

# A Quality Jobs Roadmap and Act to advance a just green transition

*Unlocking opportunities for a just transition: Policy brief 1*

In its February 2025 Communication on the Clean Industrial Deal, the European Commission announced a **Quality Jobs Roadmap** to ‘support Member States and industry in providing decent working conditions, high standards of health and safety, access to training, fair job transitions for workers and the self-employed, and collective bargaining.’ This was followed by the announcement of a **Quality Jobs Act** in the Commission President’s 2025 State of the Union address, which emphasised that ‘workers must be empowered if we are to maintain a competitive economy.’ Both initiatives are expected by the end of 2025.

This brief, the first in SOLIDAR’s series on how new EU initiatives and upcoming legislative revisions can advance a just green transition in Europe and globally, presents concrete recommendations for the Quality Jobs Roadmap and Act. It calls for ambitious measures, such as a **Just Transition Directive** and a **Quality Jobs Golden Rule**, to ensure that these initiatives become drivers of a just transition and advance the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

## Background

The EU is accelerating industrial decarbonisation and renewable energy deployment while grappling with profound labour market transformations, a shrinking workforce, strained social protection systems and persistently high levels of long-term and youth unemployment<sup>1</sup>. The Quality Jobs Roadmap and Act should play a central role in **addressing these challenges**.

On the nexus between the quality of jobs and sustainability, most **'quality jobs' remain concentrated in fossil fuel-dependent sectors**, reflecting the overall employment concentration in these sectors. Meanwhile, 80% of employment in green sectors, such as the wind, solar and heat pump industries, is concentrated in ten Member States, all of which are in north-western Europe<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, **'green' does not automatically mean 'decent'**, as evidenced by instances of poor working conditions in the recycling and waste management sector and in battery manufacturing<sup>3</sup>.

At the same time, job quality is increasingly **affected by climate change**, particularly in outdoor sectors such as agriculture, construction and tourism, where workers face heightened risks from air pollution, UV radiation and extreme weather. These sectors often rely on migrant and seasonal workers, the self-employed and others in precarious forms of work, with limited union representation and inadequate social protection<sup>4</sup>.

## SOLIDAR's recommendations

The Quality Jobs Roadmap and Act should serve as concrete instruments for implementing the principles of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, with particular emphasis on secure and adaptable employment (Principle 5), fair wages (Principle 6), transparent and predictable working conditions (Principle 7), social dialogue and worker participation (Principle 8), and work–life balance (Principle 9). In line with the Commission Communication on decent work worldwide<sup>5</sup>, these initiatives should also reaffirm the EU's commitment to **promoting decent work globally**.

Moreover, the Quality Jobs Roadmap and Act should promote a **well-being economy that serves both people and the planet**. They should form central elements of a strengthened **EU just transition policy framework**<sup>6</sup>, which was originally designed as an 'add-on' to climate and environmental policies to offset their potentially regressive socio-economic impacts. Instead, this policy framework should be an integrated set of soft and binding measures that proactively anticipate and manage changes in the world of work, as well as the broader socio-economic effects of the green transition, in a socially just way.

The Quality Jobs Roadmap and Act should be based on the following key principles:

1. **Workers and communities must be in the driving seat** of the industrial transformations that affect them. The effective participation of trade unions in all relevant decision-making processes is essential. Additionally, the meaningful involvement of non-profit stakeholders, such as civil society organisations and social economy actors (including cooperatives and Work Integration Social Enterprises), is important, given their key role in reaching and supporting those most excluded from the labour market.
2. Measures supporting quality jobs must be **backed by adequate and predictable resources**, which should also be reflected in the next EU budget.
3. Measures must be **enforceable and adjusted to local realities** to ensure their relevance and impact.

<sup>1</sup> These and other challenges are addressed in the [Draghi \(2024\)](#) and [Letta \(2024\)](#) reports.

<sup>2</sup> Piasna A., Theodoropoulou S. and Vanhercke B. (eds.) (2025) [Benchmarking Working Europe 2025](#), ETUI and ETUC, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 29. See also Merk, J., Gonzalez, A. and Cifusz M. (2024) [Electric dreams, hard realities. What the battery boom means for workers in Hungary?](#)

<sup>4</sup> Eurofound (2024), [Job quality side of climate change](#). Working conditions and sustainable work series, Publications Office of the EU, Luxembourg, p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> [Commission Communication of 23.2.2022](#) on decent work worldwide for a global just transition and a sustainable recovery COM/2022/66 final.

<sup>6</sup> This framework includes the [Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality 2022/C 243/04](#), Commission Recommendations [2020/1563](#) of 14 October 2020 and [2023/2407](#) of 20 October 2023 on energy poverty, the Just Transition Mechanism and the Social Climate Fund.

