

Towards an EU Quality Jobs Act?

The EU does not need more labour laws to ensure job quality

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On 4 December 2025, the European Commission launched its Communication on a Quality Jobs Roadmap, including a social partner consultation on a possible EU Quality Jobs Act. WEC-Europe, representing the private employment services industry, shares the objective of improving outcomes for workers while strengthening Europe's economic competitiveness. From WEC-Europe's perspective, the central challenge is not the absence of rules, but how effectively job quality is delivered in practice across increasingly diverse labour markets, rapid technological change, and major economic transitions. The key policy question is how to ensure existing regulatory frameworks work together to deliver better outcomes for workers, businesses, and society -- without creating unintended consequences that constrain job creation, labour-market access, or competitiveness. To this end, WEC-Europe sets out the following principles and priorities for the development of an EU Quality Jobs Act:

- **Focus on outcomes, not regulatory accumulation.** Improving job quality requires the right balance between EU legislation, national implementation, collective bargaining, and responsible self-regulation.
- **Value diverse forms of work and the role they play in inclusive labour markets.** Europe's labour markets rely on a wide range of contractual arrangements and service models, including agency work and subcontracting, that support labour-market entry, mobility, skills matching and business adaptability.
- **Harness digitalisation and artificial intelligence to improve job quality in practice.** Digitalisation and AI are central to Europe's future competitiveness and labour-market performance. Their impact on job quality depends less on new regulation than on how existing rules are applied, how skills are developed, and how human-centric standards are implemented.
- **Protect workers across all contractual arrangements through effective enforcement.** Abuses and non-compliance do exist in European labour markets and must be addressed decisively.
- **Support job quality through successful transitions.** Job quality must be understood dynamically, including in the context of job-to-job transitions and the green and digital transformations.

WEC-Europe stands ready to contribute constructively to the Quality Jobs Act debate, drawing on the experience of a regulated, compliant sector that supports millions of workers and businesses across Europe, but will not engage informal social partner negotiations on a Quality Jobs Act. A successful EU Quality Jobs Act should focus on making existing frameworks work better, strengthening enforcement and social dialogue, and enabling labour markets that deliver both high-quality jobs and sustainable economic growth.

1. Enabling job quality requires action by many actors beyond an EU legislative agenda

Quality jobs is a multi-faced approach and requires action by many actors to reach better labour market outcomes for all. Labour law and EU social and employment legislation play a key role in providing a common framework for job quality, and many additional EU rules have recently been adopted or are in the implementation phase. This includes rules on adequate minimum wages, gender pay transparency, transparent

and predictable working conditions, as well as the EU Directive on temporary agency work that was introduced 18 years ago.

WEC-Europe considers these rules to be important and appropriate. The policy challenge is therefore not to redefine job quality through additional legislation, but to ensure that existing rules are applied and enforced effectively in labour markets that must combine worker protection with flexibility across a wide range of contractual arrangements, including agency work, fixed-term contracts, part-time work and platform work. The EU Directive on temporary agency work, the EU Platform Work Directive and other EU instruments are an embodiment of such a balanced approach. Diverse forms of work, which include a variety of flexible work arrangements such as agency work and other services of the HR services industry, as well as subcontracting, contribute to job creation, increase competitiveness, and support labour market entry, transitions, and business adaptability. To fully realise these benefits while ensuring protection for workers, policy efforts should prioritise effective enforcement with the consistent application of existing rules, rather than the introduction of new horizontal regulation.

WEC-Europe calls for prioritising the application and implementation of existing EU regulatory tools rather than opting for a comprehensive, legislative agenda on employment and social affairs in the coming years.

2. Digitalisation, AI at work and job quality

Digitalisation and artificial intelligence will shape job quality primarily through how they are implemented in practice. Their impact on workers depends on whether AI systems are deployed transparently, responsibly and in ways that support skills development, fair treatment and secure labour market transitions.

EU policies should therefore focus on harnessing digitalisation and AI to improve job quality outcomes, rather than treating technological change primarily as a regulatory gap. In this context, the challenge is to ensure that existing European frameworks are applied consistently and translated into effective practice at level of the workplace.

In the past years, the European Union has already adopted comprehensive rules on artificial intelligence and automated decision-making, which the World Employment Confederation-Europe welcomes. We believe that there are no significant regulatory gaps at European level looking the EU AI Act, the General Data Protection Regulation, and the Platform Work Directive. At the same time, the private employment services industry stands ready to guide and support companies and workers in the digital transition and the use of AI at the workplace. One clear commitment in this context is the focus on skills development and training. The WEC/FT Longitude research on [The Work We Want](#) illustrated that the adoption of Artificial Intelligence is much more a question of upskilling and reskilling the workforce rather than of adopting new European rules. 81% of the senior executives in a global survey believe that AI and other forms of change through technology will force them to rethink qualifications and workforce planning radically. The private employment services industry is enabling skills development and training through company driven training schemes, bi-partite training funds and by enabling workers to move quickly and safely to new and emerging jobs in digitalisation and artificial intelligence. This underpins the World Employment Confederation-Europe call for an integrated approach to job quality, including appropriate regulation, skills development, secure labour market transitions, effective collective bargaining and instruments of self-regulation.

