



The (EU) Council Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed



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Ensuring access and combatting the non-take-up of social benefits*

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Outline

The European Pillar of Social Rights

Access to social protection for workers and the self-employed in the EU

- Context and indicators
- Main features of the Council recommendation
- Implementation and challenges

Minimum income (Council recommendation) – and addressing non-take-up

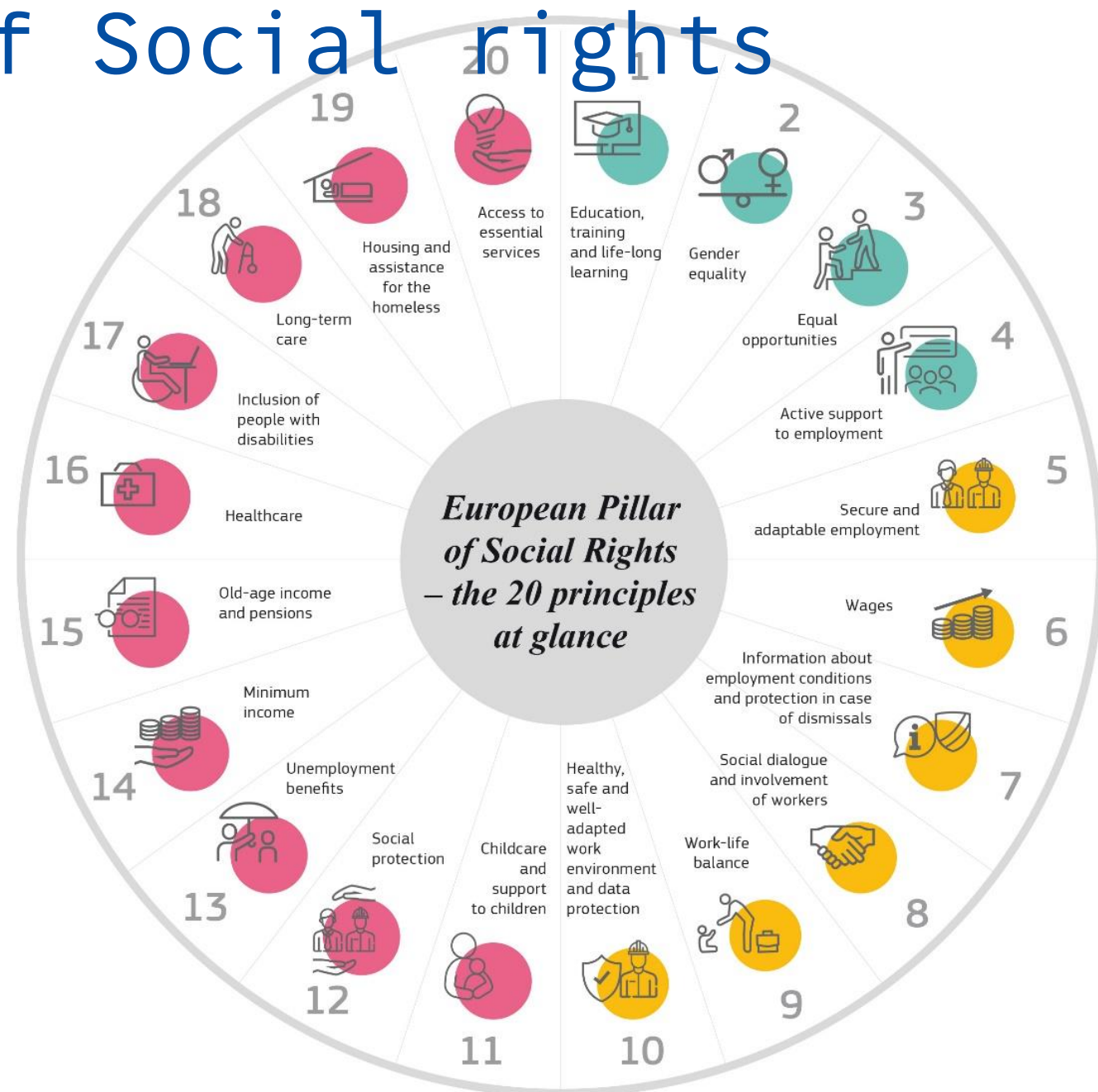
Making social protection and welfare systems fit for the future

European Pillar of Social rights

EPSR endorsed in 2017, with 20 key principles, guiding towards a strong Social Europe

EU to complement national level incl. Action plan adopted in March 2021 + Porto Social Summit and Declaration

