S&D Conference on Quality Jobs: Europe must protect workers through the digital transition

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Brussels – The Socialists and Democrats (S&D) Group in the European Parliament is stepping up political pressure for an ambitious European framework for quality jobs. At the “Quality Jobs for All” conference in Brussels on 14 October, the impact of artificial intelligence, digital surveillance, precarious employment conditions and growing work-related stress was at the centre of the debate. The conference took place as the European Commission is expected to present its proposal for a Quality Jobs Act in December 2026. Quality Jobs for All is one of the S&D Group’s six flagship political priorities, set out under their Strategic Turn initiative in recent months.

Jobs and the labour markets are changing rapidly, with automation and artificial intelligence able to fundamentally change professions and their inherent activities. At the same time, concerns are growing about job cuts, wage pressure, social exclusion and the loss of workers’ voices at work.

Experts at the conference have warned of concrete risks linked to AI-based labour management. These include higher intensity of work, increased performance pressure, reduced autonomy, opaque employment decisions, surveillance, and risks to workers’ mental and physical health. “The change driven by AI and algorithmic management presents both productivity opportunities and risks to worker autonomy, wellbeing and fundamental rights”, a 2025 study released by the European Parliamentary Research Service warned. The conference’s speakers demanded therefore the involvement of workers and their representatives in the introduction of such systems and have effective rights to information, oversight and appeal, the conference’s speakers demanded.

“For us, S&Ds, technology must serve people. It must improve the quality of work. It must strengthen workers' rights”, S&D vice president Gaby Bischoff said. People in the labour force must not become mere objects of automated decision-making. Algorithms must not be allowed to decide who loses their job.

From the S&D Group’s perspective, a European Quality Jobs Act must therefore secure concrete and enforceable rights. These include:

- effective protection against opaque algorithmic management and harmful forms of digitalisation;
- a genuine right to disconnect, as well as the possibility to telework where duties allow;
- protection of worker’s right to organise, take collective action and bargain collectively;

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- measures to tackle union busting and yellow unions;

- binding rules to address psychosocial risks such as burnout, harassment, depression and work-related stress;

- safe working conditions in heat and other extreme weather conditions.

“We have workers’ backs, now and into the future.”
Under this guiding principle, the conference put the perspectives of workers at the centre.

The S&D Group calls on the European Commission not to stop at voluntary guidelines in the announced legislative framework. What is needed are minimum standards that apply and are be effectively enforced in all Member States. Guidance can be useful, Commission Vice President Roxana Minzatu pointed out, but “rules are how we make sure that these rights remain a reality.”

Gaby Bischoff, S&D vice-president for Social Europe says about AI technology: “*It has to be regulated to benefit humans and improve our living and working conditions. The enormous productivity gains that artificial intelligence and robotics may generate must be redistributed to society as a whole, not only accumulated in the hands of a few Big Tech owners.*”

The “Quality Jobs for All” conference took place at the European Parliament in Brussels on 14 October. The S&D Group called on the European Commission, Member States, employers and social partners to establish binding rules now for safe, fair and quality jobs.

Press contact

James Kemmy

Political Adviser and Interim Press Officer (EMPL/ECON/FISC)

Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament

Phone: +32 2 2830 667

Email: james.kemmy@europarl.europa.eu

Company Contact:

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news aktuell

E. desk@newsaktuell.de
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