

EU Quality Jobs Roadmap

A view from the employment and recruitment industry on the value of diverse forms of work to deliver the work we want

The world of work is subject to fundamental shifts and changes in the context of the current megatrends, such as digitalisation and the use of artificial intelligence, the new skills and qualifications required because of the digital and green transitions and the value of diverse forms of work, which responds to changing preferences of workers and economic needs of companies. The World Employment Confederation-Europe strongly believes that policy responses to economic challenges should be based on quality jobs as quality jobs contribute to higher economic growth, less informality and more inclusive labour markets. Therefore, the employment and recruitment industry is looking forward to the Quality Jobs Roadmap announced by the European Commission to be presented in 2025.

Brussels 10 March 2025

Key messages

- Quality jobs based on appropriate regulation, fair working conditions, access to training, active labour market policies, public-private partnerships, and social and organisational elements are adequate and needed in response to current and future labour market challenges.
- Diverse forms of work are a key response to megatrends in the world of work, such as digitalisation and the rise of artificial intelligence, changing skills needs and shifting expectations from workers and companies. Promoting quality jobs should always be linked to enabling diverse forms of work to address labour market challenges and trends adequately.
- Temporary agency work and work opportunities offered by the employment and recruitment industry provide quality jobs. Agency work is a comprehensively and well-regulated form of work that ensures the adequate protection of workers; the agency work industry offers a flexible form of work that meets workers' social, physical and personal needs. Job quality in the agency work sector is further enhanced by access to training, social innovation and enhances productivity. The employment and recruitment industry acts as a partner of public employment services in the context of active labour market policies and through public-private partnerships. Therefore, HR services and agency work offer [The Work We Want](#) by responding to major challenges in modern labour markets and the world of work.

1. Quality jobs in the European policy debates and the Quality Jobs Roadmap

- Promoting quality jobs has been a long-standing priority of the EU Employment and Social Agenda. It is embedded in the Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights and the EU Employment Guidelines.

- Job quality is a multi-dimensional concept covering different characteristics. These include labour contracts, working conditions, and psychological, social, and organisational aspects. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions in Europe (Eurofound) measures job quality in its European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS 2015) in seven dimensions, namely the physical environment, social environment, work intensity, skills and discretion, working time quality, prospects and earnings. Comparably, the OECD underlines that with such a large amount of time spent at work, job quality plays a vital role in our overall quality of life. Fair wages, benefits, and good working conditions enhance worker well-being while also improving productivity and innovation. Quality jobs also reduce inequality, foster social cohesion, and prioritise health and safety.
- Based on the indicators mentioned, the main elements of a quality job largely depend on the needs of people and the stage in their professional career. A student getting first work experience will likely have different expectations from quality jobs compared to young parents who combine professional and family life with highly qualified workers. Similarly, part-time work can be an important opportunity for some workers, such as young parents or students, while it may lead to under-employment for others. Therefore, a balanced and needs-based approach is required.
- The European Commission's political guidelines 2024-2029 announced a Quality Jobs Roadmap to be developed in cooperation with social partners. The employment and recruitment industry believes that the roadmap must value the role of diverse forms of work and include an essential dimension of social dialogue and collective bargaining. A quality jobs roadmap needs to provide an adequate policy response to current megatrends in the world of work, such as digitalisation and the rise of artificial intelligence, skills and labour shortages and evolving expectations about work. These are the drivers reshaping the world of work that the World Employment Confederation identified in its research with FT Longitude, "[The Work We Want](#)", based on a large-scale survey of multinational companies worldwide.

2. Diverse forms of work and appropriate regulation are an important basis for quality jobs

- Labour markets and economies are undergoing fundamental transformations at this stage. These shifts are driven by the increasing impact of digitalisation and AI on the world of work, skills and the missing workforce and changing expectations of workers including a call for more flexible forms of work.
- Diverse forms of work, including part-time work, fixed-term contracts, platform work, freelancing and Employer of Record (EOR) and agency work, are essential elements of the modern labour market, and policymakers at the international level increasingly recognise the existence and value of these forms of work. In our The Work We Want project, 92% of senior executives say they need a more flexible workforce in the next two years.
- Agency work is one of these diverse forms of work, which has existed for decades in Europe and provides quality employment. A central characteristic of agency work is its triangular work relationship and the fact that it is comprehensively regulated in Europe based on a mix of statutory regulation, collective labour agreements, and instruments of self-regulation.

