

BRIEFING
PAPER
#105

THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF SKILLS THROUGH SOCIAL JUSTICE LENSES

On 9th May, **the European Year of Skills** was officially launched by the European Commission, putting skills at the centre of attention. With the aim to address labour market shortages and skills mismatches to ensure sustainable economic growth, it works to showcase the existing initiatives in the area, while featuring skills development opportunities and activities across Europe.

This briefing paper reflects on the European Year of Skills through **the lenses of social justice** and assesses the main targets and initiatives against **the principles set in the European Pillar of Social Rights**. It underlines that skills should first and foremost be approached from the perspective of social inclusion. Their importance for the **well-being of all people** and for the **personal development** is highlighted, making sure that **no one is left behind**.





INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to reflect on the European Year of Skills (EYS) through the lenses of social justice. It will assess the main objectives and initiatives against the principles set in the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). To be able to do so, the paper is reacting to the Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council (the Decision)¹ – adopted in March 2023 – which was based on the Proposal of the European Commission (the EC Proposal)² and then modified according to the compromise reached by the European Parliament and the Council.

Following the 2022 European Year of Youth, president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announced in her State of the Union address on the 14th of September 2022 the EC's intention to make the year 2023 the European Year of Skills. The reasons underlined were mainly closely connected with the labour market, the main aim being *“to address labour market shortages and support the sustainable growth of the EU social market economy.”*³ This is even clearer from the Commission's proposal structuring the overall goal as further promoting a mindset of reskilling and upskilling to boost competitiveness of European companies, *“realising the full potential of the digital and green transitions in a socially fair, inclusive and just manner.”*⁴

The European Year of Skills is said to pursue four main objectives:

1. “Promoting investment in training and upskilling, enabling people stay in their jobs or find new ones,
2. ensuring skills match the needs of employers, by closely cooperating with social partners and companies,
3. matching people's aspirations and skill sets with opportunities on the job market, especially for the green and digital transition and the economic recovery,
4. attracting people from outside the EU with the skills needed.”⁵

On the other hand, the Decision explicitly states that the overall objective of the EYS is in line with principles 1, 3, 4 and 5 of the EPSR and contributes to the headline targets set by the EPSR Action Plan. The listed principles underline the right to education, training, and life-long learning (principle 1), equal opportunities (principle 3), active support to employment (principle 4) and the importance of secure and adaptable employment (principle 5).⁶

1 Decision (EU) 2023/936 of the European Parliament and the Council of 10 May 2023 on a European Year of Skills (Below: the Decision): <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2023/936/oj>

2 European Commission (2022). Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a European Year of Skills 2023 (2022/0326 (COD)), (Below: the EC Proposal): <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=10431&furtherNews=yes>

3 Recital 9 of the EC Proposal.

4 Article 2 of the EC Proposal.

5 European Commission (2023). Commission welcomes political agreement on the European Year of Skills:

https://year-of-skills.europa.eu/news/commission-welcomes-political-agreement-european-year-skills-2023-03-07_en

6 Recital 5 and 6 of the Decision; European Commission (year unknown). The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1607&langId=en>



→ The objective behind the EYS is to make the EU globally competitive,⁷ which means that skills are approached from the perspective of the labour market. Interests of the groups in the most vulnerable situations in society are not at the front, but rather the enterprises (in particular, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)) are. The short-sightedness of this approach consists of looking at the labour market and its needs as the highest priority, ignoring that social inclusion and participation is a wider concept that ensures people's fulfilment at 360 degrees, going beyond economic growth. The labour market should support and adapt to this objective and not the other way around. Principle 1 of the EPSR addresses acquiring skills as the element which enables people to participate fully in society and manage transitions in the labour market.⁸ Individuals are at the front of the concern, skills should help them, not serve solely the enterprises and global competitiveness. SOLIDAR acknowledges that the amendments proposed by the European Parliament,⁹ respected this in a greater way than the Proposal, which resulted in the recitals of the Decision having more of a social tone as well.

