



Job quality is a priority in the EU, according to annual Commission report

Brussels, 13 October 2026

The quality of jobs in the EU has improved over the past decade, according to the [2026 European Employment and Social Outlook](#), published today. The report points to progress in three areas: **pay, job security, and working time**. It shows that better-quality jobs help build a strong, productive and competitive economy.

The report finds that better-quality jobs can raise productivity by improving motivation, reducing staff turnover, encouraging skills development and supporting better work organisation.

The report also looks at current challenges, including slowing employment growth, weak productivity growth, and pressure on household incomes from high energy prices. It highlights that labour shortages are often more pronounced in poorer-quality jobs, showing that improving job quality can help attract and retain workers where they are most needed. In turn, higher productivity can help improve wages and working conditions.

Later this year, the Commission will present the **Quality Jobs Act**, following the [second-phase consultation](#) of EU social partners.

Job quality still varies across countries, sectors and occupations

Job quality differs between sectors. It is higher in sectors of strategic and economic importance to the EU, in particular manufacturing and knowledge-intensive service sectors. On the other hand, labour shortage occupations often involve more atypical hours, less secure jobs and lower pay.

The report shows that better-quality jobs are more common in information and communication, finance and insurance, public administration, and professional, scientific and technical activities. Poorer-quality jobs are more often found in accommodation and food services, administrative and support services, and some lower-skilled service jobs. In addition, differences remain across Member States, with some countries recording deteriorations in two or more job quality indicators over the past decade even as the overall EU trend remained positive.

Wages and productivity go hand in hand

The report shows that wages can keep rising only if companies become more productive. At the same time, higher wages, especially minimum wages, can encourage companies to invest and innovate rather than compete on low labour costs.

Since the EU [Minimum Wages Directive](#) was adopted, minimum wages have increased, especially in Member States with lower wage levels and more minimum-wage earners.

Technology and AI are changing work

AI can boost productivity and job quality by helping workers focus on more valuable tasks and develop new skills. But its effects will depend on how it is introduced and governed. The report highlights that AI can put pressure on labour demand in some entry-level and routine jobs, and may affect wages and working conditions. This makes worker representation, skills policies and social dialogue increasingly important.

Emerging research also suggests that greater reliance on automated tools could weaken critical thinking, reduce learning by doing, and increase the need for human supervision. Less experienced workers often see the biggest immediate productivity gains by using AI. However, they may also be less able to spot errors, potentially widening skills gaps.

Employment and social trends

As required by the Treaty, the report also looks at broader employment and social trends in the EU. It shows that the EU labour market has remained resilient. In 2025, the employment rate reached 76.1%, while unemployment stayed at a historic low of 6%.

For 2026, the report draws on Commission [analysis](#) showing that the energy shock linked to the conflict in the Middle East is likely to slow employment growth but not stop it. Around 440,000 fewer jobs are expected to be created in 2026. Even so, the outlook points to slower hiring rather than a sharp downturn, as employers are expected to keep their workers. In 2026, real wages are 1.4% above their pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels, having recovered losses experienced in 2022 and 2023 in most Member States.

Background

The 2026 European Employment and Social Outlook builds on the [Employment Committee's Job Quality Framework](#), which defines the different dimensions of job quality. It shows why job quality should be central to Europe's response to long-term economic change, low productivity growth, ageing, labour shortages, and the green and digital transitions.

For more information

[Webpage on 2026 European Employment and Social Outlook](#)

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Quote(s):

"Europe's labour market remains strong. Wages are back to pre-pandemic levels. But employment growth is slowing, poverty reduction is not yet matching our ambition, and high energy prices are weighing especially on lower-income households. We are committed to creating more high-quality jobs across the EU. With the forthcoming Quality Jobs Act, we want to make sure work is available, fair, safe and rewarding for everyone."

Roxana Mînzatu, Executive Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness - 13/10/2026

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