A number of EU proposals over 2020-23 to advance social rights



Access to social protection for workers and the self-employed in the EU

Context: some figures

In 2022, almost **40% of the population** in employment in the EU-27 (78 million people) were in non-standard forms of work i.e. with

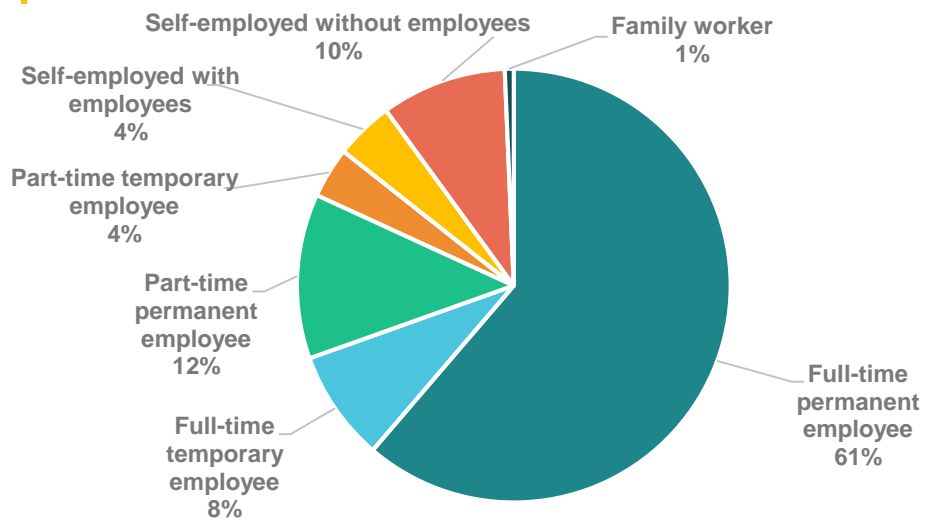
- a temporary contract (24.3 million),
- part-time work (37.1 million)
- and/or self-employed: 27.7 million including 18.9 million solo self-employed (among which around 770,000 'dependent self-employed')

Proportion of people in non-standard forms of work has **been stable over the last decade**; and situation vary greatly between and within groups

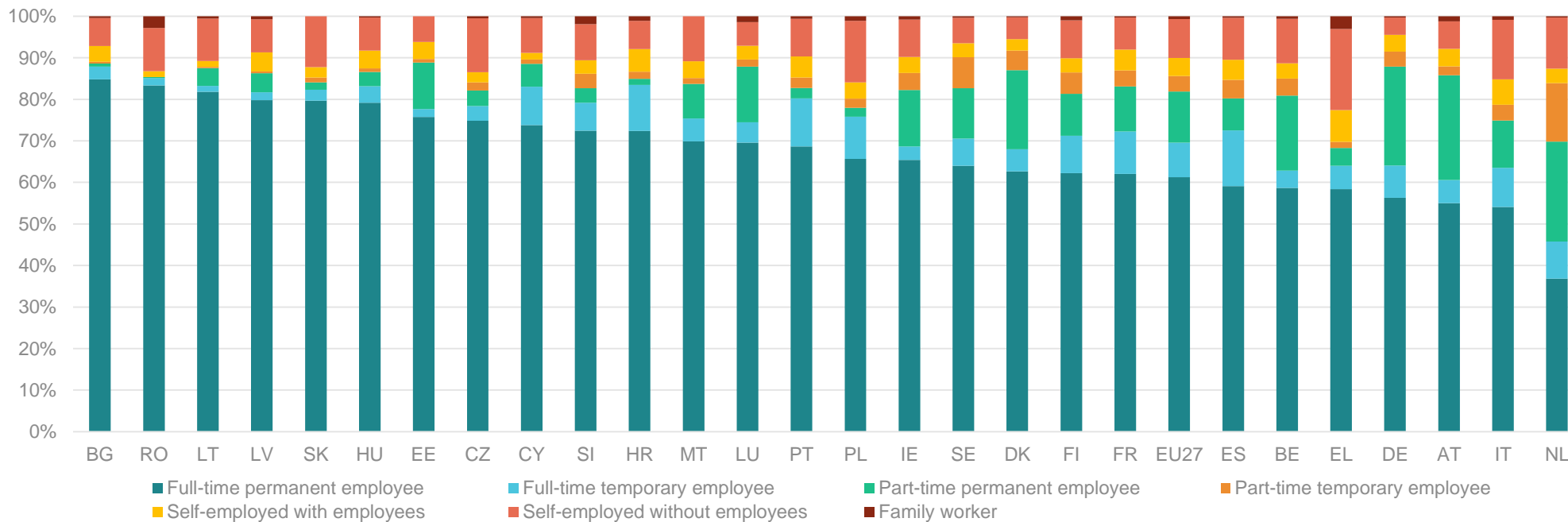
..but some **new forms of employment** (casual workers, portfolio workers, platform workers) have become more prevalent

