



# FÓRUM SOCIAL DO PORTO 2025

## Concept Note

### Quality Jobs in a Competitive Social Europe

18-19 September 2025

#### 1. An initiative of the Portuguese Government with the support of the European Commission

The Porto Social Forum 2025 is an initiative led by the Portuguese Government, organised with the support of the European Commission, in collaboration with the European Parliament, the European Council, and the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. This event builds upon the commitments made during the Porto Social Summit of 2021 and the inaugural Porto Social Forum of 2023.

This edition of the Forum comes at a time when Europe faces a new geopolitical context and a strong demand for a renewed competitiveness, going hand in hand with a fair and inclusive green and digital transition for all. To thrive now and prepare for the future, Europe needs a strong social agenda.

The theme of the Forum is *Quality Jobs in a Competitive Social Europe*. The discussions will contribute to the development of the new Action Plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights as well as the Quality Jobs Roadmap, both of which are expected in the coming months. The discussions will also support the roll out of the Union of Skills launched in March 2025 and touch upon the forthcoming EU Antipoverty Strategy. Participants will provide their contributions and insights into how we can ensure that the EU's labour market policies remain inclusive, sustainable, and resilient in the face of ongoing economic and technological transformations, as well as contributing significantly to a renewed and strong competitiveness in Europe.

As Europe undergoes profound economic and social transformations, the need for competitive, inclusive and resilient societies has never been more

pressing. Europe's resilience and adaptation to the new geopolitical and geoeconomic scenarios are intertwined with those of our regional and global partner countries or shared by them. Many of the challenges we are facing have a strong cross-border dimension or are global and overarching in nature. More than that, many partner countries not only meet the same challenges as we do – they are often at the forefront of facing them. In this regard, the Forum will benefit from perspectives from non-EU countries, particularly Portuguese-speaking countries and EU candidate countries, fostering a broader exchange of experiences and best practices. By incorporating different perspectives, the Forum seeks to strengthen international cooperation on shared challenges.

## **2. Porto Social Forum 2025 – Main Topics**

The European Pillar of Social Rights is a well-established part of the EU's DNA, with citizens' well-being at its core. The 2021 Action Plan with its three EU 2030 social headline targets sets out how to bring the 20 principles of the Pillar to life. The new EU Competitiveness Compass provides a framework for improving Europe's global economic standing, including by preserving and enhancing the EU's social fabric.

To ensure a focused and impactful discussion, the Forum will be structured around **four connected policy areas**:

### **a. Enhancing the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights: Competitiveness and Social Fairness reinforcing each other**

As the EU faces demographic shifts, works towards the digital and green transitions, and steps up strongly its competitiveness, ensuring a fair and sustainable labour market and safeguarding the European social model is critical. Policies that enhance employment and social standards go hand in hand with Europe's competitiveness and can boost employment and economic growth. On the other side, a strong EU's competitiveness will benefit from effective skills, quality jobs and social inclusion and protection policies. Ahead of the development of the new Action Plan, the Forum will critically assess the achievements and implementation gaps of the first Action Plan and discuss possible policy solutions for the future.

### **b. Advancing quality jobs for a more competitive Europe: towards a 4th 2030 target in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan**

To boost the EU's competitiveness on the macro level, quality jobs are required on the micro level.

Key dimensions to be looked at include adequate wages, good working conditions, fair job transitions, digitalisation, access to quality training and skills development opportunities, work-life balance, high standards for health and safety at work, and social protection for workers and the self-employed, notably by enhancing social dialogue and collective bargaining coverage. Other important areas to be looked at are the mainstreaming of gender equality, equal opportunities, access to services and the effective enforcement of work-related rights. While Europe has seen remarkable employment growth, a strong and resilient workforce and a more competitive economy will need to be based on quality jobs. To achieve this, the Commission – together with the Employment Committee - is working on an updated monitoring framework for quality jobs and reflecting on a possible fourth 2030 headline target.

### **c. Global outlook: employment and social policies in a broader context**

As highlighted by the Letta and Draghi Reports, European welfare systems face major structural challenges related to demography, digital and green transitions, competitiveness gaps and labour shortages, all in a rapidly evolving geopolitical context. Geopolitical tensions and trade disruptions demand strategic policies that sustain growth and provide for adequate social protection while ensuring inclusive and resilient labour markets. Migration and labour market flows, in particular from non-EU countries, and including in the context of posting of workers, bring along both challenges and opportunities for the European labour markets, economic growth and competitiveness. Exchanging on other countries practical experiences can provide valuable insights into adaptive workforce strategies, social protection, and skills development.

### **d. Free and fair labour mobility for a competitive European Union**

Free and fair labour mobility within the European Union is vital for promoting economic growth and enhancing social cohesion. By ensuring that workers can move freely between Member States, the EU can harness diverse talents and skills, driving innovation and competitiveness across the region. Central to this is the establishment of mechanisms that provide equal opportunities for all workers, protecting their rights and fostering mutual recognition of skills and qualifications. This also involves ensuring that companies compete on a fair level playing field, where no one can exploit disparities for unfair advantage. By evaluating current frameworks, the EU aims to identify areas for improvement to achieve a more integrated and balanced labour market.