

AOB for the meeting of the EPSCO Council of 1 December 2025:  
Main conclusions from the Porto Social Forum of 18 and 19 September 2025  
*- Information from Portugal*

On 18–19 September, the city of Porto hosted over 400 participants at the second edition of the “Porto Social Forum,” dedicated to “Quality Jobs in a Competitive Social Europe.” The outcomes of the discussions were consolidated into a set of open conclusions, which were subsequently submitted to Member States and other participants for further input.

The Porto Social Forum, biennial event, organised by the Portuguese Government with the support of the European Commission, is held in close collaboration with the European Parliament, the Council of the EU, Social Partners, and Civil Society representatives.

Building on the Porto Social Summit of 2021, which launched the first Action Plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Forum reaffirmed participants’ commitment to advancing a Social Europe and provided a key platform to review progress and discuss next steps.

EU leaders, Ministers, social partners, and civil society representatives highlighted the enduring strength of the European social model as a strategic advantage for Europe. They collectively underlined that competitiveness and social rights must go hand in hand, mutually reinforcing each other to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth. Discussions at the Forum focused on four key policy priorities:

1. **Strengthening the European Pillar of Social Rights:** Participants reflected on how to enhance Europe’s competitiveness while ensuring a fair, inclusive, and sustainable labour market. They reviewed the achievements and remaining gaps of the first Action Plan and exchanged ideas for future concrete measures under a new Action Plan.
2. **Advancing Quality Jobs for a More Competitive Europe:** Discussions addressed multiple dimensions of quality employment — including adequate wages, fair working conditions, digitalisation, lifelong learning, work–life balance, and strong social dialogue — as part of a Quality Jobs Roadmap and a potential fourth EU headline target for 2030.
3. **A Global Outlook on Employment and Social Policies:** Participants shared insights on how to adapt European welfare systems to demographic shifts, digital and green transitions, and labour shortages. The discussions also fostered cooperation and knowledge exchange with partner countries, including Portuguese-speaking countries and EU candidate countries.

4. Ensuring Free and Fair Labour Mobility: The Forum underlined the importance of enabling workers to move freely across Member States with equal opportunities and rights, thereby boosting innovation, competitiveness, and reinforcing the EU's Single Market.

The key outcomes and insights from these discussions are expected to contribute to several forthcoming EU initiatives, including the new Action Plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Quality Jobs Roadmap, the Mobility Package, the different initiatives included under the Union of Skills Strategy launched in March 2025, and the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy and strengthened European Child Guarantee.

**As host of the Forum, the Portuguese Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security will inform the EPSCO Council of the main conclusions stemming from the Porto Social Forum, underlining the objective for its outcomes to feed into the broader European policy agenda.**

**The final “Main Conclusions” of the Porto Social Forum are annexed to this note.**

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## FÓRUM SOCIAL DO PORTO 2025

Quality Jobs in a Competitive Social Europe  
18-19 September 2025

### Main conclusions

*Supported by*

**Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia**

### **The future of the EU is its people.**

1. In this era of profound transformation, the **European Pillar of Social Rights** remains the compass for building a sustainable, fair, competitive, and inclusive European Union. The prosperity and resilience of the Union depend on ensuring strong social rights and protections combined with economic growth and competitiveness, leading to stronger economic, social and territorial cohesion. With the many changes the EU is experiencing – such as climate change, demographic challenges, digital transformations, an increasing cost of living and new trade and geopolitical realities - the European Social Model is a strategic advantage.

2. As the EU renews its **global competitiveness** strategy, let it be anchored not only in investment in infrastructure and innovation, but also in people, social dialogue, quality jobs, social progress, and equal opportunities for all. The Draghi and Letta reports highlight the need to strengthen Europe's competitiveness internally and to fortify its standing on the global stage. Europe's industrial policy must champion quality jobs across all sectors and regions and strengthen the global competitiveness of EU industry. Addressing poverty and inequalities is crucial for strengthening competitiveness and social cohesion. The European Social Model stands as one of its greatest strengths. By combining economic performance with social progress, it gives Europe a distinctive competitive edge compared to other economies.

3. **Strong social rights and protections** are a key foundation for sustaining economic growth, wellbeing and prosperity for people, and businesses in the EU. To achieve this, we must strengthen our social fabric, as well as the social aspects of our economy and ensure high-quality public services. It is important to cooperate and work together on a strong new Action Plan to fully implement the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, through concrete actions. The implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and progress on the EU 2030 targets is monitored via the European Semester. While there has been some progress towards the EU 2030 headline targets on employment, training and reduction of poverty and social exclusion, further efforts should be made.