28 million people in the EU work through **digital labour platforms**

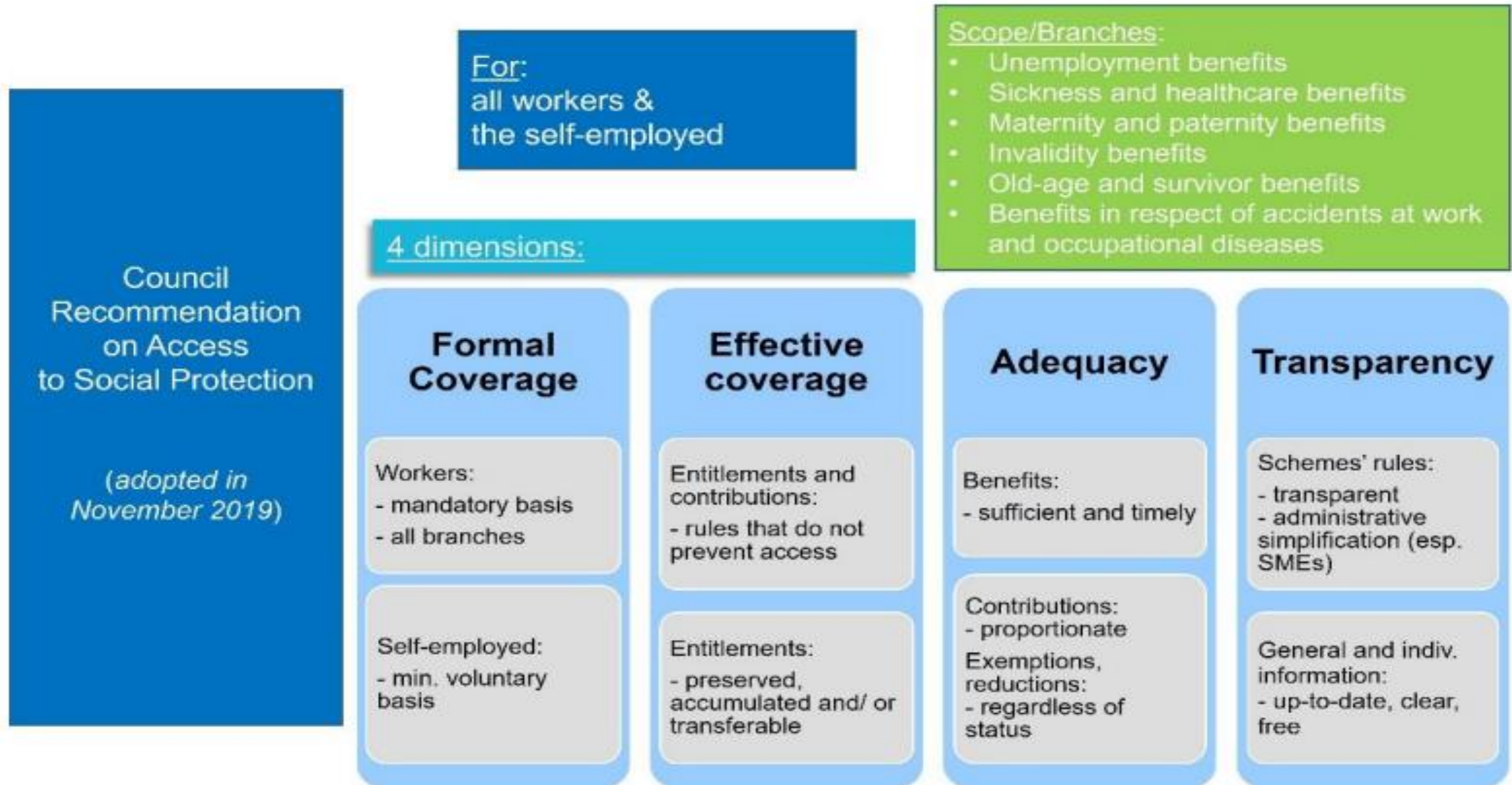
Labour market statuses in EU27 (aged 15-74), 2022 (%)



