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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Fair Labour Mobility Package**

## **1. A more integrated single market with fair, simple and modern rules to foster fair labour mobility**

The single market, with its four freedoms, is a cornerstone of our European Union. Far more than a set of rules, it represents a promise of shared prosperity, allowing every individual, worker and business to reach and value their full potential, while providing the maximum level of protection necessary to ensure fair competition and the security of rights across borders.

Cross-border labour mobility and cross-border provision of services in the EU benefit individuals, economies and societies as a whole. The right of free movement of EU citizens, which allows people to live, work and study across the EU, is supported by almost 90% of Europeans<sup>1</sup>. Today, around 14 million EU citizens live or work long term in another Member State, alongside 1.9 million cross-border workers and 3.64 million posted workers<sup>2</sup>. These are not abstract numbers. They are nurses in hospitals and care centres, engineers supporting clean-tech projects, construction workers helping deliver housing and infrastructure, drivers and seafarers keeping supply chains moving, seasonal workers assisting with the harvest or working in the tourism sector, pilots, cabin crew and air traffic controllers ensuring continuity of flights, ICT specialists bringing critical skills to the EU's digital economy, and artists and cultural professionals enriching Europe's cultural landscape.

And yet a recent Eurobarometer shows that, while 18% of respondents would like to work abroad, only 3.9% of EU citizens are currently mobile workers<sup>3</sup>. This gap signals that interest is high, but barriers remain strong.

For many individuals, the obstacles hindering them from working abroad are practical. A person who has trained as an architect, electrician or teacher, in one Member State may still face delays, costly and cumbersome procedures, lack of information or legal uncertainty when trying to have their qualifications recognised in another Member State to access a regulated profession. In other situations, where recognition of a qualification is not formally required to access jobs, people may fear that their skills and experience are not properly understood and valued when moving to another Member State. A person intending to work abroad may also struggle to understand how their social security rights, pension contributions or access to social benefits – including support services to enable persons with disabilities to participate in employment – will be regulated and protected. These difficulties can discourage mobility before it even begins<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [Citizenship and democracy - December 2023 - - Eurobarometer survey](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Annual Report on Intra-EU Labour Mobility, 2025 Edition](#).

<sup>3</sup> 'Mobile workers' refers here to individuals working in a Member State other than the country of origin, independent of the duration of that work and the country of residence. This includes posted workers, seasonal workers and frontier (cross-border) workers.

<sup>4</sup> Further practical challenges persist and need to be addressed: language barriers, insufficient access to transport and transport possibilities, difficulties in finding affordable housing and access to civil administrative procedures. Mobile workers also need fair access to financial services, and taxation systems lack transparency and ease of use across borders.

At the same time, overqualification and skill mismatches remain persistent, especially among EU mobile workers and third-country nationals<sup>5</sup>. Too often in cross-border situations, people with strong qualifications end up in jobs below their skill level simply because their diplomas, professional experience or skills are not properly understood, recognised or trusted in another Member State. An experienced engineer may spend months in a lower-skilled role while waiting for paperwork; a fully qualified healthcare worker – whether moving between Member States or arriving from a third country - may be unable to practise because recognition procedures are too slow, costly or cumbersome; and the skills of a graphic designer may not be valued in other Member States, leading to lower pay levels for mobile workers compared with nationals of the host Member State. This is a loss for the individual, for the employer and for the European economy.

Amid persistent labour shortages, businesses encounter the same barriers and benefit only partially from the potential of our single market. For employers, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), recruiting from abroad is still overly complex, slow and costly. A technology startup or scaleup trying to hire a specialist from another Member State or a hospital trying to fill critical nursing shortages by hiring qualified professionals from a third country may face delays linked to unnecessary procedures for recognising qualifications or burdensome paperwork. These barriers hold back the single market and weaken the EU's capacity to compete globally.

As highlighted in the Draghi and Letta reports, labour mobility is not only a fundamental freedom, but also a strategic asset for the EU's competitiveness, resilience and convergence. Labour mobility brings clear economic benefits and can help mitigate the EU's demographic challenges<sup>6</sup> as it creates opportunities not only for those who move, but also for those who choose to stay or return to their home regions, helping ensure that mobility contributes to balanced development and convergence across the Union. It helps employers find the skilled workers they need, supports productivity growth and can raise income across the wider workforce. This matters even more as the EU faces growing labour and skills shortages<sup>7</sup> in sectors central to competitiveness and security: agriculture and fisheries, construction, health and care, transport, digital industries, clean technologies, defence and space supply chains.

