WORKING CONDITIONS

(EPSR Principles 6 & 8):

- Ensure the ambitious implementation of the **Adequate Minimum Wage Directive** and monitor the definition of adequacy at national level to ensure it keeps up with the rising cost of living. Use the European Semester process to support this monitoring. Provide assistance for wage-setting reforms in **candidate countries** through the European Social Fund.

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND PROTECTION

(EPSR Principles 12, 14, 16, 19 & 20):

- **Tackle the financialisation of the housing market** by curbing speculative investment and limiting wealth accumulation through housing and by regulating the housing market, including through **rent caps**. Only allow private investment in the market when it responds to **ambitious social and environmental standards**.
- Expand the affordable housing stock, namely the social housing stock, through **renovations, rent control measures and adequate investment in social and affordable housing**. Provide substantial support to social and solidarity economy actors through funding and privileged access to public procurement, in the light of their essential role in ensuring access to affordable housing. The **European Affordable Housing Plan** should ambitiously fulfil these objectives.
- Put forward a **European Anti-Poverty strategy** that is based on principles like **human rights, a holistic approach, and intersectionality**. Tackle all forms of poverty including in-work poverty, pension poverty, energy poverty and transport poverty.
- Ensure adequate funding for social policies through **a stand-alone and ambitious ESF** in the next MFF and prevent dispersion of funds for other priorities, like defence. Support funding for access to public and essential services, including healthcare, and support public investment with a progressive taxation policy.

JUST TRANSITION

(EPSR Principles
1, 5, 6, 8, 9 & 10):

- As part of the announced Quality Jobs Roadmap, the Commission should propose a **Directive for a Just Transition in the world of work** through the anticipation and management of change. This Directive should require companies, Member States, and local authorities to take concerted measures ensuring quality jobs in industrial transitions, and to integrate them into transition plans.
- The Just Transition Directive or the Quality Jobs Act should include a '**Quality Job Golden Rule**' with which all EU transition policies and any form of public support at national and EU levels must comply. This rule should set out a series of obligations, such as the guarantee of wages adjusted to changing living costs, the participation of workers in the industrial transitions affecting them, and the adjustment of OHS measures to new emerging risks.
- Building on the Directive and the Golden Rule, the Quality Jobs Roadmap and Act should spearhead the development of **strategies and measures supporting just transitions in sensitive industrial sectors**, such as retraining opportunities during paid working hours, the creation of fair labour practices, including sustainable supply chains in the construction sector and limiting subcontracting in tender processes.

CIVIC SPACE AND CIVIL DIALOGUE

- Ensure access **to adequate funding for CSOs, including for their vital advocacy work**. Align the next MFF with this need by allocating enough funds and establishing transparent and proportionate rules to access them at multiple levels. Support CSOs in candidate countries as part of their accession process, including through access to funding.
- Stand up for civil society by putting a decisive end to the specious attacks on CSOs carried out by right-wing political forces at EU, national and local level. **Protect and empower activists and CSOs** by introducing a Civil Society Strategy fit for purpose.
- Ensure that **the EPSR, civic space, social and civil dialogue are highly prioritised** in accession negotiations for candidate countries.

The recommendations are organised into categories following the structure of the SRM. However, they should all be understood as transversal and intersectional. Just Transition is the category underlining the links between specific green and social measures in this Monitor but is also the overarching objective SOLIDAR strives for of ensuring that all climate and environmental policies are designed to also tackle inequalities and enhance rights and vice versa.

**Scan to
read the
full SRM**



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