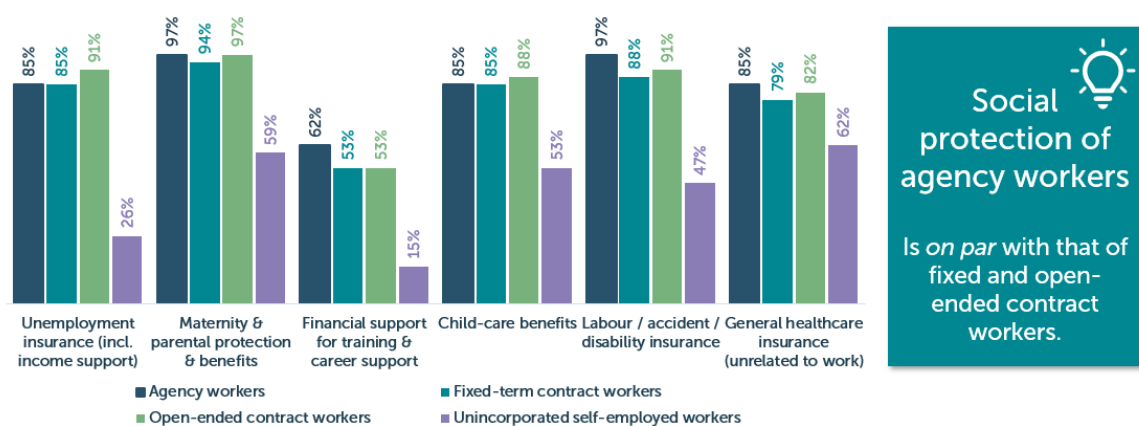
- At the EU level, the Directive on Temporary Agency Work provides, since its adoption in 2008 and the transposition into national law by 2011, the common European framework for the agency work industry by establishing minimum employment and working conditions for agency workers. The core principles are the explicit recognition of the positive role of the agency work industry in terms of job creation, labour participation and inclusion, the requirement to review restrictions on agency work and to assess whether these are justified, and the principles of equal treatment and equal pay, combined with a commitment to social dialogue-based solutions.
- In addition to the regulation on equal treatment and equal pay, appropriate working conditions as a basis for quality jobs are ensured through compliance with further working conditions regulations, such as regulations on working time, minimum wages and the protection of workers in the context of the cross-border provision of services.

3. Ensuring social protection for all to foster quality jobs

- Appropriate working conditions in the agency work industry and quality jobs are combined with access to social protection for agency workers. Labour market intelligence of the World Employment Confederation shows that access to social protection for agency workers is, in principle, comparable to people employed based on open-ended contracts if looking at the average level of coverage across the different branches of social protection

Access to Various Forms of Social Protection for Different Employment Contracts

Social Protection of Agency Workers



Social protection of agency workers

Is *on par* with that of fixed and open-ended contract workers.

In some countries, challenges may occur for workers employed on short-term contracts and with frequently changing work assignments. Especially for these highly mobile workers, the agency work industry has developed innovative solutions to provide social protection for agency workers. These include bipartite funds offering social protection and benefits for agency work based on portable and transferable rights. These bipartite funds are typically based on collective labour agreements and are

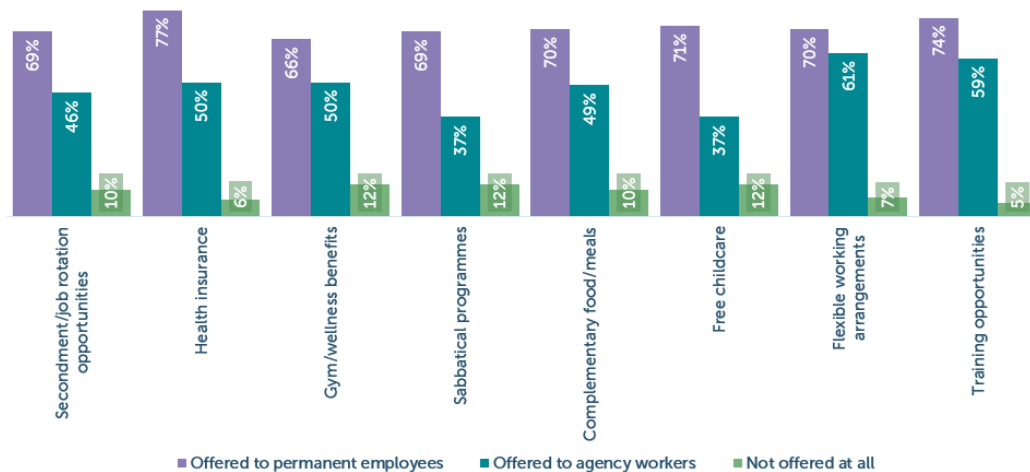
particularly well developed in countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Italy.¹

Governments should be encouraged to establish an enabling environment for collective bargaining and the establishment of bipartite funds, thus giving space for social dialogue while fully respecting the different industrial relations systems and social dialogue models in Europe.

- The World Employment Confederation/FT Longitude strategic research project “The Work We Want” illustrated that between 37 and 61% of the survey multinationals offer fringe benefits to the agency workers in addition to legal requirements. These fringe benefits may include a job rotation scheme, health insurance, access to the gym and wellness benefits, sabbatical programmes, complimentary meals, free childcare, flexible working arrangements and training opportunities.