But crucially, labour mobility must also be fair. It must be underpinned by social security and labour rights' protection, and by a steadfast commitment to equality, non-discrimination and fair recruitment, ensuring a genuine level playing field for mobile workers, local workforces and the enterprises that hire them.

Yet mobile workers, including third-country nationals, are exposed to abuses and violation of their rights, while the companies that play by the rules are undercut by those that do not. Despite

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<sup>5</sup> The overqualification rate among EU workers employed in their own country stood at 20.8% in 2023. For mobile EU citizens and third-country nationals, the equivalent rates were 31.4% and 39.8%, respectively. Source: Eurostat (online [data](#) code lfsa\_eoqgan).

<sup>6</sup> [European Commission: Joint Research Centre, Biagi, F., Deuster, C. and Natale, F., A Demographic Perspective on the Future of European Labour Force Participation, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2025, JRC141153](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Labour shortages and surpluses in Europe - EURES \(EUROpean Employment Services\)](#).

the existing legislation on the posting of workers and social security coordination, cross-border enforcement remains a challenge, and administrations are not cooperating to their full potential.

Lower levels of transparency and long subcontracting chains can increase the risk of gaps in the protection of workers and may distort competition between companies. Examples include undeclared work, including the employment of illegally staying third-country nationals, underpayment, poor application of occupational health and safety rules, labour exploitation, trafficking risks, discrimination. Enforcement is hampered by limited awareness of labour rights and barriers to reporting abuses and accessing effective remedies and on the side of public authorities by fragmented procedures, limited access to timely and reliable information, and insufficient interoperability for checks. These gaps make it harder to exchange information swiftly and to detect and tackle abusive practices, including fraud while compliant employers face repeated, duplicative controls.

EU citizens should be able to live, study, work, train and retire anywhere in the EU as easily as they can in their own country, knowing that their skills can be fully leveraged and their social rights protected, including when returning to their countries of origin<sup>8</sup>. Fair labour mobility should facilitate mobility in all directions, including return mobility, allowing people to bring the experience and opportunities gained elsewhere back to their home regions.

For the EU to remain competitive, it is also key to make it more attractive to third-country talent in sectors facing shortages. Businesses complying with the rules should benefit from proportionate administrative procedures, clearer information and simpler checks. And public administrations should be able to apply and enforce rules and procedures more efficiently, thanks to better information exchange and digital tools.

With the ‘One Europe, One Market’ roadmap<sup>9</sup>, the EU has made a commitment to make decisive progress on completing the single market by the end of 2027. The Fair Labour Mobility Package is a response to the above presented challenges. The European Council of March 2026 asked for measures to ‘enhance free movement of workers by improving mutual recognition of professional qualifications and strengthening the portability of qualifications and skills across national borders, including through digitalisation and interoperability’. It answers repeated calls from Member States<sup>10</sup>, the European Parliament<sup>11</sup> and the European Economic and Social Committee<sup>12</sup>, and builds on extensive consultation with all relevant stakeholders<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> In 2023, the number of returnees increased by 7% from 713 000 in 2022 to 759 000 - [Annual report on intra-EU labour mobility \(edition 2025\)](#).

<sup>9</sup> [One Europe, One Market Roadmap - European Commission](#)

<sup>10</sup> E.g. The European Council of March 2026 asked for measures to ‘enhance free movement of workers by improving mutual recognition of professional qualifications and strengthening the portability of qualifications and skills across national borders, including through digitalisation and interoperability’. Fair labour mobility has been indicated as a main priority by all recent Presidencies of the Council of the EU.

<sup>11</sup> [European Parliament resolution of 20 May 2021](#) on impacts of EU rules on the free movements of workers and services: intra-EU labour mobility as a tool to match labour market needs and skills, [European Parliament resolution of 18 January 2024](#) on the revision of the European Labour Authority mandate (2023/2866(RSP)).

<sup>12</sup> [Opinion on a clear EU framework for the posting of third-country nationals](#)

<sup>13</sup> An implementation dialogue with Executive Vice-President Mînzatu took place on 16 September 2025. Further consultation activities are described in the impact assessments preparing the initiatives part of this package.

