



**10** REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES



**Reduce inequality within  
and among countries**



## EU internal action

### Overview and challenges

Tackling the various forms of inequalities is an essential part of the fight against poverty, improving social cohesion and fulfilling human rights. Delivering on SDG 10 in an EU context requires addressing inequalities within countries, inequalities between countries, and migration and social inclusion.

The trends on inequalities between EU countries show a continued long-term convergence of Member States in terms of GDP and income. EU citizens living in northern and western European countries had the highest gross disposable income per capita, whereas eastern and southern EU countries had the lowest. At regional level, in spite of this upward growth path, a number of EU regions grows at a slower pace than the EU average. An increasing number of EU regions, primarily in southern Member States but also in North Western Europe, are currently in or at risk of falling into a “development trap”.<sup>(24)</sup>

Income inequalities within countries had been decreasing in the EU between 2015 and 2019, before rising again in 2020. For example, the income received by the 20% of the population with the highest income was almost five times higher than that

received by the 20% of the population with the lowest income. In a majority of Member States, there are important regional asymmetries in particular with regard to access to basic public services, labour market, competitiveness and productivity. These disparities are further accentuated in rural areas where access to basic public services remains generally a challenge.

Whereas the gap between the risk of poverty in urban and rural areas has narrowed in the EU in recent years, rural areas tend to be at higher risk of poverty due to out-migration, and limited access to services, weaker labour markets and educational opportunities.

EU-level developments in the area of SDG 10 since 2015 reveal a mixed but, on average, moderately favourable picture. Inequalities had been decreasing in the pre-pandemic years. Thanks to a prompt policy response, overall income inequalities and the risk of poverty or social exclusion remained broadly stable between 2019 and 2020 in most Member States.

However, the mid-term effects of the pandemic on poverty and inequality remain uncertain. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic affected different population groups and regions unevenly<sup>(25)</sup>, revealing the underlying vulnerabilities and

<sup>(24)</sup> See Cohesion in Europe towards 2050: Eighth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion; Publications Office of the European Union, 2022.

<sup>(25)</sup> The coronavirus pandemic and fundamental rights: A year in review | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (europa.eu)

# 2030 targets and trends at EU level

## Target and policy reference

Reinforce economic, social and territorial cohesion by redressing the main regional imbalances in the Union and address the problems of disadvantaged areas, with particular reference to rural areas

[2021-2027 Cohesion Policy](#)

Narrow territorial and social disparities between regions in the EU and promote the socioeconomic inclusion of marginalised communities, low-income households, and disadvantaged groups

[2021-2027 Cohesion Policy](#)

## Trends

The gap in the risk of poverty or social exclusion rate between cities and rural areas at EU level narrowed between 2015 (when it was 3.1%), and 2021 (0.6%).

The coefficient of variation in gross household disposable income between Member States decreased by 3.8% between 2015 and 2020 (and by 11.3% since 2005). However, a clear north–south and west–east divide is evident when looking at the geographical distribution of GDP per capita and household income in the EU in 2020 (with EU citizens living in northern and western countries having the highest gross disposable income per capita).

More details on indicators and trends for SDG 10 can be found in the statistical and analytical annex and Eurostat’s monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs.

inequalities. Women who, in 2021 still earned on average 12.7% less than men, continue to shoulder the bulk of care responsibilities in the household and struggle to enter and remain in the labour market, with consequences also on their pensions. Migrants’ participation in the labour market was also disproportionately affected.

The recent energy and food price rises hit the poorest households the hardest. The increases in fossil fuel, electricity and commodity prices, already noticeable in the second half of 2021, have been further aggravated by the invasion of Ukraine. They weigh particularly on the most vulnerable households, who have to spend a higher share of their disposable income on basic goods such as energy and food. Similarly, the twin transitions will have to be managed well to prevent rising inequality.

In parallel, the EU witnessed a substantial increase in migration into the EU in the pre-pandemic years, while the Ukrainian war has led to a new wave of displaced persons to the EU, in particular women and children. Successful integration of migrants is essential for future well-being, prosperity and cohesion in the EU and can only be achieved in cooperation between the European Commission, the Member States and a range of relevant stakeholders.

## Key initiatives

Ensuring cohesion between EU Member States and reducing inequalities such as in economic performance, income and

living standards, is one of the central objectives of the European Union.