Multinationals Offer Social Security & Fringe Benefits To Employees

WEC-Longitude “The Work We Want” Research Project



4. Health and safety and social conditions at work

- The protection of health and safety at work and the social conditions is an important element of quality jobs. European and national law provide a relevant and up-to-date framework to ensure the health and safety of agency workers.
- The “EU directive (91/383/EEC) supplementing the measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of workers with a fixed-duration employment relationship or a temporary employment relationship” ensures that fixed-term and temporary agency workers who are exposed to the risk of accidents at work and occupational diseases more than other workers have the same level of safety and health protection at work as other employees. It also provides for a duty on undertakings to give adequate information and training to these particular workers before they take up their responsibilities to protect their safety and health at work.

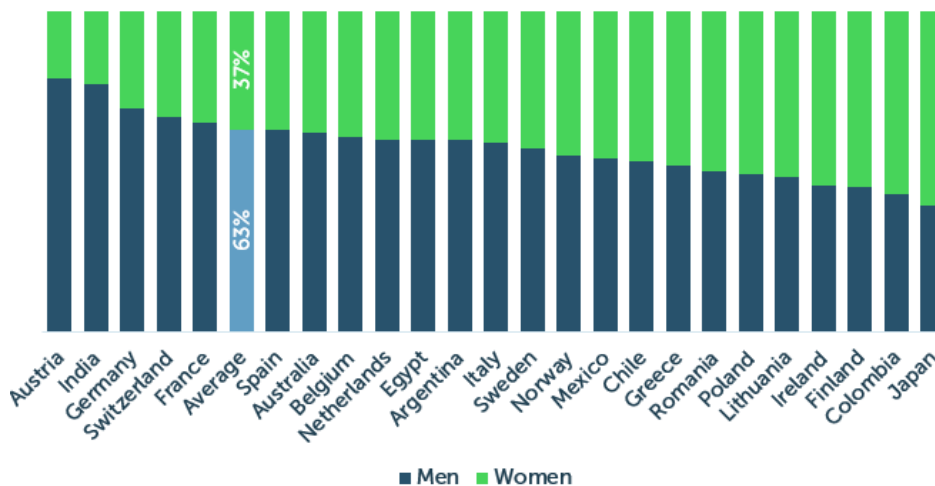
¹ For further information, please consult the WEC-Europe/UNI-Europa report on Social Innovation in the agency work industry, which was conducted in cooperation with CEPS and KU Leuven/HIVA. [CEPS-HIVA Social-innovation-TAW-research-report.pdf](https://www.ceps-hiva.be/sites/default/files/2019-05/CEPS-HIVA_Social-innovation-TAW-research-report.pdf)

- A 2024 WEC survey on agency work regulation illustrated that 85% of all agency workers have access to general healthcare insurance, which is significantly higher than workers employed on direct-fixed term contracts (79%) or unincorporated self-employed workers (62%).
- In some countries, such as Belgium, specific bipartite bodies have been set up to ensure and promote the health and safety of temporary agency workers. The Belgium organisation Prevention & Interim provides health and safety information, training, and campaigns to improve the health and safety of agency workers and their social conditions.

5. Promoting equal opportunities for all

- The agency work sector and the employment and recruitment industry are equal-opportunity employers. Equal opportunities are ensured for women and men, younger people, who are particularly strongly represented among agency workers, and people with disabilities. The most recent WEC labour market intelligence shows that agency workers are predominantly male in many countries, while there is also an important share of women performing agency work.

Agency workers by gender - 2023
(% of all agency workers)



- The agency work industry fully complies with all relevant EU and national laws on equal opportunities and equality of treatment between women and men.
- The principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination are also embedded in the World Employment Confederation Code of Conduct, which includes respecting the principle of non-discrimination.²

² See also: [WEC Code-Conduct.pdf](#)

6. Enabling social dialogue and collective bargaining for quality jobs

- Effective sectoral social dialogue is an essential element in ensuring job quality. The agency work industry is the only form of flexible work organised as a sector with representative sectoral social partners at national, European, and global levels. Social Dialogue is essential to foster the exchange between companies and workers, enable dispute resolution, and engage in collective bargaining.
- The national labour market models and regulations in the EU countries and the respective industrial relations systems strongly determine collective bargaining in the agency work industry. EU and national law establish the principles of equal treatment and equal pay for agency workers. In contrast, national law in several countries allows for settling pay and working conditions through collective bargaining.
- The agency work industry has been pioneering in fostering social innovation by developing new ways of working, learning and social protection. The establishment of social innovation solutions has been particularly prominent in countries such as Italy, Belgium, France and The Netherlands.
- WEC-Europe and UNI-Europa adopted in December 2024 a work programme for 2025 to 2027 with a focus on discussing and addressing significant trends in the world of work, including a focus on appropriate regulation, skills and employment policies and labour mobility. The main instruments of the sectoral social dialogue include policy debates and the exchange of good practices, joint declarations, joint recommendations, and joint projects in the current work programme period, which focuses on capacity building and labour mobility.

About the World Employment Confederation-Europe

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

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

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

Let's talk about work!

Join the conversation