INSTRUMENTS FOR THE REALISATION OF THE EYS

The focus of the EYS will be on the implementation of existing instruments, while also adopting new proposals to help further boost skills development. In this chapter, the key initiatives are underlined, while already indicating the main gaps and recommendations needed to bring them in line with the EPSR.

1. The European Skills Agenda, presented by the EC on the 1st of July 2020

The European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (ESA) is the Commission's five-year strategic plan for upskilling and reskilling. It includes 12 actions with the aim of ensuring that the right to training and lifelong learning in the EPSR is guaranteed all across Europe. The EYS is an opportunity to further promote the implementation of the plan, as stressed already in the Article 2 of the Decision, stating that the objective of the EYS will further contribute to the objectives set in the European Skills Agenda.¹⁰

Some of the actions under the ESA include:

- The **Pact for Skills**, which supports public and private organisations regarding upskilling and reskilling, helping them through the green and digital transitions. The importance of it is accentuated in the EYS as well, underlining partnerships for onshore renewable energy,

⁷ Page 3 and the recital 3 of the EC Proposal; Recital 9 and first paragraph of Article 2 of the Decision.

⁸ European Commission (year unknown). The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 Principles (below: the EPSR): <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1606&langId=en>

⁹ European Parliament. Report on the Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a European Year of Skill 2023 (A9-0028/2023) (Below: Report of the Parliament): https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0028_EN.html

¹⁰ European Commission (2020). Commission presents European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1196; recital 7 and 13 of the Decision.



heat pump skills and energy efficiency, which are in the making.¹¹

- **The Council Recommendation on Vocational Education and Training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience**, adopted on 24th of November 2020.¹²
- **The Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Individual Learning Accounts**, made by the EC on 10th December 2021¹³
- **The Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability**¹⁴.
- Building on the ESA, in November 2021, the Council adopted a **Resolution on a new European Agenda for Adult Learning**, which aims to increase adult participation in the formal, non-formal and informal learning.¹⁵

→ As SOLIDAR already stressed, the main critique of the ESA is that it remains growth-oriented instead of focusing on sustainable development. Our societies need to transform based on sustainability and resilience, a change that requires a paradigm shift, which is not possible to achieve without democratic support. It is important to equip people in the EU with the competences that enable them to be aware citizens in changing societies.¹⁶

2. Initiatives in connection to the green transition

The EC Proposal stipulates that in order to be able to advance to “a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy, as laid out under **the European Green Deal**”¹⁷ upskilling and reskilling of the workforce will be needed to gain the skills for the green transition. **The Fit for 55** Commission Communication recognises that the only way to manage the green transition is if “the EU has the skilled workforce it needs to stay competitive”. The commitment to equip people with skills needed for the green transition is already included in the **ESA** as well.¹⁸ Important to mention is also the **GreenComp**, a reference framework for sustainability competences, which works for advancing a consensual definition of the meaning of the sustainability as a competence.¹⁹

Already announced in the Green Deal Industrial Plan, one of the key actions of the **Net-Zero Industry Act** is enhancing skills. This includes setting up Net-Zero Industry Academies, supported by the Net-Zero Europe Platform. The aim is to contribute to quality jobs in the sectors crucial to reach net-zero by 2050, dealing with technologies like wind turbines, heat pumps and solar panels.²⁰

11 European Commission (year unknown). Pact for Skills: https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/index_en; recital 13 of the Decision.

12 Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience 2020/C 417/01 (OJ C 417, 2.12.2020, p. 1–16):

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32020H1202%2801%29>

13 Proposal for a Council Recommendation on individual learning accounts (COM/2021/773 final):

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0773>

14 Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability (COM/2021/770 final): <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0770>

15 European Commission (year unknown). Adult learning initiatives:

<https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/adult-learning/adult-learning-initiatives>; Recital 15 of the Decision.