## SOLIDAR recommends:

As part of the 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**<sup>7</sup>. This Directive should require companies, Member States, and local and regional authorities to develop and implement **measures that ensure quality jobs in industrial transitions, integrate them into transition plans** at national, regional, sectoral and company levels, and make access to any form of public support, including EU-level funding, conditional on their implementation. The early and meaningful participation of trade unions must be a central requirement, to be achieved through strengthened social dialogue, systems of collective bargaining and processes of workplace democracy. Inclusive and well-informed civil dialogue must also be ensured.

The establishment of a '**Quality Job Golden Rule**,' for example as part of the Just Transition Directive or the Quality Jobs Act. This rule would set out a **series of obligations** that all EU transition policies must adhere to, including any form of public support at national and EU levels. It would be underpinned by an EU-wide **Quality Jobs Indicator**<sup>8</sup>, which defines and scores the key dimensions of job quality<sup>9</sup>, building on existing frameworks<sup>10</sup>.

The Quality Jobs Golden Rule should include **transversal obligations** such as:

- The creation of stable and decent working conditions for all workers directly and indirectly affected by climate adaptation and mitigation policies.
- The guarantee of decent living wages adjusted to changing living costs, including the effects of energy prices on consumption, housing and transport.
- The promotion and extension of collective bargaining coverage and the respect of collective agreements, with a focus on the poorly unionised sectors directly and indirectly affected by transition policies.
- Limiting the spread of atypical and precarious contracts, such as zero-hour arrangements, bogus self-employment and abusive subcontracting chains, in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights' commitment to secure employment.

It should also include **guiding principles tailored to the sectors, regions and companies impacted by transition policies**, such as:

- The participation of workers and trade unions at all levels of corporate transition strategies, including on organisation, job transformation, retraining and occupational health and safety issues.
- The mandatory creation of job retention schemes with social partners. This could include permanent contracts targets, mandatory local hiring, and where possible, the promotion of innovative work arrangements such as reduced working time, educational leave, or job-sharing schemes. Additionally, pension transition solutions should be provided for workers approaching retirement.

<sup>7</sup> ETUC (2024) [A Just Transition policy framework and Directive to anticipate and manage change](#) | ETUC and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2025) Proposal for a European Just Transitions Directive.

<sup>8</sup> IndustriAll Europe (2025) [Good quality jobs: A compass for the next legislative period](#).

<sup>9</sup> The Indicator should cover essential aspects such as wages that reflect real living costs, contract security, working conditions, work-life balance, equality and non-discrimination, health and safety (including psychosocial risks), access to social protection, opportunities for lifelong learning, and collective bargaining and trade union rights.

<sup>10</sup> Currently, the EU does not have a single, legally binding definition of 'quality jobs', but rather a multidimensional concept based on various normative frameworks. These include the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), Eurofound's [Quality Job Index](#), the ILO's [Decent Work Agenda](#), the [OECD Framework for Measuring and Assessing Job Quality](#) and the [Opinion of the Employment Committee \(EMCO\) on the dimensions of job quality](#).

- The mandatory investment in workforce re- and upskilling, local apprenticeships and opportunities for developing transversal competences, and the guarantee of free retraining during paid working hours covered by employers.
- The introduction of wage ladders based on skills acquisition, with targeted support for vulnerable workers, including seasonal, migrant, self-employed, women, young workers, people with disabilities, low-wage workers and 50+ workers. The qualifications acquired need to be recognized between Member States and between industrial sectors, including competences acquired through non-formal learning experiences.
- The temporary limit or ban on dividend payments and share buybacks for companies benefitting from public support and, where possible, agreements on public returns.
- A comprehensive shareholder financial disclosure which better aligns private interests around common policy goals.

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:

- Planned re-employment strategies for workers moving from carbon-intensive sectors to green sectors, providing adequate support, particularly for low-skilled workers and workers in carbon-dependent regions. These strategies should be backed by comprehensive, granular skill mapping and be aligned with national and regional industrial needs, while actively promoting gender balance, given that most newly created jobs in the green economy are currently held by men.
- Inclusive competence development strategies for workers in the sectors affected by transition policies, promoting access to formal and non-formal adult learning opportunities that are grounded in the local realities of the learners, and prioritising transversal competences such as critical thinking, ecological literacy, civic engagement and social responsibility.
- Reinforced labour inspections that address not only physical risks but also psychosocial health and safety issues, including stress, burnout, harassment, and job insecurity, and the creation of fair labour practices, including sustainable supply chains in the construction sector and limiting subcontracting in tender processes.
- Inclusion of strong and enforceable social and environmental chapters in all EU trade agreements and partnerships, ensuring compliance with ILO Fundamental Labour Standards and Conventions and enforcement through independent dispute mechanisms with remedies, sanctions and incentives linked to labour rights.

