



Resolution 2653 (2026)¹

European guidelines to counter social dumping and labour exploitation

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Social dumping and labour exploitation undermine the European social model, erode fundamental rights and human dignity, and distort fair competition, threatening social cohesion and democratic stability across member States of the Council of Europe. Heads of State and Government at the Reykjavík Summit (2023) underscored the centrality of social justice and the European Social Charter (ETS No. 35 and ETS No. 163 (revised), “the Charter”) whose standards serve as a “floor of rights” that must not be undercut in national practice or law.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly notes with concern that, as national economies integrate further, disparities in labour standards, wages and enforcement mechanisms contribute to a dual labour market where vulnerable workers, often migrant or posted workers and those involved in the informal economy, are subjected to substandard working conditions and do not benefit from adequate social protection. Moreover, labour exploitation ranging from systematic underpayment, denial of social protections, unsafe working conditions and excessive hours to psychological or physical coercion and, at its worst, forced labour and trafficking in human beings, represents a grave violation of human dignity and fundamental rights.

3. Social dumping and labour exploitation are contrary to the Decent Work Agenda of the International Labour Organization (ILO) grounded in four pillars of employment, social protection, social dialogue, and rights at work (including minimum wage), which applies to all persons at work both in the formal and informal sectors. Council of Europe member States are also committed to pursuing the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development whose Goal 8 aims to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”.

4. The Assembly underlines that all member States are bound by the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) and are committed, to varying extents, under the Charter and its revised version, to defending socio-economic rights, including the right to just conditions of work, fair remuneration, safe and healthy working conditions, protection of migrant workers and non-discrimination. It further underlines the importance of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No. 197) in combating severe forms of labour exploitation and ensuring a victim-centred, human rights-based response.

5. In this context, the Assembly highlights the relevance and complementarity of various supra-national legal standards established by the European Union directives, the ILO conventions and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

1. *Assembly debate* on 23 April 2026 (17th sitting) (see [Doc. 16371](#), report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Ms Valérie Piller Carrard). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 23 April 2026 (17th sitting).

See also [Recommendation 2307 \(2026\)](#).

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6. The Assembly welcomes the political declaration adopted at the Council of Europe High-Level Conference on Social Rights – the European Social Charter, on 19 March 2026, and urges member States to better use the benchmarks of the Charter, together with other international instruments, in combating social dumping and labour exploitation more effectively. To this end, it notably recommends to:

- 6.1. strengthen national legal foundations and institutions underpinning work-related rights by using the norms of the Charter (particularly Articles 2, 3, 4, 18, 19, 20 and E) and accept additional provisions of the Charter with a view to combating social dumping more effectively;
- 6.2. incentivise socially just economic models that provide for stable and secure employment putting economic interests and socio-economic rights on an equal footing;
- 6.3. protect whistle-blowers who report labour exploitation to authorities, establish safe channels for such reporting and build “firewalls” between labour law enforcement and immigration authorities, empowering exploited workers to claim back wages without fear of expulsion or loss of residence;
- 6.4. strengthen social partnership, ensure freedom of association and guarantee the right to organise by expanding sectoral collective agreements to cover all workers, especially in high-risk, low-wage sectors and involving social partners in multistakeholder field inspections;
- 6.5. significantly increase resources (funding and staff) for labour inspectorates to meet ILO’s minimum benchmarks, enable risk-based inspections and ensure effective, dissuasive sanctions for breaches of labour legislation;
- 6.6. harmonise controls and strengthen cross-border collaboration, including with the European Labour Authority and tax authorities, invoking, where appropriate, the Protocol amending the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters (CETS No. 208);
- 6.7. ensure minimum living wage and wage parity for all workers in host countries, banning zero-hours contracts, and curb gender pay gap;
- 6.8. promote integrated, multistakeholder co-operation by replicating, where applicable, Nordic models of cross-agency (labour, migration, police, tax) centres for intelligence sharing, data exchange, risk analysis and enforcement, focusing on high-risk and cross-border cases;
- 6.9. mandate compulsory licensing and certification of temporary employment agencies, set up risk evaluation systems, ensure sanctions for non-compliance and ban agencies that operate as shell companies or without real economic activity in the country;
- 6.10. enhance regulation and accountability for subcontracting by mandating joint liability across the subcontracting chain, imposing strict limits on subcontracting levels and ensuring equal conditions, wages and access to remedies for all workers, taking inspiration from Swiss and Belgian enforcement models;
- 6.11. as appropriate, ensure effective enforcement of relevant EU directives, including for third-country nationals and workers recruited through temporary employment agencies;
- 6.12. provide workers, especially migrant and posted workers, with accessible, multilingual information on their rights and contact points for legal aid, including through trade unions;
- 6.13. combat false self-employment and informal employment by establishing clear criteria to classify workers as employees, extending protections to platform workers, increasing supervision of sectors known for bogus self-employment and using targeted amnesties and simplified registration for regularisation purposes;
- 6.14. advance and mainstream corporate social responsibility by enforcing due diligence in supply chains, which requires companies to identify, audit and tackle the risks of social dumping. Public authorities and private firms should refuse to work with contractors or suppliers engaged in exploitative practices;
- 6.15. consider adopting positive measures and incentives that reward virtuous enterprises for embracing high social norms for their workers;
- 6.16. support the negotiations towards an international legally binding instrument based on the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and implement the Guiding Principles as called for by Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on human rights and business.

7. In light of the above recommendations, the Assembly calls on national parliaments to review and enhance, where necessary, national legislation to bring it in line with the country's international commitments aimed at combating social dumping and labour exploitation. It encourages national parliaments to follow the implementation of practical measures against social dumping and labour exploitation by government and relevant public agencies.