The proposal to revise the mandate of the European Labour Authority will strengthen enforcement and access to information, improve cooperation between administrations and cross-border checks. The proposal for a European Social Security Pass will improve the functioning of social security coordination rules thanks to digitalisation. The Skills Portability Initiative will make it easier to transfer qualifications and skills across borders and simplify recognition procedures. It will contribute to a genuine single market for talent in which workers and professionals can put their skills to use across the entire EU, and businesses can more easily employ the qualified workforce they need to remain competitive.

The Fair Labour Mobility Package complements key strategic sectoral initiatives, such as in the domains of aviation, maritime transport<sup>14</sup>, ports<sup>15</sup>, agriculture<sup>16</sup> or research<sup>17</sup>. In line with the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy<sup>18</sup>, it will support talent attraction and retention, particularly important for deep tech. The package also supports Choose Europe for Science by helping attract and retain global research and innovation talent. It will furthermore contribute to the broader framework for the EU Inc. proposal to enable innovative companies to operate under a single, harmonised set of EU-wide rules. In addition, as indicated in the Communication 'Towards a 28th regime for EU companies', the Commission will prepare in 2027 a legal proposal to allow fully fledged cross-border telework for startups and scaleups across the Union<sup>19</sup>. Finally, the package goes also hand in hand with the Right to Stay strategy: labour mobility is both a right and an opportunity, but people should also have the freedom to stay – with the possibility to build a good life and career in their home region if they wish. Equally, those who move should have genuine opportunities to return and put their experience to use in their home regions. Facilitating fair mobility, including return mobility, can therefore also contribute to territorial cohesion and help ensure that all regions can benefit from the opportunities offered by the Single Market.

Taken together, these measures will facilitate implementation and enforcement of EU rules in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights<sup>20</sup> while giving a strong new impulse to fair labour mobility in the EU. They will create more opportunities for individuals; stronger protection for workers; easier access to talent, simpler procedures and lower administrative burdens for businesses. Above all, the package reflects a simple conviction: if the EU wants a stronger and more competitive economy, it must make the freedom to move, work and provide services fair and simple in practice, not just in principle.

## **2. Modernising and simplifying social security coordination**

The EU's long-standing rules on the coordination of social security systems ensure that individuals can live, work, retire and move freely across Europe while maintaining their social security rights. This is simply the core of EU integration. The latest and long-awaited revision

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<sup>14</sup> EU Industrial Maritime Strategy, COM(2026)111 final.

<sup>15</sup> EU Ports Strategy, COM(2026)112 final.

<sup>16</sup> i.e. social conditionality in Common Agricultural Policy legislation

<sup>17</sup> With the forthcoming European Research Area (ERA) Act

<sup>18</sup> COM(2025) 270, 28.5.2025

<sup>19</sup> COM(2026) 320, 18.3.2026

<sup>20</sup> [Communication on the European Pillar of Social Rights, COM\(2026\) 650 final](#)

of the EU rules on social security coordination, provisionally agreed in April 2026, delivers a more modern, fair and effective framework that strengthens protection for workers while reducing unnecessary administrative burden and legal uncertainty for companies operating across borders.

At the same time, EU labour markets have been undergoing a further structural transition over the past decade, bringing about a need for further modernisation, simplification and clarification of the rules. Building on the improvements of the latest revision, a new initiative should respond to emerging realities, such as high mobility among certain groups of workers, for example those who are on short term assignments, requiring frequent job changes, those who are highly mobile without having a stable workplace in one Member State (e.g. digital nomads), and those who frequently change employment status. This poses the question of where social security contributions are to be paid and collected. In terms of risks, material preoccupations are the potential exposure to double contributions and the loss of accumulated rights for workers; legal uncertainty on applicable legislation for employers; and circumvention of rules and fraud for administrations.

An increasing number of self-employed persons are active cross-border, sometimes in several Member States. In most cases, these are legitimate activities for which applicable legislation should be established swiftly. However, this has also been associated with risks for misclassification of self-employed status, undeclared or underdeclared activities, and other forms of fraud.

Moreover, there is demand from Member States for mechanisms that further reinforce checks and monitoring to fight abuses, including via increased administrative cooperation and automatic data exchange. This relates in particular to activation or job placement measures applicable to individuals exporting their social security benefits – notably unemployment benefits – to another country. The latest revision of the rules on social security coordination, provisionally agreed in April 2026, already introduces strengthened rules on reporting and mutual cooperation between countries to communicate changes in employment status of the person concerned. The European Commission will propose improvements to data exchanges between the institutions within the Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information system (EESSI) to that end. The next step should be exploring a further strengthening of the cooperation and data exchange, notably through structural automatic data exchange on work resumption and activation take-up.