On automated decision-making and AI at the workplace, the World Employment Confederation followed this approach by embracing a human centred approach to AI and adopting a [Code of Ethical Principles in the Use of Artificial Intelligence](#). It is mandatory for all WEC members to abide by the Code, which imposes strict standards, ensuring fairness, non-discrimination, privacy, and a human-centric approach in all AI applications related to recruitment and employment practices.

WEC-Europe calls to harness digitalisation and artificial intelligence to improve job quality in practice. This can be achieved with the existing EU instruments, especially the AI Act, the General Data Protection Regulation, and the EU Platform Work Directive. We call for working with business representatives and EU level social partners to complement the existing regulation by instruments of self-regulation and to ensure compliance throughout the EU. Working with the existing instruments and with the employer's community will unlock the potential of digitalisation and AI to boost competitiveness while at the same time ensuring that workers receive the support, they need to manage the digital transformation at their workplace.

3. Ensuring job quality for all workers, including those in diverse forms of work and in subcontracting chains

The World Employment Confederation-Europe calls for appropriate protection of workers, independent of their form of work or employment status. Only by ensuring protection for all workers, including those involved in diverse forms of work, will we be able to deliver improvements to job quality that benefit society and increase competitiveness.

A specific contractual arrangement that has gained increasing attention at the European level is subcontracting and the working conditions in longer subcontracting chains. Subcontracting is a common and essential practice in modern economies, where businesses delegate contractual obligations to third parties. Subcontracting and longer supply chains are essential in many economic sectors that are essential clients of the private employment services industry, such as the automotive industry, manufacturing, or the construction sector.

To be clear, subcontracting should not be confused with agency work, which is a triangular work relationship in which a worker is employed by a temporary work agency and assigned to a client company to work there under its supervision and control. It is essential to differentiate clearly and fully between the established, well-regulated and compliant agency work industry represented by the World Employment Confederation-Europe and other intermediaries and rogue providers, who act like temporary work agencies, but do not comply with rules and are often at the centre of questionable practices of subcontracting and labour intermediation.

The World Employment Confederation has established [a Code of Conduct](#) and works with its members across the world to ensure compliance and enforcement of its principles. Key elements of the Code of Conduct are the respect for the law, the respect of the ethical and professional conduct and the respect for the transparency of the terms and conditions of engagement. WEC-Europe acknowledges that there can be challenges linked to compliance and enforcement in long subcontracting chain and when some service



The [European Employers Institute](#), of which WEC-Europe is a founding member, published a [study](#) in 2025 illustrating why EU policymakers should not limit subcontracting. Restricting subcontracting comes with legal complexities and unintended consequences. As subcontracting refers to the practice where someone delegates contractual obligations to a third party, subcontracting is such a widespread practice in the modern economy that it is hard to pinpoint for restriction purposes without creating unintended consequences for business in general. The EEI legal study concludes that any measure

providers in the subcontracting chain are not compliant with national rules. Also subcontracting in the context of the cross-border provision of services and posting of workers needs to be done in a fully compliant way.

needs to be carefully defined and drafted to avoid negative legal side effects. Furthermore, the legal study concludes that subcontracting is an aspect of the freedom of contract, which is protected as a part of the right to conduct a business under Article 16 of the EU Charter, as well as under the free movement of services and the freedom of establishment.

Taken together, these challenges point to a clear policy conclusion. Where abuses occur in subcontracting chains, the risk lies not in subcontracting as such, but in non-compliance and weak enforcement. Broad restrictions on subcontracting risk creating unintended consequences, including reduced labour-market access, increased informality and the displacement of compliant providers by rogue operators. By contrast, targeted enforcement, clear allocation of responsibility along supply chains and effective cooperation between authorities are more effective tools for protecting workers and safeguarding fair competition.

WEC-Europe calls for valuing diverse forms of work and of providing services and to refrain from introducing new EU Regulation on subcontracting or subcontracting chains. Rather than discussing new EU rules in an area that is already regulated in most EU countries, focus should be laid on compliance and enforcement of existing regulation at the national level.