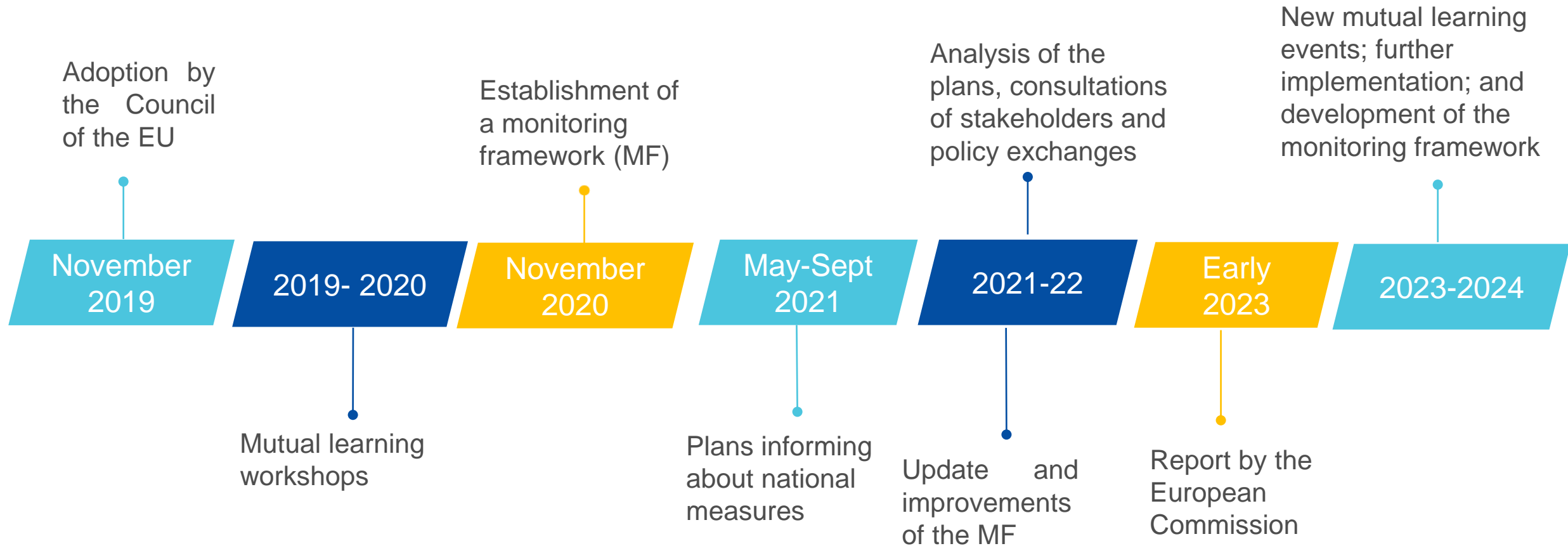
Labour market statuses by Member State (aged 15-74), 2022 (%)



2019 Council Recommendation – main features



Implementation of the Recommendation



Formal coverage: some ambitious reforms

Structural reforms in 15 Member states : already adopted in 5 - while planned in 10

For self-employed:

- plans to providing/improving access to unemployment in **EE, LT, BE** (bridging rights);
- social insurance coverage in **CY**, disability insurance in the **NL**, sickness benefits in **EL**, paternity benefits in **RO**

For non-standard workers:

- access to unemployment benefits for domestic workers in **ES**
- improvement in coverage for workers from cultural sectors in **PT**
- **PL** to extend mandatory insurance and improve coverage of civil law contracts;
- protection by sickness benefits to employees without a scheme in **IE**;
- **RO** planning to ensure formal access to all social security branches for seasonal and day workers as well as platform workers

Effective coverage: some policy measures

Gaps in effective access recognised as a challenge in the national plans – but **few structural reforms**

Majority of measures reported were taken on a **temporary basis in response to the COVID 19 pandemic** (for instance eligibility conditions loosened for UBs, sickness or income support for self-employed)

Some **reforms** improving effective coverage:

- **ES** (unemployment assistance)
- **IT** (improved access for non-standard workers)
- **LT** (preparing reform of unemployment insurance)

Little focus in the plans on how to improve **transferability** of entitlements

Adequacy: focus on some branches

Adequacy is addressed in **16 national plans**

Many focussed on improving **pensions for the self-employed** (BE, ES, FI, LV, PT) or employees with **low entitlements** (AT, CZ, DE, EE, FR)

Mostly **temporary measures** to improve the adequacy of **unemployment benefits** (e.g. duration prolonged or degressivity suspended) – some structural