**In 2027, the Commission will therefore present a proposal for further simplification and modernisation of the EU rules on the coordination of social security systems.**

### **3. Improving enforcement of the rules and ensuring information for all**

#### ***3.1. Strengthening the European Labour Authority***

Since its creation in 2019, the European Labour Authority (ELA) has been a cornerstone in ensuring fair labour mobility within the EU. This was confirmed by the Commission's 2025 evaluation of the Authority. However, that same evaluation identified a need to further strengthen ELA's strategic and operational capacity.

**As part of this package, the Commission has therefore adopted a proposal for a targeted revision of the European Labour Authority Regulation.**

A stronger role for ELA will help the Commission and Member States to achieve a genuine EU labour market built on trust and a level playing field, offering opportunities to companies as well as to mobile workers, and protecting them from fraud, abuse and undeclared work. Revising ELA's mandate will strengthen the effectiveness of cross-border inspections by giving the Authority the tools to run better risk assessments in support of concerted and joint inspections, which remain voluntary at the initiative of the Member States concerned. The revision will explicitly define ELA's role in providing information and supporting inspections involving third-country nationals in the EU labour market, as often mobile EU and third country workers face the same challenges<sup>21</sup>. This will strengthen the enforcement of the employment and social rights of these workers and shield compliant employers from unfair competition. The initiative will also improve information, guidance and support by enabling direct and tailored information provision based on the needs of workers and employers. It will also strengthen and simplify the Authority's mediation function, increasing its effectiveness and reducing litigation risks and costs linked to cross-border disputes. Finally, it will further improve cross-border mobility support through the European Employment Services (EURES) network, while simplifying the framework and cutting administrative burden for national administrations.

### ***3.2 Improving free movement of services and enforcement in the case of posted third-country nationals***

In 2023, one in five posted workers was a third-country national<sup>22</sup>. While third-country nationals fill genuine labour needs for EU businesses, the administrative requirements linked to their posting are not always easy to navigate. At the same time, third-country nationals can face greater vulnerabilities than posted EU workers – from lack of information on their rights to enforcement gaps – leaving them at a higher risk of exploitation. As a result, the implementation and enforcement of their rights are not guaranteed, and they could even end up irregularly staying in the host Member State if they are not genuinely posted.

The EU legal framework on posting applies to both EU and third-country posted workers but questions on interpretation of the existing legal framework remain open despite the Court of Justice of the EU's case law on posted third-country nationals<sup>23</sup>. The collaboration between the Commission and ELA has resulted in a handbook on national legislation and practices for posting third-country nationals<sup>24</sup> and the recent revision of the social security rules and the forthcoming e-declaration for the posting of workers contribute to addressing some

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<sup>21</sup> ELA will support national labour inspectorates on the employment and social security aspects of the relevant EU directives, while responsibility for migration policy and its enforcement stays with the competent national and Union authorities.

<sup>22</sup> [Posting of workers - Collection of data from the prior declaration tools: reference year 2023](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Commission report on the implementation of the posting of workers Directive](#)  
ELA [report on the cooperation practices, possibilities and challenges between Member States – specifically in relation to the posting of third-country nationals](#).

<sup>24</sup> [Handbook](#)

enforcement issues. This will be further supported by ELA's strengthened role in operationally supporting Member States in applying and enforcing these rules. Further clarification may be required as to the conditions for genuine posting of third-country nationals. Further action could be needed, not only to safeguard the rights of posted third-country nationals, but also to support Member States in effectively applying and enforcing the rules as well as enable EU businesses to post third-country workers. This will in turn promote fair competition between service providers and should alleviate administrative burdens.

**Building on the work carried out with ELA, the Commission will seek ways to provide clarification of the legal framework on the posting of third-country nationals.**

### ***3.3. Modernising networks for placements and matching***

The EU has put in place a wealth of digital tools to support mobility, skills transparency and recruitment, which together aim to foster a coherent ecosystem, including Europass, ESCO<sup>25</sup> and the EU Talent Pool. Within this ecosystem, EURES<sup>26</sup> is a central operational pillar: it supplies trusted job vacancy data and helps match jobseekers and employers. The recent ELA evaluation<sup>27</sup> and the EURES activity report (2022-2024) revealed a sharp decline in EURES placements<sup>28</sup>; reduced Member State commitment (fewer staff and less dedicated time); low public awareness (only one third of jobseekers are aware of EURES); and a portal that could benefit from improvements to its data accuracy and user experience.