16 More: SOLIDAR (2020). Ups and Downs in the Updated Skills Agenda:

<https://www.solidar.org/en/news/ups-and-downs-in-the-updated-skills-agenda>

17 Recital 14 of the EC Proposal.

18 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Fit for 55: delivering the EU's 2030 Climate Target on the way to climate neutrality (COM(2021) 550 final), Chapter 2.2.1.: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0550>

19 European Commission (year unknown). GreenComp: the European sustainability competence framework:

https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/greencomp-european-sustainability-competence-framework_en

20 European Commission (2023). Net-Zero Industry Act: https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/publications/net-zero-industry-act_en



→ Upskilling to succeed in the green transition has also been approached from a perspective, where the skills are serving to advance to a competitive economy. To really achieve a just green transition, we need to think wider and not only equip certain experts with the necessary skills but help the society as a whole to change perspective and transform in a green way.

3. Initiatives regarding the digital skills

Another aspect on which the EYS builds are digital skills for all. Supported also by the ESA, there are numerous initiatives surrounding digital skills. Here, a few of them are pointed out:

- **A Europe fit for the Digital Age**, which is EU's digital strategy with the goal to make this transformation work for people and businesses, while helping to achieve its target of a climate-neutral Europe by 2050.²¹
- **2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade** is a framework aiming to monitor the progress towards the 2030 targets and milestones, while launching multi-country projects and preparing a legislative proposal for a robust governance framework.²²
 - A year later a political agreement on the **2030 Policy Programme: Path to the Digital Decade** was reached. It sets up a monitoring and cooperation mechanism, which will

facilitate reaching the targets set out in the Digital Compass.²³

- Contributing to the goals of the 2030 Digital Compass is the **Digital Education Action Plan** (2021-2027), adopted on 30th September 2020. It calls for greater cooperation at European level on digital education. The goal is to address the challenges and opportunities of the COVID-19 pandemic, underlining opportunities for the education and training community, policy makers, academia and researchers on national, EU and international level.²⁴
- **Digital Decade** is the EC strategic vision setting targets and actions drafted around 4 crucial points, one of them being digital skills. The first target regarding skills is to ensure that at least 80% of EU population have at least Basic Digital Skills by 2030. The second one is to reach 20 million employed ICT Specialists with the aim of achieving gender convergence.²⁵

Under the European Year of Skills, the Commission is set to not only implement the existing instruments, but also **adopt a digital education and skills package**, aiming to improve digital skills, education, and training. Additionally, applications for the **European Digital Skills Awards 2023** are open, aiming to reward projects and initiatives working to bridge the digital gap. Moreover, the Commission intends to launch a **Cyber Skills Academy**, which will help closing the growing cyber talent gap.

²¹ European Commission (year unknown). *A Europe Fit for the Digital Age*:

https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age_en

²² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions *2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade* (COM/2021/118 final):

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0118>

²³ European Commission (year unknown). *Europe's Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030*:

https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/europes-digital-decade-digital-targets-2030_en#the-path-to-the-digital-decade

²⁴ European Commission (year unknown). *Digital Education Action Plan* (2021-2027):

<https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan>

²⁵ Digital Skills & Jobs Platform (2021). *Digital Decade*: <https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en/actions/european-initiatives/digital-decade>



From 7th – 22nd October 2023, **EU Code Week** will be taking place, an initiative with the aim to bring coding and digital literacy to everybody in a fun and engaging way.²⁶

→ When discussing the digital skills, it is essential to mention an emergingly important field, quickly advancing: **artificial intelligence (the AI)**. People need to become equipped with the skills necessary to understand this field, so it does not stay mystified and untouchable. After all, understanding the mechanism allows society to study it and provide the necessary critiques. The AI should not only be examined from the technological perspective but should also be analysed from the social sciences point of view. Its applications for gender equality and all other forms of potential discrimination, as well as its impact on the future of work, should be examined, contributing to the greater understanding of it and allowing the society as a whole to benefit from it and not the tech giants. However, while digital technologies advance at the highest speed, basic digital competences are lacking among European citizens, notably the most marginalised groups. The European Commission must ensure that a comprehensive approach is put in place and that digitalisation is considered as a public good, fostering the inclusion of all people and protecting their privacy and basic rights.²⁷

4. Attracting Skills and Talent to the EU²⁸

The initiative Attracting Skills and Talent to the EU from 2022, starting also from the background of the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, comprises of three pillars and was analysed in the paper that SOLIDAR published in December 2022.²⁹

The legislative pillar of the initiative encompasses a proposal for a recast of both the **Single Permit Directive and the Long-Term Residents Directive**, making the process easier and improving equal treatment of workers and protection from labour exploitation.