The EU has a wide range of policies in place addressing different aspects of SDG 10. The EU also has several mechanisms that seek to promote economic and social convergence among and within Member States. The [European Semester](#) provides a framework for coordination of economic and employment policies across the European Union. The [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) puts forward a holistic approach for upward social convergence among Member States towards better working and living conditions. Established in 2017, the Pillar sets out 20 key principles to support fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems and to tackle inequalities. It serves as a new ‘social rulebook’ that ensures solidarity between generations and creates opportunities for all. The European Pillar of Social Rights action plan turns the principles into concrete actions to benefit citizens.

For example, the [European Child Guarantee](#), adopted in June 2021, helps to ensure that in Europe every child in need has equal access to quality early childhood education and care, education, healthcare, housing and nutrition.

The Commission has also stepped up its efforts to help EU countries reduce inequalities from the outset, by publishing a Communication on ‘Better assessing the distributional impact of Member States’ policies’ and a Communication on ‘Harnessing Talent in EU’s regions’, addressing territorial disparities caused by the demographic transition.

The [Just Transition Mechanism](#) supports those regions that will be most affected by the transition to a climate-neutral society.

The EU is engaged in achieving a [Union of equality](#). In line with this, the Commission adopted a series of strategies, namely the [Gender Equality Strategy](#), the [LGBTIQ Equality Strategy](#), the EU anti-racism Action plan, the [EU Roma Strategic Framework](#) and the [Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#). These strategies are aimed at combatting [racism](#), promoting [Roma](#) equality, inclusion and participation, promoting [gender](#) and [LGBTIQ equality](#), and guaranteeing the rights of [persons with disability](#). The Commission also adopted the [EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish life](#) setting out series of measures to prevent and combat all forms of antisemitism. The Commission has also proposed EU legislation to strengthen the independence, the resources and powers of equality bodies, the national bodies which assist victims of discrimination and promote equality <sup>(26)</sup>.

Migrants and asylum seekers often constitute a particularly vulnerable group. To address this issue, the [New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#), adopted in September 2020, aims to create faster migration processes and stronger governance of migration and border policies. The [Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion \(2021 to 2027\)](#) sets out actions that support migrants' inclusion in education and employment, as well as access to health services and affordable housing. The [EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals](#) assists refugees, migrants and citizens of non-EU countries in profiling their skills and work qualifications to reception, employment and education services.

The Temporary Protection Directive, which was adopted following the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, was triggered for the first time by the Council in response to the unprecedented Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 to offer quick and effective assistance to people fleeing the war in Ukraine. The Temporary Protection Directive defines the decision-making procedure needed to trigger, extend or end temporary protection, but also lists the rights for beneficiaries of temporary protection (e.g. residence permit, social welfare, medical care, education).

Additionally, in May 2022, under the lead of the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, the EU put in place the Common Anti-trafficking Plan to raise awareness among the displaced people and prevent trafficking in human beings and support potential victims among those fleeing the war in Ukraine.

## Selected enablers

Financial resources, reforms and investments as well as science and innovation are strong means to implement the SDGs in the EU.

With EUR 392 billion for 2021-2027, and representing almost a third of the total EU budget, [Cohesion Policy funds](#) specifically target at strengthening sustainable economic growth and boosting social and territorial convergence.

Cohesion Policy also reinforces cooperation among Member States and between Member States and third countries through cross border, inter-regional and transnational cooperation actions including the contribution to EU macro-regional strategies.

The [European Regional Development Fund \(ERDF\)](#), with a budget of EUR 214 billion, targets in particular less developed regions, intended to help to redress the main regional imbalances in the Union.

The [European Social Fund Plus \(ESF+\)](#) is a key financial instrument as part of the [Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027](#) for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights and helping reduce inequalities. With a budget of EUR 99.3 billion (2021-2027), the ESF+ funds many thousands of projects to help people in difficulties and those from disadvantaged groups to get skills, jobs and equal opportunities. For example, the [Diversity Promotion project](#), implemented by Latvia's Society Integration Foundation, is educating thousands about the benefits of a diverse workplace and an inclusive society, with a series of nationwide activities.

The [Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived \(FEAD\)](#) may support asylum seekers by providing them with immediate relief and social assistance. For example, the [Frostschutzengel 2.0](#) (Guardian angel against freezing) project provides multilingual health and social counselling to homeless German and EU mobile citizens in Berlin.