Building on the EURES 2030 strategy<sup>29</sup>, **the proposed revision of ELA's mandate**, by enabling a better functioning of EURES and maximizing synergies with other networks and IT tools for placements and matching and enhancing the focus on (AI) digital services, will further contribute to supporting labour mobility in the EU.

**Furthermore, before the end of 2026, the Commission will propose a revised Decision to prepare the Public Employment Service network for current labour market challenges, notably activation of vulnerable groups and labour migration.**

## **4. Digitalisation in support of free movement**

Digital tools are central to the EU's efforts to simplify procedures and reduce administrative burden for individuals, businesses and public administrations. The initiatives in this package aim to make a tangible contribution to the objective of ensuring full online availability of key public services by 2030 for individuals and businesses. By building on trusted solutions, such as the European Digital Identity (EUDI) Wallets and the Single Digital Gateway Regulation, advancing the once-only principle, and promoting seamless interoperability among all players involved in fair labour mobility, these measures will do more than simplify procedures. They

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<sup>25</sup> The multilingual classification of European skills, competences and occupations.

<sup>26</sup> Currently governed by Regulation (EU) 2016/589 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 April 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Evaluation of the European Labour Authority, COM(2025) 256, 26.5.2025.

<sup>28</sup> From nearly 85 000 in 2018-2019 to under 50 000 in 2021-2023, with its share of intra-EU placements dropping from 10% to under 5%.

<sup>29</sup> [Europe's job market is shifting, and EURES is ready to lead the way into 2030 - EURES \(EUROpean Employment Services\)](#)

will help reinforce trust and transparency<sup>30</sup> and improve efficiency in cross-border situations and exchanges. They also help in detecting fraud and fighting abuses.

#### ***4.1. European social security pass (ESSPASS)***

Despite significant progress in digitalising cross-border exchanges among 3 400 national social security institutions and moving away from paper-based procedures with the implementation of the Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information system (EESSI), proving social security rights across borders remains burdensome. Individuals, businesses, healthcare providers and national, regional and local authorities still face time-consuming procedures that often require physical presence, paper documents or electronic documents without secure verification. These obstacles can even discourage individuals from exercising their right to free movement and deter businesses from sending workers abroad.

**Building on existing initiatives, in particular the Single Digital Gateway Regulation and the EUDI Wallets, the Commission has adopted as part of this package a proposal for a European social security pass.**

This initiative will make it easier, faster and more secure to prove and verify social security entitlements across the EU. It will apply to persons within the scope of social security coordination rules set out in Regulation 883/2004, and the Commission is preparing to extend its scope to third-country nationals legally residing in the EU and in a cross-border situation. The initiative will progressively cover all documents that certify social security rights when moving within the EU ('portable documents'), while maintaining paper alternatives<sup>31</sup>. It will start with the portable document A1, which indicates in which country social security contributions are paid, and also include the European Health Insurance Card, which is held by more than 253 million people and allows access to medically necessary healthcare when abroad temporarily. The proposal will increase predictability for individuals and businesses by setting binding time limits for issuing documents. For businesses, compliance with posting requirements will be simplified by bringing convergence in information requirements for the portable document A1 requests and by providing the possibility for a single-entry point for these requirements and those agreed in the posting e-declaration<sup>32</sup>. Public administrations will benefit from instant verification of documents and better tools to detect fraud and enforce the rules, as well as improved efficiency through streamlined procedures.

#### ***4.2. E-declaration for the posting of workers***

The complexity of procedures for the temporary posting of workers to another Member State are considered by many companies as one of the barriers to provide cross-border services<sup>33</sup>. The purpose of administrative requirements under the EU rules on posting is to guarantee that an appropriate level of protection of posted workers' rights is respected with regard to the cross-border provision of services. However, the diversity of national declaration requirements, both

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<sup>30</sup> Supporting also the objectives of transparency and simplification in the 2019 Council Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed, [EUR-Lex - 32019H1115\(01\) - EN - EUR-Lex](#).