4. Alongside implementing the policies and instruments needed to meet the existing EU 2030 targets, the forthcoming **Quality Jobs Roadmap**—developed together with the social partners, shall set quality employment as a shared ambition. Jobs need to provide fair pay, safe and healthy working conditions, including in relation to mental health, workplace wellbeing and work-life balance, equal opportunities, effective social protection with access to life-long training, and access to collective bargaining in line with national practices.

In an increasingly digitalised world of work, where new technologies and AI are having a major impact on businesses and workers, it's important to harness the opportunities, while protecting people from potential harm and ensuring the human-in-control principle. Good working conditions are also vital for productivity.

It's important to engage constructively in the discussions on how to further promote quality work across the Union and exploring possibilities to work on a potential additional 2030 target in this field and on a comprehensive monitoring framework.

5. The commitment to the role of **trade unions and employers'** organisations as key actors in social dialogue remains an essential component of the European Social Model.

6. The **European Union needs skilled people** to respond to current and emerging challenges, stay competitive and to address skill mismatch on the labour market. People need support to adapt to new demands in the world of work, to find and move between jobs. The launch of the Union of Skills aims to ensure that everyone in Europe is empowered to build solid skills foundations and engage in lifelong upskilling and reskilling, and that the EU attracts and retains top talent to its workforce. An ambitious new EU Strategy for Vocational Education and Training and an EU framework on job training is important under the first principle of the Pillar.

7. The right **to free, fair and effective labour mobility** is a cornerstone of the European Union's Single Market, enabling people to move freely across Member States, boosting job matching and the Single Market in services, across the EU and thereby strengthen EU competitiveness. Further EU initiatives aim to ensure equal treatment and protection

for all workers, provide better information for workers and employers, make skills and professional qualifications more portable and recognized, guarantee a level playing field for all companies - including those with social impact and in the social economy - through the role of the European Labour Authority, expand digital tools to simplify procedures and reduce administrative burdens, improve enforcement, and curb abusive practices, including concerning posted third country nationals.

8. The **fight against poverty and social exclusion** must be intensified, with the first-ever EU Anti-Poverty Strategy addressing all forms of exclusion, focusing on children, tackling homelessness, and promoting intergenerational integration mechanisms that empower vulnerable groups such as children - backed up by the European Child Guarantee - and older people. No one can be left behind in the Union's future, and our policies must ensure that all have access to adequate social protection systems, including good-quality, accessible and affordable services, including preventive and curative health care for those who need it most. Moreover, as rents and house prices soar, it's very important that the Commission's upcoming Affordable Housing Plan addresses the structural drivers of the housing unaffordability crisis.

9. **Equality is also essential.** Despite progress, women remain concentrated in low-paid jobs, underrepresented in decision-making, and continue to earn less than men, with the pay gap widening with age. Achieving equality remains central to the European Pillar of Social Rights, guided by the 2025 women's rights roadmap and the upcoming post-2025 Gender Equality Strategy. An ambitious second phase of the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is equally important, including measures to boost employment and full inclusion, supported by the European Commission's Disability Employment Package. A higher participation of women in the labour market also increases European competitiveness.

10. **Older and younger** cohorts are impacted differently by today's challenges. Younger generations continue to face challenges upon entry into the labour and housing market, while remaining more likely to be at risk of poverty and social exclusion (than the general population). Older generations face challenges of social, economic and political exclusion due to a rapidly digitalised world and thus need increased opportunities for life-long learning and skills development. The technological developments and structural changes pose additional risks, necessitating actions in supporting their retention and adaptability. The forthcoming Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness should ensure that the interests of present and future generations are respected, in policy and law making, and commit to continue supporting the creation of inclusive, resilient communities in which young people and senior citizens are actively engaged and economically and socially safe.

11. The **Porto Social Forum is a call** for strong and decisive action: not only to bridge the gap between principles and practice through concrete initiatives, but to ensure that competitiveness serves the people, and all policies are viewed through a social lens. The promotion of decent work beyond EU borders, in line with ILO standards, can help to

achieve a level playing field worldwide. These are also the messages to the Second World Summit for Social Development.

12. In this context, the **Porto Social Forum held today—a biennial initiative** promoted by the Portuguese government with the support of the European Commission, in close cooperation with the European Parliament and involving social partners and civil society—marked the third anniversary of the Porto Social Summit. The event provided an opportunity to foster better alignment between competitiveness and social fairness, quality jobs, and the European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan.

13. It is essential to **deepen cooperation across borders** and regions and to work closely with social partners, civil society organisations, and other key stakeholders. The contributions of civil society organisations within civil dialogue are essential.

14. Only together can we transform the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights into a living reality - a commitment that is all the more important as we prepare to grow our Union.

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