Under the operational pillar, the Commission launched the **EU Talents Partnerships** initiative on 11th June 2021 with the aim to enhance mutually beneficial international mobility by contributing a comprehensive policy framework and funding support. The ambition is to address skills shortages in EU labour markets by safeguarding better matching of labour market needs and skills between the EU and partner countries.³⁰ The importance of the initiative to enhance mobility opportunities and legal pathways to the EU is underlined also in the EYS.³¹

²⁶ European Commission (2023). Commission welcomes political agreement on the European Year of Skills: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=10521&furtherNews=yes>

²⁷ SOLIDAR (2020). SOLIDAR Foundation Position Paper: AI Implications for Education and Lifelong Learning: https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/142/original/SOLIDAR_Foundation_AI_Position_Paper.pdf?1592215657

²⁸ European Commission (2022). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Attracting Skills and Talent to the EU (COM/2022/657 final): <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2022:657:FIN>

²⁹ SOLIDAR (2022). Briefing Paper 104 - Attracting Skills and Talent to the EU: <https://www.solidar.org/en/publications/briefing-paper-104-attracting-skills-and-talent-to-the-eu>

³⁰ European Commission (year unknown). Talent partnerships: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/legal-migration-and-integration/talent-partnerships_en

³¹ Recital 22 of the Decision.



→ SOLIDAR warns that temporary migration programmes must not be used as a pretence for kicking workers out of the schemes and out of Europe after they are no longer needed or wanted. If the participants so aspire, they should be offered pathways for continuation of their career. It is also essential to be aware that the label ‘partnership’ does not accurately describe the asymmetric relationship between the EU and the third countries in the areas of migration and labour.³²

The idea to launch an **EU Talent Pool** was first included in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum but was developed under the operational pillar of the Skills and Talent package. The goal is to facilitate international recruitment and help the employers find the needed talent also by making the EU more attractive to skilled workers from third countries.³³

The EYS further underlines the importance of this initiative for the EU, receiving workers in sectors identified to be strategically relevant at EU level.

→ SOLIDAR addressed the danger of the proposed platform adding to the power imbalance between large companies searching for workers and individuals from the third countries wanting to work in the EU. Therefore, certain safeguards should be implemented, ensuring that the initiative is in line with the first chapter of EPSR, guaranteeing equal opportunities and access to the labour market.

The forward-looking pillar of the Skills and Talent initiative stipulates that the Commission will also deal with **how to better attract low and medium skilled workers**, who are also needed in the EU labour market.

In order to allow third country nationals to realise their full potential on the EU labour market, **the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027** sets to improve their employment opportunities and skills recognition.³⁴ In the EYS Decision it is stressed as well that to complement the impact of existing initiatives, the EYS will work on facilitating the recognition of qualifications awarded outside the Union, which is important for helping third country nationals realise their potential on the EU labour market.³⁵

→ It is evident from the initiatives listed so far that the EU is motivated to deal mostly with the migration of high-skilled workers. And what is more, the EU intends to keep this focus also in the EYS, since it underlines that it will work further on their implementation. An important step in that direction was also the **revised EU Blue Card Directive**, which entered into force in October 2021 and aims to attract high-skilled workers to the EU labour market.³⁶ The focus on the talent is not negligible even when it comes to people in need of international protection: in the proposal it is clearly stated that the EC “will promote complementary pathways to the EU” for them “in order to harness refugees’ ▶

³² For more see: SOLIDAR (2022). Briefing Paper 104 - Attracting Skills and Talent to the EU:

<https://www.solidar.org/en/publications/briefing-paper-104-attracting-skills-and-talent-to-the-eu>, p. 8; SOLIDAR (2021). Briefing Paper 101 - The EU Talent Partnerships: <https://www.solidar.org/en/publications/briefing-paper-101-the-eu-talent-partnerships>

³³ European Commission (year unknown). EU Talent Pool:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13716-EU-Talent-Pool_en

³⁴ European Commission (year unknown). Action Plan on the Integration and Inclusion: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/legal-migration-and-integration/integration/action-plan-integration-and-inclusion_en

³⁵ Recital 23 of the Decision.