<sup>31</sup> [Standard forms for social security rights - Your Europe](#).

<sup>32</sup> See also next section

<sup>33</sup> [Synopsis report on Single Market Strategy consultation activities](#)

in nature (paper or digital) and content has contributed to complexity for businesses and posted workers alike and fragmented the single market. The recent provisional agreement on the proposal for an e-declaration<sup>34</sup>, as the first deliverable of the One Europe, One Market roadmap, is a major step forward. It will allow companies to submit a declaration on posting workers in digital format through a central, multilingual portal for Member States that join the system.

Yet further work is needed. Employers and several Member States have repeatedly called for closer alignment between the procedures for obtaining the portable document A1 and the procedures for submitting the e-declaration. In this respect, the ESSPASS proposal is already taking significant steps by aligning the data required for requesting portable document A1.

**The Commission is taking steps to apply the once-only principle in the context of the portable document A1 and the procedure for submitting the e-declaration. These two procedures could be brought closer together from a technical and user-oriented perspective, once the e-declaration portal for the posting of workers is in place.**

The Commission's next step will be to work with Member States to enable national portals for requesting the portable document A1 to interoperate with the public interfaces connected to the Internal Market Information System (IMI). Consultations already started in 2026. Such streamlining will rely on a broad uptake of the common e-declaration portal by Member States, which is strongly encouraged by the Commission.

Meanwhile, ELA is pursuing efforts to make it easier for businesses to comply with the existing rules through digitalisation. It is piloting a digital tool to help **calculate the remuneration of posted workers and increase transparency** – the **remuneration calculator**.<sup>35</sup> User access is expected from 2027 for the pilot countries. The ambition is to cover the road transport sector across all Member States, before extending progressively to other sectors.

#### ***4.3. European pension tracking service***

Transparency of pension rights earned in different Member States with different pension systems is a key element of fair labour mobility. Without an overview of their current pension rights held in different schemes and countries, and of the expected pension benefits, mobile workers can find it hard to plan their career, saving needs and retirement. The Commission is therefore supporting the development of a European tracking service (ETS) for pensions<sup>36</sup>, which aims to connect information from Member States' national tracking systems. It will provide mobile workers with a one-stop overview of their pension rights in real time, as well as with information on pension providers and systems. The project, currently in the roll-out phase, aims to connect five to seven national pension tracking systems by 2029.

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<sup>34</sup> COM(2024) 531, 13.11.2024.

<sup>35</sup> The pilot covers posted drivers in the freight transport sector in eight countries: Belgium, Czechia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovenia.

<sup>36</sup> [www.findyourpension.eu](http://www.findyourpension.eu).

The Commission's EU supplementary pension package<sup>37</sup>, adopted as part of the Savings and Investments Union strategy<sup>38</sup>, could also support EU labour mobility by improving the cross-border portability of supplementary pension rights while respecting national pension systems. The Commission Recommendation on pension tracking systems, pension dashboards and auto-enrolment<sup>39</sup> furthermore calls on Member States to develop national tracking systems and ensure that they are compatible with the ETS, thereby supporting labour mobility.

**The Commission will continue to support the development of the ETS for pensions and facilitate mutual learning and exchange of best practices in pension tracking among Member States.**

## **5. Empowering businesses and workers by increasing the portability of skills and qualifications**

To fully reap the benefits of mobility in the single market, workers and professionals must be confident that the qualifications and skills they have acquired in one Member State are easily understood, valued and, for regulated professions, recognised in another Member State. Uncertainty about the acceptance and value of the qualifications from other Member States, and, where applicable, the outcome, cost and duration of recognition, deters some from moving altogether. Those who do move risk seeing their skills underused and face a significantly higher risk of overqualification. This leads to less favourable working conditions than nationals holding comparable qualifications.

Challenges also affect third-country nationals or EU citizens with qualifications obtained outside the EU who seek to work and integrate into the EU labour market. Difficulties in understanding, assessing and recognising these qualifications and skills, prevents international talent from finding employment in the EU and contribute to skills underutilisation and overqualification.

Obstacles to skills portability also hinder employers – in particular SMEs – from effectively searching for talent across and beyond EU borders, as the complexity of verifying non-national qualifications often proves too costly or risky for smaller recruiters. This is particularly relevant where qualifications and skills have been acquired outside the EU, highlighting the importance of transparent and reliable mechanisms to support their assessment. Consequently, many businesses remain confined to local labour pools even when the specific expertise they need is available elsewhere.