Integration within the EU is funded by several EU funds, mainly by the [Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund \(AMIF\)](#) and the [European Social Fund Plus \(ESF+\)](#), but several aspects are covered by other funds and programmes ([European Regional Development Fund \(ERDF\)](#); [European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development \(EAFRD\)](#); [European Maritime and Fisheries Fund \(EMFF\)](#); [Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme \(CERV\)](#); [Erasmus+](#); [European Solidarity Corps \(ESC\)](#)). These funds are supporting integration measures tailored to the needs of third-country nationals, including education, effective and inclusive employment, skill-building, social inclusion, civil society organisations and other aspects of an inclusive and diverse society.

<sup>(26)</sup> COM/2022/688 final and COM/2022/689 final of 7 December 2022



The Recovery and Resilience Facility contributes to the efforts to reduce inequality through several of its six pillars, chiefly social and territorial cohesion, but also health and economic, social and institutional resilience, policies for next generation and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. For example, in the context of the recovery and resilience plans, Croatia is introducing reform and investment to provide social mentoring to individuals at risk or already in a marginalised position in society. These measures will roll out a new individualised mentoring service at all social welfare centres in Croatia. This new service will focus on the integration of beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum benefit, persons with disabilities, victims of violence, homeless people, migrants, Roma, young people departing the social welfare system, persons serving prison sentences and members of other socially vulnerable groups. The aim is to reach and benefit at least 30 000 users.

Research and innovation actions in Horizon Europe are supporting EU policy priorities in the field of reducing inequalities. For example, the [ESSPIN](#) project aims to investigate policy responses to social, economic and spatial inequalities arising in the EU in the context of emerging mega trends (such as climate change, urbanisation, energy, digital disruption and economic growth) and the challenges they bring. The [Exit Project](#) is fostering participatory multi-stakeholder processes across regions that are left behind and how inhabitants, institutions and organisations in these areas perceive, experience and counteract inequalities.

Another example is the flagship project on ‘Welcoming and integration of Third Country Nationals in Member States’ supported by the Technical Support Instrument under the call for 2022. The project aims to enhance the socio-economic integration of people fleeing the war in Ukraine and is centred

on two axes: (i) facilitating access to the labour market through measures that support the recognition of certificates and diplomas issued, in accordance with Ukrainian laws and regulations; and (ii) facilitating social inclusion by improving the functioning of the existing integration centres for foreigners. Overall, the project is expected to result in building capacity for Polish authorities to allow those fleeing the war and requesting temporary protection in Poland to enjoy swift access to procedures and basic services such as accommodation, education and healthcare, and to gain access to jobs.

## Stakeholder engagement

As a flagship initiative of the [European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#), an Expert Group called 'Disability Platform' was established in October 2021. The group's aims are to: (i) bring together the focal points of the national UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), organisations of persons with disabilities and the Commission; and (ii) function as a forum to exchange views on the UN's assessments of Member States' implementation of the UNCRPD. As a party to the UNCRPD, the European Commission meets regularly in a [Conference of States Parties \(COSP\)](#) to consider any matter regarding the implementation of the Convention (Art. 40 UNCRPD). The Commission has published a report on the implementation of the UNCRPD by the EU in April 2023 and it organises an annual conference for the [European Day for Persons with Disabilities](#), gathering together organisations of persons with disabilities as well as high-level EU institution representatives.

The Commission also organises the [Access City Award](#), which is an award recognising cities that have worked to become more accessible. It promotes equal access to urban life for people with disabilities and allows local authorities to promote and share their best practices.

The New European Bauhaus Prize is another Commission award which tackles inequalities by supporting sustainable

projects that 'prioritise people and places that need it the most' and address the urgent needs of people and inequalities faced by territories, communities and individuals. The prize recognises and celebrates existing beautiful, sustainable and inclusive projects and initiatives, and supports the younger generation to further develop emerging concepts and ideas.

To address gender inequality in research and higher education, the [EU Award for Gender Equality Champions](#) recognises and celebrates the outstanding results achieved in the implementation of gender equality by academic and research organisations.

EU integration efforts are supported by partnerships with all those involved: migrants, host communities, social and economic partners, civil society and the private sector. Established networks/partnerships include: the [European Integration Network](#); the [Expert Group on the views of migrants](#); the [Committee of the Regions partnership on the Integration of Migrants](#); the annual [European Migration Forum](#).

## Multi-level approach

SDG delivery implies ambitious action at all levels. For example, Spain adopted a reform to its labour market in December 2021 with the aim to put an end to precariousness and temporary employment in the country. Among others, the reform reinforces fixed-term contracts and reduces the time required to obtain the status of permanent worker.