Only few measures to improve **adequacy of other branches** (sickness, invalidity, healthcare) reported in the plans

Relatively few measures to improve adequacy of social protection for **workers in non-standard jobs** (some focused on cultural sector workers)

Transparency

Not much addressed in **national plans** ..even if there are **reforms** across the EU to support access to clear and up-to-date information and awareness of social rights, and to simplify procedures

..in many cases through the **Recovery and Resilience Plans**

Some MSs state that the rules on access to social protection are **already clear and transparent** and that information is accessible (e.g. BE, EE, FR, HR, MT, SE), with some also highlighting the importance of maintaining/improving this (BE, LU, MT, NL, SE)

Complex dimension to monitor / compare

Analysis based on **2022 [ESPN report on transparency](#)** (and 35 national reports)

Transparency / Access to information

General and personalised **information**: trends towards digitalisation (online portals, personal accounts, online tools, information per specific status)

Awareness raising **campaigns** in 14 EU Member States since 2017 (e.g. in case of reform; to inform about future entitlements, benefits of joining a scheme, COVID-19 measures, etc)

Gaps:

Some information gaps and shortcomings specifically affecting (sub-groups of) non-standard workers and the self-employed (for instance information on voluntary schemes)

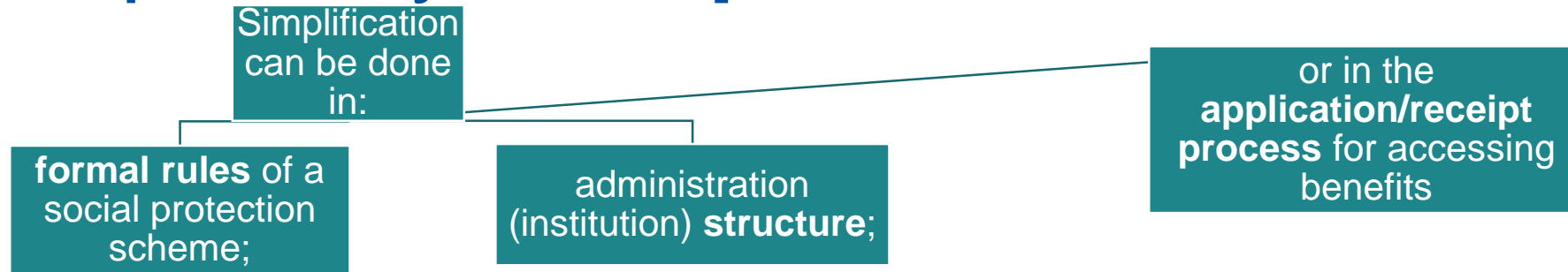
Online calculators exist but almost only for pensions

Limited knowledge of sickness, healthcare and old-age benefits

Complex language, outdated information

Access to information for vulnerable groups (people with visual/hearing impairments, older people or homeless people) ; digital divide; physical venues still matter