As part of this package, **the Commission has adopted a skills portability initiative**. It is composed of **three separate legal acts** aimed at digitalising and improving the availability of information on qualifications and skills, modernising the recognition processes for regulated

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<sup>37</sup> COM(2025) 840, 20.11.2025 and COM(2025) 842, 20.11.2025.

<sup>38</sup> COM(2025) 124, 19.3.2025.

<sup>39</sup> Commission Recommendation (EU) 2025/2384 of 20 November 2025 on pension tracking systems, pension dashboards and auto-enrolment (C(2025) 9300).

professions and simplifying procedures for recognising the qualifications and skills of third-country nationals.

### ***5.1. Portability of qualifications through digitalisation and better information***

Insufficient information on and understanding of qualifications and skills obtained in other Member States limits their labour market value for workers, professionals and employers. Continued reliance on paper-based attestations of qualifications, which are vulnerable to fraud, makes verification of qualifications cumbersome. While many Member States invest in digitalisation of qualifications, the 2025 Single Market Strategy points out that the current approach to issuing digital credentials remains highly fragmented. This hampers EU-wide interoperability, leaving mobile workers and employers without a streamlined, reliable way to present and verify qualifications across the Union. It creates undue administrative burden and costs for citizens and businesses and also increased risks for fraud and forgery. To address these problems, as part of the package, the Commission adopted a proposal for a Skills Portability Act requiring Member States to issue interoperable and secure digital credentials for qualifications (in the context of both regulated and non-regulated professions) and requiring comparable information on qualifications, including through a new Europass comparison tool. Digital credentials will be issued free of charge for citizens and will be legally valid and verifiable across the Union. The fact that they will contain EQF levels enabling comparison across Member States will support their understanding and their recognition where required, while recognition decisions will remain in the remit of national competent authorities. The proposal aims to ensure that workers, employers and national authorities have access to reliable and comparable information on qualifications and skills within the Union in a simple, effective and cost-efficient way.

### ***5.2. Facilitating recognition of qualifications and extending automatic recognition to additional regulated professions***

New digital tools will also make it easier for mobile professionals to get their professional qualifications legally recognised in another Member State where this is required to practice a regulated profession.

**As part of this package, the Commission has adopted a proposal to amend Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications, among others, to facilitate and speed up cross-border recognition processes.**

The proposal introduces a unified digital workflow, building on existing tools and integrating artificial intelligence. It will support both mobile professionals and the competent authorities of the Member States assessing applications for cross-border recognition. This will cut processing times, reduce documentation requirements and the need for certified translations, support authorities in checking the authenticity of documents and improve cooperation between Member States and the Commission to help improve professional mobility in the single market. The improvements are drawing on the digital credentials established under the Skills Portability Act.

Moreover, professional mobility will be further enhanced by defining common training frameworks for specific professions based on existing commonalities between Member States. While allowing Member States to retain their own training paths into the professions, common training frameworks define the minimum set of knowledge, skills, and competences legally required to practise a specific profession, thus enabling automatic recognition across borders. As a first step, **the Commission has adopted a common training framework for physiotherapists**, a profession for which many Member States report critical shortages. This common training framework enables physiotherapists who meet the specified requirements to benefit from automatic recognition without undergoing additional substantive qualification assessments.

On top of the common training framework for physiotherapists, the Commission has identified an **indicative list of priority professions for which common training frameworks could be established**. This prioritisation reflects the need to move beyond a purely case-by-case approach and accelerate the recognition of qualifications in professions that are particularly important for Europe's economic resilience, competitiveness and ability to deliver the green and digital transitions.

The list targets professions where national qualification standards are already converging, making them the most viable candidates for a common training framework defined at EU level. It covers jobs that are crucial in the context of the EU's overall competitiveness and innovation potential (e.g. *civil engineers and biomedical laboratory technicians*) and in the context of the green transition and an independent Energy Union (e.g. *electricians and landscape architects*). It also includes several care professions which are critical in the context of demographic transition (e.g. *nursing and healthcare assistants, occupational therapists and radiographers*), as well as professions related to education (e.g. *kindergarten teachers and childcare workers*).

