



EU Policy Updates Note 6

06 / February – April 2025



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1. Introduction

This Note provides an overview of relevant EU policy developments in the four domains covered by the DignityFIRM project taking place between February and April 2025. In February, the European Commission published its [Vision for Agriculture and Food](#), aiming to **improve farmers' position in the agri-food supply chain and boost the sector's competitiveness**. To increase the EU's competitiveness more broadly, the Commission also unveiled the so-called [Omnibus package proposals](#), to ease **sustainability reporting and simplify due diligence obligations for companies**. While generally welcomed by [businesses](#), the package was met with [concerns](#), among others, about workers' protections. In March, the [Commission](#) also proposed to **reform the EU's returns framework**, with civil society organisations (CSOs) expressing criticism over its potential fundamental rights implications. Meanwhile, the [European Parliament](#) reached its position on the EU Talent Pool, paving the way for negotiations with the Council. Further developments not covered in this Note include the Commission's [Union for Skills](#), a comprehensive skills strategy to strengthen **education and skills development** in the EU, promote **labour mobility** and boost **talent attraction**. In April, the [Council](#) also agreed to its negotiating position on new rules to tackle [unfair trading practices](#) in the EU's food supply chain.

2. EU Developments

Farmer-focused Vision for Agriculture recognises migrant agri-food work and challenges

In February, the European Commission presented its [Vision for Agriculture and Food](#), building on [recommendations](#) of the [Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture](#) (see [Note 4](#)). The [Vision](#) outlines a roadmap for EU agricultural policies until

2040, aiming to foster a **competitive but fair agri-food sector**. It elaborates on the Commission's [efforts](#) to diversify farmers' income and **prevent below-cost selling** (see [Note 5](#)). To ease the regulatory burden on farmers, it also lays out [plans](#) to simplify administrative requirements and streamline support under the **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**, with a proposal expected before the [summer](#). At the same time, the Vision explicitly underscores the need to ensure the **protection of agri-food workers**. Recognising the sector's **reliance on migrant workers**, it includes a particular call for proactive policy solutions to address their often [precarious working conditions](#), alongside stronger social dialogue and collective bargaining. [Trade unions](#) appreciated the focus on improving [working conditions](#) but called for **concrete commitments**, also raising concerns for the impact of simplification on **labour safeguards**. Meanwhile, [EU Agriculture Ministers](#) and [farmers associations](#) welcomed the Vision, praising its constructive approach to the sector's challenges.

Commission proposes 'Omnibus' to ease sustainability reporting and due diligence rules

In February, the [European Commission](#) published its 'Omnibus' package to reduce administrative burdens on companies, forming part of its [competitiveness strategy](#) (see [Note 5](#)). The proposals seek to simplify frameworks concerning sustainability reporting and due diligence requirements on companies. These include the [Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive](#) (CSRD), the [Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive](#) (CSDDD) (see [Note 2](#)), as well as the [EU Taxonomy Regulation](#). The [Omnibus](#) suggests **delaying** existing [CSRD](#) reporting [deadlines](#) and **postponing** [CSDDD](#) transposition to July 2027. [Key changes](#) would narrow the [CSRD scope](#), meaning **fewer EU and non-EU companies** would need to

report. When reporting on the sustainability impact of their ‘value chains’ as well as mapping risks, the [information](#) in-scope companies could request from smaller, out-of-scope companies would be limited. Under the revised [due diligence rules](#), companies would have to conduct in-depth assessments into harmful practices only for their [direct business partners](#), rather than across the entire value chain, and every five years instead of annually in current rules. EU-level civil liability has also been removed, leaving it to national law. The proposals have sparked mixed reactions. On the one hand, [private sector representatives](#) welcomed the potential to **improve the business environment**, stating that it would help companies meet their sustainability targets while promoting the EU’s economic competitiveness, including in agri-food sectors. On the other hand, [CSOs](#) and commentators (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)) warn that the changes risk weakening **labour protections** and **accountability** for harmful practices, including in agri-food value chains. Negotiations within the [Council](#) and the [Parliament](#) have started. Co-legislators already agreed to delay the CSRD deadlines and CSDDD transposition via [fast-track procedures](#), with positions on the [other parts](#) still to come.

New Return Regulation seeks to strengthen harmonisation but includes no guidance on non-returnable persons

In March, the European Commission proposed a regulation establishing a [Common European System for Returns](#), replacing the [current directive](#). The [proposal](#) aims to **harmonise and increase the effectiveness of return procedures across the EU**. The [new rules](#) include stricter [detention procedures](#), [mandatory mutual recognition](#) of return decisions and the possibility for member states to establish ‘[return hubs](#)’. While maintaining the principle of [voluntary return](#), the proposal places **emphasis on returnees’ obligations**, introducing sanctions for non-compliance. These include **reduced social benefits** or **withdrawal of work permits**. Notably, the proposal offers [no binding rules](#) on the situation of [non-returnable persons](#), failing to address the risks of exploitation that they face. [CSOs](#) expressed [concerns](#) over the proposal’s impact on fundamental rights,

especially in connection to harsher detention grounds and implementation of return hubs. Other [commentators](#) welcomed **harmonisation efforts**, stating this could enhance legal certainty. With returns remaining on the [top of the political agenda](#), negotiations are expected to receive priority. However, these could be contentious, due to possible divisions within the [European Parliament](#) and [Council](#).

Parliament advances negotiations on the EU Talent Pool

In March, the [European Parliament](#) reached a [negotiating position](#) on the proposal to establish an [EU Talent Pool](#). This follows the general approach adopted by the Council in [June 2024](#). The Talent Pool constitutes an [online job-matching tool](#) designed to facilitate international recruitment and tackle labour shortages in the EU (see [Note 2](#)). With its [amendments](#), the Parliament seeks to strengthen standards for **fair and transparent recruitment**, including requiring clearer **information on registered employers and the working conditions** they offer. These would include working hours, paid leave and remuneration. The proposed amendments also aim to strengthen access to **redress mechanisms** in case of poor treatment or labour exploitation. Conversely, the Parliament retained the Commission’s initial proposal to limit the Pool to persons residing outside the EU. It also maintained that member states’ [participation should be voluntary](#), despite efforts from the [rapporteur](#) to make it mandatory. [Interinstitutional negotiations](#) on the proposal are set to begin soon.

This note is published on a quarterly basis.

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ABOUT DignityFIRM

Towards becoming sustainable and resilient societies we must address the structural contradictions between our societies' exclusion of migrant workers and their substantive role in producing our food.

www.dignityfirm.eu



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