The Quality Jobs Roadmap and Act should be aligned with the Union of Skills Strategy and its initiatives aimed at supporting **just transitions with a lifelong learning approach**, with a strong regional and territorial focus on the most affected groups and those at risk of poverty. This should specifically target youth, seasonal and migrant workers, self-employed and outsourced workers, women, people with disabilities, low-wage and precarious workers, workers in rural areas, older workers (50+), displaced workers, and those who lose their jobs as a result of the green transition.

5  
The Quality Jobs Roadmap and Act should reiterate the obligations of economic operators **trading with partner countries**, particularly in sectors key to the EU's decarbonisation efforts, to ensure respect for national, regional and international labour and environmental rights. Without such safeguards, there is a risk that carbon leakage could result in job losses or a decline in job quality in Europe. Therefore, the Quality Jobs Roadmap and Act should also commit the EU to promoting decent work, universal social protection and robust environmental standards in partner countries.

6  
To build on available skills and industries, the Quality Jobs Roadmap and Act should be **based on an EU-wide industrial mapping** conducted by Member States in cooperation with social partners, local authorities and non-profit stakeholders in relevant fields, such as civil society organisations. This mapping exercise should inform the setting of standards to guide region- and industry-specific transition strategies, the operationalisation of a granular definition of 'transition' in future legislation pursuing transition objectives, as well as holistic, place-based strategies that link industrial, economic and social ambitions, including win-win partnerships that help partner countries develop green industries rather than just supplying raw materials. The mapping exercise should be an integral part of the work of the announced **EU Fair Transition Observatory**, drawing on the expertise of trade unions, civil society organisations and social and solidarity economy stakeholders at field level. The Observatory should coordinate with the European Skills High-Level Board and contribute to common policy objectives.

7  
The EU should update its Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) framework<sup>11</sup> to address new emerging risks. An extended OSH strategy should introduce (cross)sectoral and risk-specific legislation, including on the protection of posted workers in high-risk sectors; the protection of workers from toxic substances and electrical hazards in the photovoltaic panels sector; the protection of workers exposed to extreme weather conditions, including UV radiation, heat stress and floods. A Psychosocial Risks Framework should address the vulnerabilities of a transitioning world of work, such as job transitions, financial insecurity, increased workloads, organisational change and inadequate training. Future legislation should establish minimum OSH standards tailored to climate-vulnerable sectors and regions, whilst adjusting physical and psychosocial risk prevention guidelines to better protect groups facing heightened vulnerability, in particular for vulnerable workers.

8  
The Quality Jobs Roadmap and Act must **build on the EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages**<sup>12</sup>, as currently adopted and in force, to ensure transition policies lead to real wages conducive of decent living conditions in all Member States. National minimum wages should be adjusted to changing living costs, including the effects of energy prices on transport, consumption and housing, so that workers in low-wage and high-risk sectors do not bear the costs of the transition through declining purchasing power. Other measures should include the extension of collective bargaining coverage to emerging sectors and weakly unionised transitioning sectors, and the adjustment of wage floors to productivity gains.

9

In order for the Quality Jobs Roadmap and Act to fulfil EU-wide transition objectives, Member States must **strengthen and adjust their social protection systems** to guarantee just job-to-job transitions, provide safety nets that are aligned with the changing cost of living and ensure continuous access to essential services, with a focus on the social groups most affected by climate mitigation and adaptation policies, including groups at risk of poverty. The possibility should be explored to turn the **2023 Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income**<sup>14</sup> into a Directive setting standards and targets.

10

A changing industrial landscape will require further legislation to **reinforce the European Labour Authority's** oversight, coordination and mediation capacities, ensuring that transition strategies include fair labour migration and fair mobility pathways, and that the rights of all workers are respected across borders, irrespective of their employment relationships.

11

To ensure stronger alignment between transition strategies at company, sectoral, regional and Member State levels while avoiding an administrative burden, compliance with the Quality Job Golden Rule should be **monitored through a standardised reporting system** based on size- and sector-adjusted criteria, instead of company-specific indicators. This reporting template should be designed to facilitate its integration with existing EU governance instruments.

# solidar

SOLIDAR is a European and worldwide network of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working to advance social justice through a just transition in Europe and worldwide. Our over 50 member organisations are based in 27 countries (19 of which are EU countries) and include national CSOs in Europe, as non-EU, EU-wide and organisations active at the international level.

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<sup>11</sup> [EU strategic framework on health and safety at work 2021-2027](#) Occupational safety and health in a changing world of work.

<sup>12</sup> See [Directive \(EU\) 2022/2041](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on adequate minimum wages in the European Union.

<sup>13</sup> [Council Recommendation of 30 January 2023](#) on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion 2023/C 41/01.