To further advance work in this area, the Commission will **agree with the Member States an annual working plan** to jointly plan efforts and assess, on a case-by-case basis, whether sufficient regulatory convergence exists for common training frameworks in line with the applicable legal criteria. This will provide a more structured and forward-looking basis for cooperation, while enabling the Commission and Member States to focus efforts on professions where common EU action can deliver the greatest economic and social value.

### ***5.3 Attracting and retaining talent from outside the EU***

As explained in the European asylum and migration strategy<sup>40</sup>, in the next five years, the EU should aim to become the most attractive place in the global race for talent. Even with the full mobilisation of the domestic workforce, shrinking demographics and severe labour and skills shortages in critical sectors make attracting third-country talent an urgent necessity. The upcoming EU Talent Pool<sup>41</sup> and other initiatives such as the revised EU Blue Card, Talent

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<sup>40</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy - COM/2026/45 final

<sup>41</sup> [Regulation \(EU\) 2026/1047 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2026 establishing an EU Talent Pool](#)

Partnerships<sup>42</sup> and the European Legal Gateway Office pilot in India reflect this strategic approach of making the EU a competitive destination of choice for skilled workers. At the same time, third-country nationals and EU companies willing to hire them need to be able to rely on clear, simple and predictable procedures for recognising qualifications obtained outside the EU. Creating such rules would allow the EU to position itself more effectively as a unified bloc when engaging strategically with international partners notably within the framework of Talent Partnerships.

**Therefore, as part of this package, the Commission has adopted a proposal for a Directive with the aim of establishing a common legal framework for recognising qualifications of third-country nationals to strengthen the EU's position in the global competition for talent.**

While fully respecting the Member States' migration regimes and their competence to regulate professions in their territory, the proposal will streamline recognition processes for third-country nationals. This will benefit both non-EU citizens already residing in a Member State who want to access a regulated profession and those who need to get their qualifications recognised in the context of a legal migration pathway. Through the parallel amendment of Directive 2005/36/EC, EU citizens holding equivalent qualifications obtained in a third country will enjoy treatment that is at least as favourable.

In addition to common minimum procedural standards (with regard to deadlines, documentation requirements and the rights of applicants), the proposal also aims to eliminate duplicate steps and fees by requiring Member States to provide integrated procedures, as much as possible. It also envisages the provision of services that will assist competent authorities in verifying the authenticity of third-country qualifications, while leaving the decision to them. Finally, the proposal opens the possibility of having specific pre-approved qualifications automatically recognised, provided that they meet the minimum training requirements applicable in the Single Market and that they are delivered by accredited training institutions in third countries, reviewed by European quality assurance agencies. This possibility would apply to those professions for which the EU has already defined harmonised minimum training requirements, and which are of high economic importance and subject to significant labour shortages. To accelerate the process of pre-approval and deepen international cooperation, the framework also introduces streamlined arrangements for partner countries with trusted education and training systems.

As part of this package, the Directive on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals will be accompanied by a set of complementary soft measures to improve trust, transparency and understanding of skills and qualifications acquired abroad by third country nationals, including facilitated pre-departure support under Talent Partnerships such as upstream skills assessment and documentation preparation, improved EU-level information

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<sup>42</sup> [Talent Partnerships - Migration and Home Affairs - European Commission](#).

provision for individuals and employers as well as the promotion and better use of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in relations with third countries.

## **Conclusion**

As set out in the interinstitutional roadmap towards ‘*One Europe, One Market*’, building a stronger, fairer and more integrated single market is not only an economic necessity – it is a political imperative for a Europe that wants to remain resilient, competitive and united in an age of geopolitical tension, technological disruption and economic uncertainty. Competitiveness in a global context can only be achieved with internal solidarity. Achieving this ambition requires effective implementation and enforcement to translate agreed commitments into tangible results on the ground. In this context, the Fair Labour Mobility Package represents a major step forward towards a stronger social Europe. It strengthens enforcement to prevent abuse and exploitation, and helps ensure that individual social security data, skills and qualifications can effectively circulate across borders. It cuts unnecessary administrative burden through digitalisation and supports the fight against fraud. By boosting trust between Member States and making labour mobility fairer, simpler and more transparent, this package does much more than merely improve procedures or propose new digital tools – it reinforces the single market as a powerful engine of solidarity, opportunity, shared prosperity, intergenerational fairness and as a concrete expression of Europe’s promise to protect, empower and deliver for its citizens, workers and businesses.