³⁶ Council Directive 2009/50/EC of 25 May 2009 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment (OJ L 155, 18.6.2009, p. 17–29):

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32009L0050>



talent".³⁷ SOLIDAR is highly critical of such approach, that focuses on attracting 'talents' and filling European labour market gaps, while leaving borders closed and increasing deportations and returns for other types of (aspiring) migrants. This type of orientation caters short-to-medium term needs of European employers to the detriment of a comprehensive labour migration approach targeting all skills levels and sectors, that would benefit migrant workers and European societies as a whole in the long-term.

5. Other initiatives

To encourage training and labour market participation of young people, the EC will propose an **update of the European Quality Framework for Traineeships**. By proposing an initiative to **renew the learning mobility framework**, the EC will work to enable more students and teachers to go abroad. As a part of the European Research Area, a **new framework for research careers** will be developed and will include measures to improve working conditions, skills and mobility and promote recognition of the profession. Additionally, the Deep Tech Talent Initiative will facilitate training of 1 million students and professionals in the 'deep tech' fields by 2025.³⁸

SOLIDAR'S POSITION

SOLIDAR welcomes the Commission's decision to highlight the next year (9th of May 2023 – 8th of May 2024) as the European Year of Skills, drawing attention to education, training, and lifelong learning.

Many factors importantly affected this field, not only the COVID-19 crisis and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, but also the green and digital transitions and demographic changes. The Commission underlined the consequences that these events have on the labour market, such as reduced numbers of available labour force and accentuated labour mismatches, contributing to the employers' struggle to find the workforce with appropriate skills.³⁹ To ensure the smooth functioning of the European labour market, workforce with the right skills must become available and the engagement in upskilling and reskilling of individuals must "*meet companies' needs across the Union*".⁴⁰

Skills are therefore set as the indispensable element of improving the labour market, necessary to boost global competitiveness. On the contrary, **SOLIDAR underlines that skills should first and foremost be looked at from the perspective of social inclusion and participation in society**. Skills are necessary for the well-being of all people, for the personal development and are key to ensuring prosperity. Thus, the narrative of the European Year of Skills should not depart from the principles set out in the EPSR. The right to education, training and life-long learning should serve primarily individuals, enabling them to participate fully in society.⁴¹

³⁷ Proposal of the EC, p. 5.

³⁸ European Commission (2023). Commission welcomes political agreement on the European Year of Skills: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=10521&furtherNews=yes>

³⁹ Recital 1 and 2 of the Decision.

⁴⁰ The EC Proposal p. 2; Recital 2 of the Decision.

⁴¹ Principle 1 of the EPSR.



To ensure that everyone is empowered to participate in society, **global citizenship education, workers' and popular education and digital citizenship education** are crucial.⁴² In ensuring equal opportunities and striving for a more democratic society, the **validation of transversal skills**, as the *"learned and proven abilities which are commonly seen as necessary or valuable for effective action in virtually any kind of work, learning or life activity"*, is vital.⁴³

SOLIDAR underlines that the EYS should be **in coherence with the EPSR and focus more on those left behind**. In line with principles 4 and 17 of the EPSR, measures should also focus on supporting long-term unemployed and people with disabilities. Skills are crucial to prevent social exclusion of vulnerable groups and are key for ensuring equal opportunities for under-represented groups, including women.⁴⁴ Ensuring that no one is left behind however also means offering solutions and support for those who are not able to reskill or upskill.⁴⁵ That is mentioned in the final Decision (unlike in the EC Proposal), however it is not specified which measures could be implemented to reach this goal.