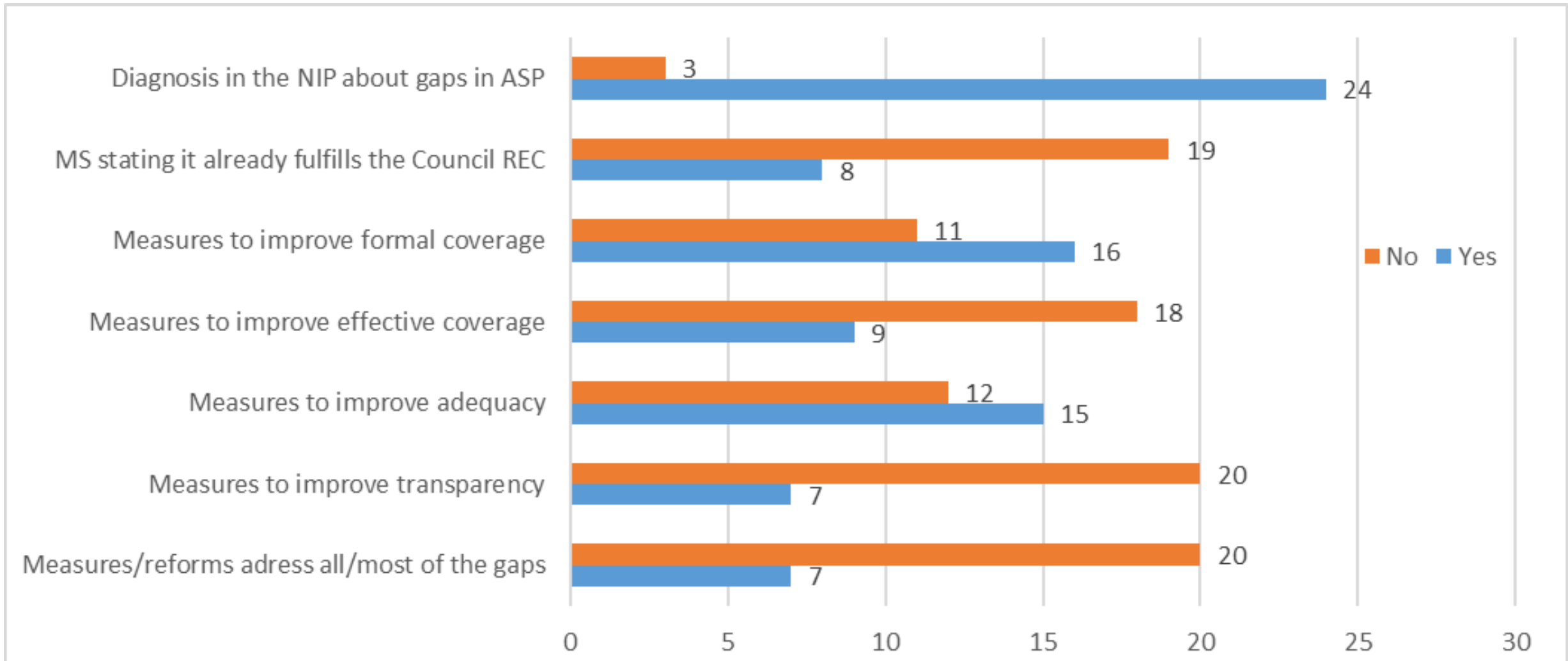
Transparency / Simplification



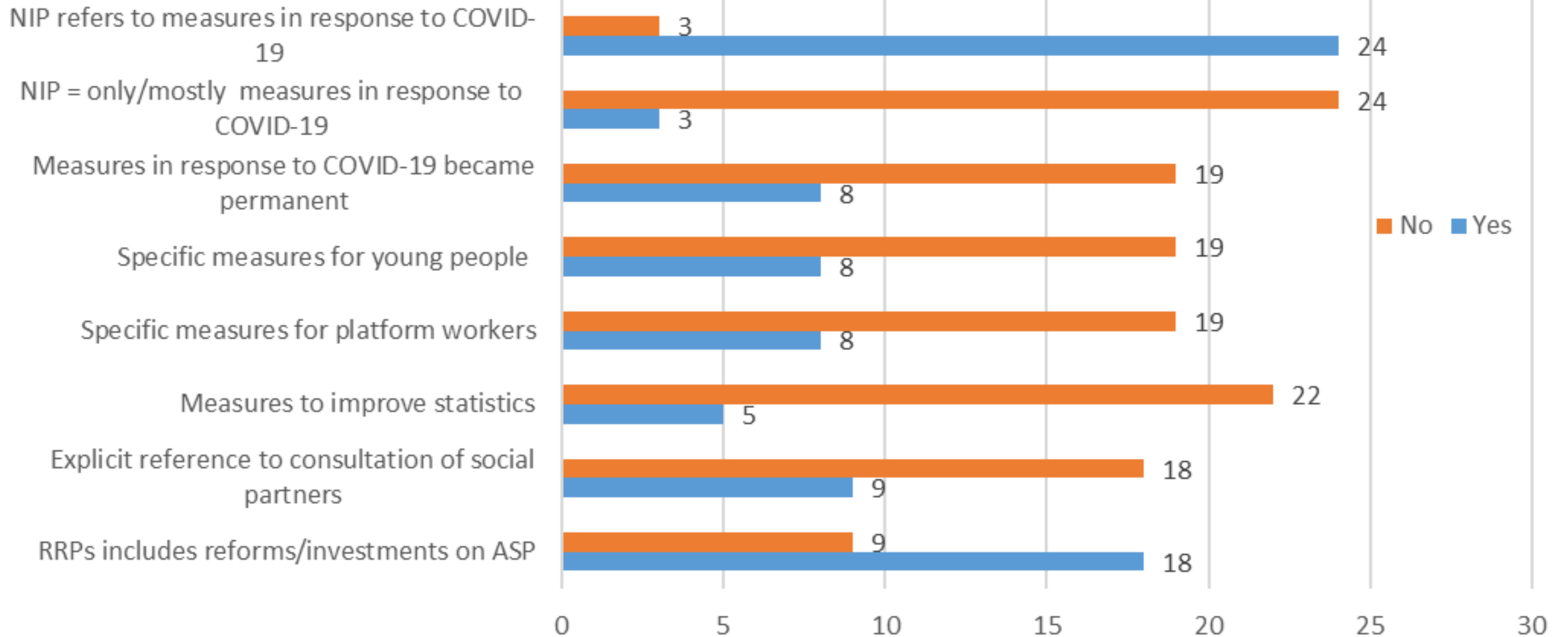
Several MSs are simplifying access to general or specific schemes (AT and PT: simpler rules for self-employed); **merging benefits** into unified schemes or harmonisation of regulation; simplification of **contribution payment** systems, **one stop social security portals**; **'once-only principle'** for data collection, **partial automation** of data exchange