The region of Piedmont in Italy is focusing on social innovation through its We.Care strategy. People and their network of relations, not social services, are at the centre of the strategy. It shifts focus from providing assistance to helping people contribute to the growth of the region. Actions combine social and labour policies and cover social services, local governance, collaboration between public and private bodies, development of entrepreneurial projects with social benefits, and corporate welfare. The final goal is to match social and labour policies with economic development.

# EU external action

## Global trends

Progress against the multidimensional goal of reducing inequalities has been uneven and put at risk by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially where social security systems and safety nets are weaker. Reduced labour income and remittances in a context of increased food prices and out-of-pocket expenses for healthcare hit low-income households hardest, while top wealth increased sharply (see [World Inequality Report 2022](#)). The impact of the war in Ukraine increasingly aggravates the

inequality gap both between and within countries. The effects are likely to disproportionately affect poorer countries, notably those dependent on imports of food and oil.

According to the [UN SDG 2022 report](#), the world is currently enduring the highest number of conflicts since 1947. Approximately 25 % of the world population is living in conflict-affected countries, with the number of refugees at a record high in 2021, 1 in 3 children living outside their countries of birth being child refugees, and forced displacement



**The COVID-19 pandemic** has exacerbated income and labour market inequalities worldwide and disproportionately affected women and vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as young people and children.

continuing to grow. The situation has been exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, which added 6.5 million refugees to the 100 million people forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict or generalised violence (May 2022), an increase of 17.6 million people compared to end-2020 (see [2022 Global Peace Index](#)).

The number of migrants worldwide continues to grow, from an estimated 272 million in 2019 to an estimated 281 million in 2020, and has increased more in Europe and Asia than in other regions. Migration management remains a priority for the EU, in line with SDG10 which seeks to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people.

### Internal/external coherence including policy coherence for development

Reducing inequality is both an internal and external priority for the EU. Inequality is an obstacle to sustainable economic growth and to reducing poverty, and SDG 10 targets are thus highly interlinked with targets for poverty and growth (SDGs 1, 8 and 9), gender equality and inclusion (SDG 5), environmental sustainability (SDGs 6, 7, 11-15), health, nutrition and education (SDGs 2, 3 and 4), and conflict and access to justice (SDG 16).

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated income and labour market inequalities worldwide and disproportionately affected women and vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as young people and children, persons with disabilities, older persons, persons with a minority racial or ethnic background, migrant workers and workers in the informal economy. The EU approach to promoting decent work worldwide (see SDG 8) supports the universal concept of decent work as developed by the ILO, paying particular attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, thus supporting the reduction of poverty, social exclusion, and inequality through improving working conditions and living standards. This is also translated into sector strategies such as the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles, which focuses on the protection of human rights, including labour rights and child labour, gender inequality and on promoting due diligence across supply chains in the textile sector.

In its international partnerships, the EU promotes the model it stands for, based on sustainability, focus on people and values, in order to tackle these global challenges and create shared prosperity. For example, the EU has been contributing to strengthening bilateral dialogues on migration and mobility and is starting new actions on decent employment, social protection and product safety for consumer protection at regional and national level.

On migration, the proposed Pact on Migration and Asylum of September 2020 links the internal and external aspects of the European approach to migration by balancing collective responsibility and solidarity. Enhancing the EU's internal processes are key parts of the Pact. More efficient and faster procedures, along with ensuring well-managed external borders and effective solidarity between the EU Member States, are important elements in making asylum and migration systems predictable and reliable. Regarding external aspects, the Pact emphasises that the EU promotes tailor-made and mutually beneficial partnerships with other countries. These partnerships address shared challenges such as migrant smuggling, managing legal pathways and tackling the effective implementation of readmission agreements and arrangements.

## EU and Member States external financial support for SDG implementation and results

In 2021, EU institutions reported to the OECD commitments for EUR 8.5 billion in projects contributing to SDG 10, making it one of the largest recipients of EU development assistance along with SDGs 1 and 8. The main share of the EU contribution is accounted for by projects that target SDG 10 as a significant SDG. The main contributions come from projects targeting SDGs 1, 4, 8 and 17. Projects marked as contributing to SDG 10 as the main objective also contribute to other interlinked SDGs, with a strong focus on SDGs 1, 5,

8 and 16. When taking into account also other official flows, private funds mobilized through public intervention and support to international public goods, the Total Official Support to Sustainable Development (TOSSD) of the EU to SDG 10 amounted to EUR 10.9 billion in 2021. In terms of selected results of assistance <sup>(27)</sup>, from 2018 to 2021 more than 20 million migrants, forcibly displaced people or individuals from host communities were protected or assisted using EU support.