One of the reasons the skills shortages appear are the poor working conditions in some sectors that result in people quitting jobs and young people not deciding to get skilled for those jobs.⁴⁶ The consequence of the lack of workers are even

worse working conditions – remaining workers need to fill in for the lack of personnel. To break this cycle, it is not enough to invest into the (re)skilling programmes. It is crucial to **improve the working conditions**: reducing work pressure, raising wages, enabling workers to improve their work-life balance by improving the leave-policies all help to increase the attractiveness of sectors with labour shortages.⁴⁷ This is in line with the principle 10 of the EPSR and ensures that the **working environment will be adapted to workers' professional needs**. That will play an important role in prolonging their participation in the labour market, therefore easing the consequences of demographic change as well.

Moreover, SOLIDAR wants to stress that the reskilling and upskilling programmes require additional effort from workers taking part in them. That should not be taken for granted but should be compensated by higher wages and better working conditions.⁴⁸

We should not forget that in order to improve the labour market participation and increase social inclusion, particularly of vulnerable groups, such as women and older workers, investing in skills should not be the only measure. It is essential to ensure **better social protection of workers, a health-oriented working environment and better options to combine work and personal life, including by guaranteeing affordable childcare**.

⁴² SOLIDAR (2021). *Citizenship and Popular Education for Democratic Participation*:

<https://www.solidar.org/en/focus/citizenship-and-popular-education-for-democratic-participation>

⁴³ SOLIDAR (2021). *TRANSVAL-E: Validate Transversal Skills!*:

<https://www.solidar.org/en/projects/transval-e-validate-transversal-skills>

⁴⁴ Principles 2 and 3 of the EPSR.

⁴⁵ Also underlined in the Report of the Parliament, Amendment 49.

⁴⁶ PES (2023). *Labour shortages in the EU – Background briefing for the Social Europe Network meeting of 25 April 2023*, p. 3; Now also mentioned in the recital 2 of the Decision.

⁴⁷ PES (2023). *Labour shortages in the EU – Background briefing for the Social Europe Network meeting of 25 April 2023*, p. 8; Also Report of the Parliament, Amendment 48.

⁴⁸ PES (2023). *Labour shortages in the EU – Background briefing for the Social Europe Network meeting of 25 April 2023*, p. 6.



The third chapter of the EPSR on social protection is pivotal in this regard. In the end, the worker is the person deciding in which skills they are going to invest. Here, the risk of loss of employment opportunities plays an important role: if the employers in certain sectors require a specific set of skills to be competitive in the international economy, it will not be enough for them to promise long-term employment or wage stability. States' social protection systems will have the key role. If the unemployment protection and other social security schemes, such as parental protection and pension schemes are sufficiently strong, the workers will have more confidence when choosing their occupations and gaining specific skills.⁴⁹ This is even more important as it can be observed that employers are focusing less on training and upskilling their employees and are rather buying the specific skills, they need on the labour market in the short or medium term.⁵⁰ Therefore, SOLIDAR calls for **strengthening the social protection schemes** in Member States.

49 Estevez-Abe, Margarita; Iversen, Torben; Soskice, David: *Social Protection and the Formation of Skills: A Reinterpretation of the Welfare State* (2001): https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235220621_Social_Protection_and_the_Formation_of_Skills_A_Reinterpretation_of_the_Welfare_State

50 ILO (2015). *Non-standard work and workers: Organizational implications*, p. 13: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_414581.pdf

solidar

50 Avenue Des Arts.
Box 5, 2nd floor.
B1000 - Brussels
Belgium

Twitter: @SOLIDAR_EU
Facebook: SOLIDAR
www.solidar.org
solidar@solidar.org

Responsible editor:

Mikael Leyi

Authors:

Katarina Kogej,
Carlos Roldán Mejías

Designer:

Dagmar Bleyová

SOLIDAR is a European network of membership based Civil Society Organisations who gather several millions of citizens throughout Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the values of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across three main policy sectors: social affairs, lifelong learning and international cooperation.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

This document was funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.