Application procedures: web portals with **integrated functionalities** for users and sharing of data among the different institutions; online and **pre-filled application procedures** (DE, IT, SK); some rare examples of **automatic granting** of benefits for eligible people in specific branches

Overview of the 27 national plans (1)



Overview of the 27 national plans (2)



Main conclusions of the report

Large number of workers or self-employed people are still **left without** sufficient access to social protection

Mixed picture regarding implementation efforts; overall level of **ambition varies significantly** across Member States

With a few exceptions, most Member States **do not aim to address all** existing gaps in access to social protection

Starting point is very diverse – logical to see fewer commitments to new structural reforms in Member states with already universal/generous systems

Some **ambitious reforms** (focused on **formal coverage**) in half of the Member States...

...but **not in a number of** Member states where non-standard workers and self-employed are still not (adequately) covered

Access to minimum income – a new Council recommendation (2023)

Access to adequate minimum income in the EU

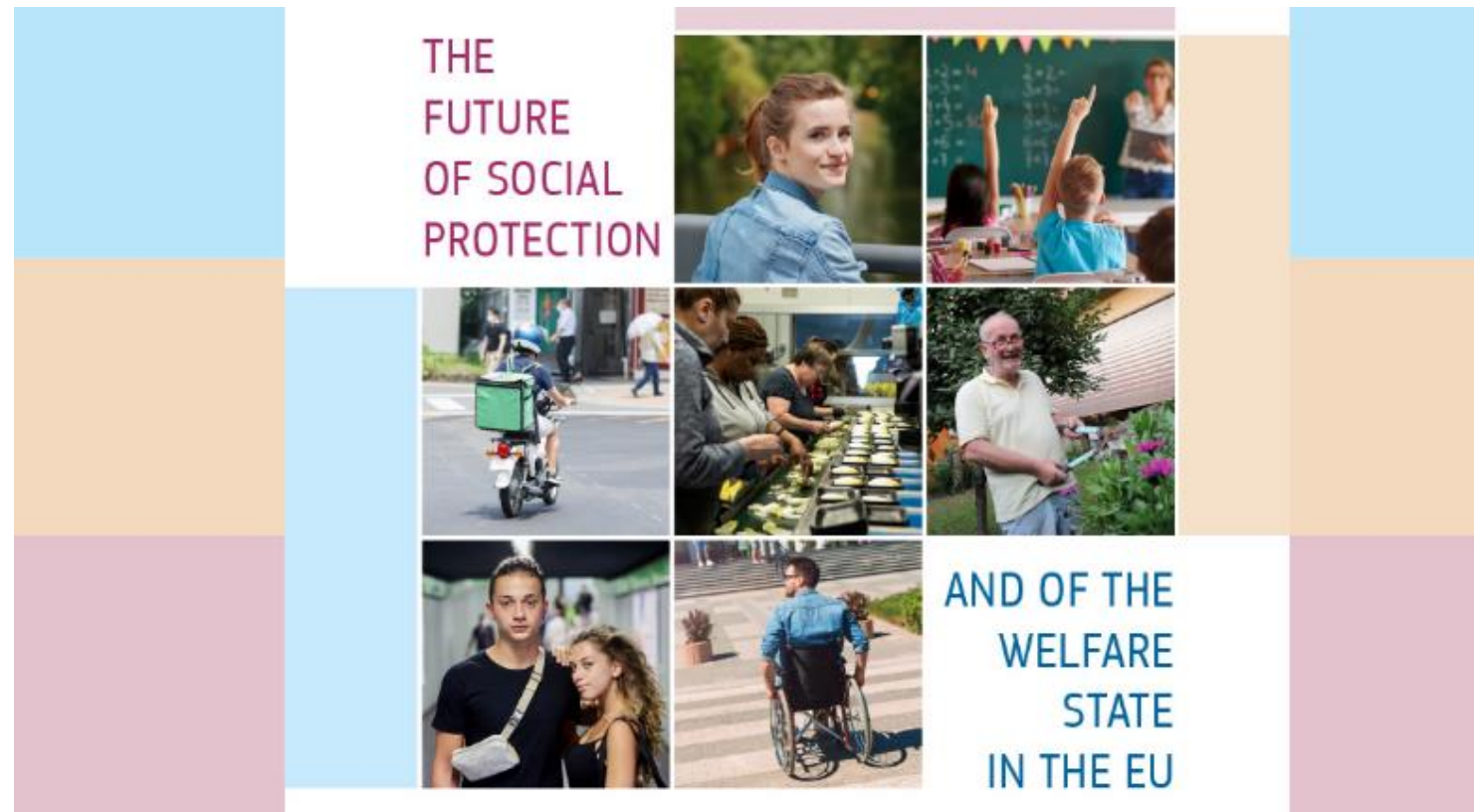
A new **Council recommendation** (adopted Jan. 2023)