4. Job quality in the context of just transitions

Labour market transitions have become much more common in European labour markets as companies require agile HR solutions and as workers change their jobs and workplace more frequently. Labour market transitions can be linked to labour contractual arrangements and transitions linked to economic transformations, such as the digital and green transitions. The term just transitions is increasingly used for describing the transitions linked to economic transformations towards a carbon neutral economy.

The employment and recruitment industry is an enabler of labour market transitions in a broad sense and has developed in recent years increasing experience in managing the just transition to carbon neutral economy enabling better labour market outcomes within the current legal framework. A White Paper published by The Adecco Group in 2025 highlights that persistent wage gaps and labour market inefficiencies are hindering progress in the global push for sustainability and a net-zero economy that has placed Green Jobs at the heart of workforce transformation.¹ The research shows that Green Jobs often fail to offer competitive wages or clear pathways for workers to transition, raising concerns about the accessibility and appeal of these roles. It identifies a median wage gap of -0.46% between Green and non-Green Jobs. These findings underline that improving job quality in the green transition is not primarily a question of new regulation, but of supporting transitions through training, mobility pathways and social protection mechanisms that allow workers to move into emerging roles on sustainable terms.

¹ The Adecco Group: [Green Jobs: Closing Gaps and Addressing Skill Challenges to Empower the Climate Economy](#)

Against this background, the European Commission is right in making a link between the general focus on a quality jobs act and the green transitions. As far as the employment and recruitment industry is concerned, solutions developed within the industry such as training initiatives and actions to improve social protection for people on short term and agency work contracts are also relevant and applicable to workers assigned to jobs linked to the green transition.

WEC-Europe supports the focus on just transitions in the context of the forthcoming Quality Jobs Act. We believe that the green transition must be coupled with appropriate working conditions based on collective bargaining and a strong involvement of social partners at national and European levels.

5. Enforcement and the role of social partners

The private employment services and agency work industry fully supports the focus on enforcement and compliance with existing laws and regulations to ensure quality jobs, and are members are playing their part in ensuring compliance. Compliance is important for workers to ensure their protection and for companies to ensure a level-playing field and improve their competitive position.

Enforcement is predominantly a national, Member States competence. In the context of the cross-border provision of services, the [European Labour Authority](#) does play an important role in ensuring compliance and enforcement of EU Regulation linked to labour mobility and the World Employment Confederation-Europe contributes to the work of the European Labour Authority as an alternate member of the ELA Stakeholder group. In the agency work industry, social partners at the national, sectoral level have taken important, complementary actions to ensure compliance and enforcement.

Enhancing compliance and enforcement has an important competitiveness dimension as well, as only balanced, and appropriate enforcement protects the agency work industry from unfair competition from labour market intermediaries who are not complying with the rules.

In this context, a focus on enforcement is not an alternative to improving job quality – it is a prerequisite for making progress in this area. Clear responsibilities, effective inspections and cooperation between authorities would greatly improve protection for workers, support for compliant employers, while avoiding the risk that regulatory complexity undermines the goal of good quality job opportunities for all.

WEC-Europe supports the focus on compliance and enforcement in the context of an EU Act on Quality Jobs. Compliance and enforcement are a primarily national/Member States responsibility, which the EU level plays a significant role in the cross-border context.

6. *Initiating formal social partner negotiations under Article 155 TFEU on any of the issues identified in this consultation*

Ensuring and improving job quality in Europe is an important topic in various economic sectors and industries, but it is primarily a cross-industry topic affecting all sectors.

WEC-Europe and UNI-Europa are considering applying for an EU funded social dialogue project on quality jobs in the agency work industry in 2026, but we do not intent to initiating a dialogue under Article 155 TFEU on quality jobs and quality jobs. As illustrated in this reply to the consultation, WEC-Europe strongly believes that social partners at European and national levels are in a privileged position to discuss quality employment.

WEC-Europe does not intend to enter negotiations under Article 155 TFEU on the topics addressed within the Quality Jobs Act consultation, as these matters should be addressed at the level of the cross-industry social partners.

About the World Employment Confederation-Europe

The World Employment Confederation-Europe serves as the voice of the HR services industry at the European level, representing both national federations and workforce solutions companies worldwide. Our diverse membership encompasses a broad spectrum of HR services, including agency work, direct recruitment, career management, Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO), and Managed Service Provider (MSP) solutions.

Our mission revolves around securing recognition for the pivotal role played by the HR services industry in fostering well-functioning labour markets and advocating on behalf of our members to enable appropriate regulation. By fostering an environment conducive to sustainable growth of the HR services sector, our ultimate goal is to deliver better labour market outcomes for all.

By bridging the supply and demand gaps in labour markets, creating pathways to employment, enabling agile organisations, balancing flexibility with protection and deploying digital solutions responsibly, the HR services industry plays a central role in addressing labour market challenges and delivering people-centric solutions.