Collectively, the EU and those Member States that reported on SDGs to the OECD in 2021, contributed EUR 21 billion to SDG 10. EU and Member State flows to SDG 10 in 2021 predominantly focused on projects in Africa (36%) and Asia (18%). Support to SDG 10 also has a strong global component (31%).

## Main policy orientations and initiatives for external engagement

The reduction of inequality is a main priority of the EU's development policy, enshrined in EU treaties and the 2017 European Consensus on Development. It is rooted in the EU's commitments to promoting and protecting human rights ([Council conclusions on addressing inequality in partner countries](#), 2019). The rights-based approach (RBA), and the EU Human Rights Dialogues with partner countries are central to addressing discrimination, promoting equal opportunities for all and improving inclusion, particularly of women, including through the use of digital technologies.

The [EU's approach](#) to reducing inequality reflects its complexity. In that context, the EU has developed an innovative inequality marker to enable better understanding, tracking and benchmarking the impact of actions on inequalities and to capture appropriately the multidimensionality of inequality. EU interventions will seek to reinforce their inequality-reducing effect and approach, focusing on benefits for the bottom 40% (poorest) or other socio-economically disadvantaged individuals, households or groups.

Equality initiatives in various regions and countries, notably with Team Europe, aim to nurture a strategic culture of cooperation around transformative actions that can have real inequality-reduction impact in partner countries.

The Commission recognises that social protection is an important policy tool for reducing inequalities, including inequality of opportunity. Through its geographic and thematic programmes on social protection, the Commission works with partner countries to help strengthen national social protection systems. Its thematic programme on Improving synergies between social protection and public finance management aims to demonstrate the impact of social protection on economic growth, encourage domestic resource mobilisation and help

<sup>(27)</sup> For the methodology on results, see the same section under SDG 2.



build gender-sensitive and shock-responsive social protection systems. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme focused on expanding coverage to large segments of the working population engaged in the informal economy.

With regard to migration and forced displacement, the [EU and Member States developed a comprehensive and balanced approach](#) to facilitate legal migration, protect migrants and refugees, prevent irregular and unsafe migration and help partner countries address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement. The [proposed EU Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) aims to reduce unsafe and irregular routes and promote sustainable and safe legal pathways for those in need of protection ([EU strategy on voluntary return and reintegration 2021](#)).

This is exemplified through the Team Europe Initiatives for the [Central Mediterranean](#) and the [Western Mediterranean](#) migration routes, which will offer support in the areas of legal migration and mobility, protection and asylum, prevention of irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, return, readmission and reintegration, and migration and development. The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) for 2021-2027 will support Member States' actions in this area, in a way that is complementary to the support provided to partner countries through the Global Europe instrument.

## Examples of EU actions (with a focus on Global Gateway and Team Europe initiatives)

In relation to SDG 10, Equality Initiatives, with inequality as their principal objective, include a Regional Team Europe initiative (TEI) in Latin America for inclusive and equal societies and country TEIs, such as in Kenya (human-centred digitalisation, also supporting the roll-out of the Global Gateway strategy), South Africa (employment in digital and green economy areas), Bangladesh (decent work), Burkina Faso (territorial inequalities) and Paraguay (digital, gender and social protection). The TEI in Paraguay aims to strengthen interlinkages between SDG10 and SDGs 1, 4 and 5 by supporting the digitalisation of the social protection system and education sector, and the promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination.

The Regional Team Europe Initiative on Afghan displacement responded to the Afghan regional displacement crisis covering Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Central Asian countries. A comprehensive approach was adopted, supporting strengthened policy dialogue, protection and sustainable reintegration for Afghans on the move in host countries, provision of basic services, access to health and education, the fight against smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings, and labour migration and mobility.

In the Guatemala-Mexico corridor and the Madagascar, Sri Lanka and Pakistan-Arab States corridors, [Global Action to Improve the Recruitment Framework of Labour Migration \(ILO-EU 2017- 2021\)](#) aimed to prevent and reduce abusive and fraudulent migrant recruitment practices and increase the protection of migrant workers.

The European Union Global Diaspora Facility ([EUDIF](#)) (2019-2023) is the first EU-funded project to take a global approach to consolidate efforts on diaspora engagement for development. Through the facility, all actors in the diaspora-development ecosystem, such as diaspora organisations, partner countries, and EU Member States, receive support to engage and collaborate more effectively with each other.