The Council recommendation aims to combat poverty and social exclusion, promote **adequate income** support by means of **minimum income**, effective access to **enabling and essential services** for persons lacking sufficient resources and by fostering **labour market integration** of those who can work

Para 10 (TAKE UP OF MINIMUM INCOME) : *It is recommended that Member States **encourage or facilitate the full take-up of minimum income** through:*

- (a) reducing **administrative burden**, including through simplifying the application procedures and ensuring step-by-step guidance for those who need it, while paying attention to the availability of digital and non-digital tools;
- (b) ensuring access to user-friendly, free of charge, and updated **information** on rights and obligations related to minimum income;
- (c) **reaching out** to persons that lack sufficient resources to raise their awareness and facilitate the take-up, particularly of single-parent households, including through involving relevant **stakeholders** at national, regional and local level;
- (d) taking steps to combat **stigmatisation** and unconscious bias attached to poverty and social exclusion;
- (e) taking steps to improve or develop **evaluation** methodologies and **assessing** regularly the non-take-up of minimum income according to such methodologies and, where applicable, related labour market activation measures, identifying the barriers and putting remedial actions into place

Making social protection and welfare systems fit for the future – report of the High-Level group (2023)



21 KEY STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS



A. Starting strong

- 1) Affordable early childhood education and care
- 2) Income support and services to prevent child poverty
- 3) Support to enable starting a family
- 4) High quality jobs for the youth, complemented by financial support for further education and training



B. Ensuring inclusive social protection and lifelong learning

- 5) Access to social protection for all people in employment irrespective of their status
- 6) High quality of work throughout working life
- 7) Opportunities for up- and re-skilling for the digital and green transitions
- 8) Inclusion of migrants through social and labour market policies
- 9) Job retention schemes for all to protect income, jobs and skills during crises



C. Supporting adequate income and high-quality care in old age

- 10) Flexible working-time and adjusted workplaces for longer careers in good health
- 11) Chance for everyone to earn an adequate pension, and decent minimum benefits to tackle poverty in old age
- 12) Pension credits for care giving periods
- 13) High-quality and affordable long-term care services



D. Promoting inclusive and high-quality services including energy-efficient housing and transport

- 14) Affordable, energy-efficient and universal-design housing
- 15) Energy-efficient public transport accessible to all
- 16) High quality and inclusive social services, better involving non-profit and social economy organisations



E. Ensuring sustainable financing for a resilient welfare state

- 17) Broadening the tax basis through progressive taxation on income, consumption, capital, carbon and energy
- 18) Considering minimum tax rates on capital at EU level
- 19) Golden rule for public finances to secure social protection and investment in social infrastructures



F. Stepping up EU capacity to secure social protection in the future

- 20) Additional EU legislative initiatives to fulfil all principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and ensure consistent enforcement across the Union
- 21) Minimum package of social rights, based on the European Pillar of Social Rights. guaranteed at national level.



Useful links

- Council recommendation (2019) on [access to social protection](#) for workers and the self-employed :
 - Monitoring framework on access to social protection - and [update](#)
 - [National plans](#)
 - Commission's [Report](#) (2023) on its implementation
 - ESPN [report](#) on transparency (2023) in 35 European countries
- Council Recommendation of 30 January 2023 on [adequate minimum income](#) ensuring active inclusion
- Report of the High-Level group on “the [future of social protection](#) and of the welfare state in the EU”
 - [Factsheet](#)
 - Summary and recommendations [in all EU languages](#)

Thank you for your attention

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