In Georgia, the Strengthening Development Impact of Migration in Georgia (STREAMinG) project aims to unlock the positive impact of human mobility for the country's development processes. This is to be achieved by helping Georgian partners implement the 2021-2030 migration strategy and its 2022 and 2023 action plans, with a particular focus on mainstreaming the concept of migration and development into all sectoral areas, by ensuring achievement of SDGs and in line with the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.

EU assistance for refugees in Türkiye aims at addressing the challenges of leaving no one behind and providing a decent life to refugees, focusing on the inclusion of refugees in planning for the sustainable development goals, helping refugees and host communities to cope, and create better conditions for their sustainable integration and social cohesion. In addition, the EU-funded [Complementary Emergency Social Safety Net](#) (EUR 245 million) provides monthly cash assistance to the most vulnerable refugees in Türkiye (i.e., single parents, elderly headed families and households with one or more persons with disabilities) so they can meet their basic needs.

Actions by the EU and its Member States are mutually reinforcing and coordinated to ensure complementarity and impact in support of the SDGs. In addition to acting together with the EU through joint programming and Team Europe Initiatives, EU Member States carry out their own projects in support of the 2030 Agenda (including SDG 10). An example of is set out below for illustrative purposes.

To combat the feeling of exclusion among young people and improve their prospects in the precarious security situation of the Diffa region in Niger, France is promoting social cohesion, income creation and socio-professional integration by supporting job and income-creating activities for some 10 500 young people, socio-educational, cultural and sports activities for personal and collective fulfilment and systems for training, mediation and integration and employment adapted to the local context.

# Looking ahead

In the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe, there was broad support for a stronger EU economy, social justice and jobs, stressing the importance of ensuring full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, including its relevant headline targets for 2030, at EU, national, regional and local level in the areas of 'equal opportunities and access to the labour market'. EU citizens emphasised in particular the need to reduce inequalities both between EU territories and within them.

In that respect, the Union of equality strategies will be fully implemented, building on the progress achieved already. <sup>(28)</sup> The Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2020 contains several flagship initiatives such as the Disability Employment Package that was launched in 2022 as an initiative to promote equality on the labour market and beyond. Another flagship initiative is the European Disability Card to promote free movement of persons with disabilities and allow for mutual recognition of the disability status and grant access to preferential conditions in services for short stays in other Member States. Another important flagship is the resource centre 'AccessibleEU' to facilitate implementation of EU law in the area of accessibility and capacity in accessibility expertise. These flagships will be fully implemented in the coming years. The EU also intends to strengthen its efforts in application, enforcement and awareness raising on EU rights on work-life balance, including parental leave.

Additional measures will also be considered to support regions in development traps experiencing persistent low growth, together with further work to make industry sustainable, digital and resilient, and to address dependencies. This work will notably seek to address the demographic transition – notably on ageing and depopulation – and consider ways to address employment and labour shortages reflecting the geopolitical context.

On migration, plans are under way for EU-wide awareness-raising campaigns, and for the launch of an EU skills profile tool for third country nationals.

Globally, the Commission will actively join partners in efforts to build nationally appropriate social protection floors, with the aim of achieving universal social protection. The EU will support the implementation strategy of the Global Accelerator on Jobs

and Social Protection for Just Transitions. Through a new thematic programme on universal social protection 2030, the EU will also support the Convergence Initiative towards more inclusive and interoperable social protection information systems.

The EU will continue to take determined actions to accelerate the implementation of SDG 10 globally, including through the roll-out of a range of multiannual indicative programmes with partner countries where inequalities and/or migration are a shared priority. A tangible contribution to SDG 10 (and other interlinked SDGs) will be the deployment of the Global Gateway strategy at regional and national level, to be undertaken in a Team Europe approach, including to support investments and interventions that help create decent jobs and foster inclusive growth by including social protection measures. The Commission will support a new regional Team Europe Initiative on Social Protection in Sub-Saharan Africa. Led by several Member States, the new TEI will aim to address strategic and political gaps in Sub-Saharan Africa, including the severe underinvestment in social protection, large coverage gaps and weak administrative structures.



<sup>(28)</sup> The Commission regularly reports on progress achieved with the strategies. Key initiatives already adopted include: (i) a proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms COM/2021/93 final (political agreement reached on 15 December 2022); (ii) a proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence COM/2022/105 final; (iii) proposals to strengthen the role and independence of equality bodies COM/2022/688 final.