



Ayuntamiento
de Gijón

Social Affairs Forum 2026

Bridging generations: Cities driving inclusive work and skills for all

5-7 May 2026

Background

The 2026 Social Affairs Forum in Gijón will focus on **Bridging generations: Cities driving inclusive work and skills for all**. The Forum will explore how cities can shape the future of work to be inclusive, sustainable, and family-friendly, ensuring that all residents can access opportunities and thrive in changing labour markets. Rapid technological change, demographic transitions, and new social expectations are reshaping the labour market. Cities must adapt by supporting parents to balance work and family life, creating opportunities for workers of all ages, gender or socioeconomic backgrounds, tackling workplace exclusion, and ensuring that vulnerable groups can access lifelong education, training and employment pathways.

Discussions will highlight how employment and skills policies can address social inclusion at every stage of life:

- **Cities as employers (Union of Skills):** Addressing staff shortages, talent attraction and enhancing the attractiveness of public sector work.
- **Working-age adults:** Advancing fair employment with adequate wages, ensuring diversity and inclusion at the workplace, enabling good work-life balance, through affordable and accessible **childcare** and family-friendly, **gender-responsive employment** policies, with a focus on **single parents**. This includes ensuring access to training and upskilling opportunities within jobs, particularly for workers with caring responsibilities.
- **Young people:** Ensuring access to **training, upskilling** and **reskilling** pathways, as well as entry-level job opportunities and fair and quality internships, while addressing the growing difficulties young people face when entering the labour market. This also includes second-chance **education** and **training** for adults who left education early.
- **Anti-poverty strategies and tackling in-work poverty:** A cross-cutting policy priority underpinning all the above areas and particularly acute in urban contexts. It requires coordinated action across services, including employment, skills recognition, wage-setting, access to **affordable housing**, skills development and social protection policies, as well as access to affordable, quality **care services**. Addressing in-work poverty also means recognising the role of paid and unpaid care work in shaping labour market participation and career progression, particularly for **women** and people with a **migration background**, and taking into account its intersection with multiple vulnerabilities.

Against Gijón’s tradition of innovation, social inclusion, and community engagement, the Forum will combine keynotes, co-creation workshops, site visits, and networking opportunities to co-design pathways for an inclusive future of work in Europe.

Programme overview

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| DAY 1 | morning | SAF Steering Committee meeting Newcomer session SAF Business meeting |
| | afternoon | Opening session Keynote speech Parallel workshops Informal dinner |
| DAY 2 | morning | Panel Session Learning Labs Directors of Social Services roundtable High-level meeting with Politicians |
| | afternoon | Site visits Official dinner |
| DAY 3 | morning | Focus group on skills Parallel co-creation workshops |

Please note that all times are Central European Time (CET)

Contacts

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Agenda

| DAY 1 – Tuesday 5 May 2026 Venue: Laboral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial Los Prados, 121, Periurbano - Rural, 33203 Gijón, Asturias, Spain | |
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| 09:30 | Registration Participants will be able to collect their badge in the lobby. The badge will be valid for all the days of the event. Please don't forget to <u>sign</u> the participation lists. |
| 10:00 – 11:00 | Newcomer's session (Eurocities members only) <i>Room: Aula Formacion</i> First time attending the Social Affairs Forum? This session is for you! In this session, participants can gain a deeper understanding of Eurocities' organisational structure and learn about the advantages of being a member. They will learn about the thematic areas of the Social Affairs Forum and the different opportunities that it offers for its members. Additionally, this session will provide a space for participants to engage in discussion with Eurocities' team and voice specific needs and interests of their cities. |
| | 9:30 – 11:00 SAF Steering Committee meeting (steering group members only) <i>Room: Biblioteca</i> |
| 11:00 – 12:45 | Social Affairs Forum Business meeting (Eurocities members only) <i>Room: Plató</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eurocities policy update • Forthcoming activities and opportunities for Eurocities members (Next Social Affairs Forum) • Working Groups updates |
| 12:45 – 14:00 | Lunch break |
| 14:15 – 14:35 | Official welcome <i>Room: Plató</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome remarks by Carmen Moriyón, Mayor, Gijon • Welcome remarks by Myriam Bencharaa, Vice-president for General Administration, Human Resources and Industrial Relations, and European Affairs, Lyon Metropole & Chair of the Social Affairs Forum |
| 14:35 – 14:45 | Political keynote <i>Room: Plató</i> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susana Solís Perez, Member of the European Parliament |
| 14:45 – 15:00 | <p>Keynote speech <i>Room: Plató</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lukas Kleine-Rueschkamp, Head of the Local Employment and Skills Unit, OECD |
| 15:00-15:30 | Coffee break |
| 15:30-17:00 | <p>Parallel workshops – Co-learning workshops</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusive employment for people facing barriers to labour market participation (The Hague) <i>Room: Aula de Formación</i> 2. Family-oriented services for (single) parents and informal caregivers to access employment (Gijon) <i>Room: Aula Escuela</i> 3. Cities as employers: inclusive, fair and attractive public sector careers (Glasgow) <i>Room: Biblioteca</i> 4. A generational approach to work and reskilling (Gothenburg) <i>Room: Chill-out</i> |
| <h2>Social Event</h2> <p>Venue: Sidrería Tierra Astur Poniente (C/ Mariano Pola, 10-14, 33212, Gijón, Asturias)</p> | |
| 20:00-22:00 | <p>Informal dinner (at own costs)</p> <p>Join fellow Eurocities members for an evening of food and networking at the typical Sidrería Tierra Astur Poniente. Located on the promenade of Poniente Beach in Gijón, its interior is an authentic Asturian cider house.</p> <p>Please note that this evening is at participants own cost (around 30€ per person).</p> |

DAY 2 – Wednesday, 6 May 2026

Venue: Laboral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial
Los Prados, 121, Periurbano - Rural, 33203 Gijón, Asturias, Spain

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| 9:00 | <p>Registration</p> <p>Participants will be able to collect their badge in the lobby. The badge will be valid for all the days of the event.</p> <p>Please don't forget to <u>sign</u> the participation lists.</p> | | |
| 9:30 – 9:40 | <p>Opening – Michele Calandrino, European Commission (TBC)</p> | | |
| 9:40 – 10:25 | <p>Plenary Session - The role of cities in fostering and supporting quality employment <i>Room: Plató</i></p> <p>The EU Quality Jobs Roadmap, building on the European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan, represents a key political commitment to promote fair wages, secure employment, safe working conditions, access to skills, and inclusive labour markets. Its success, however, will depend largely on effective implementation at local level.</p> <p>This panel will feature representatives from the EU institutions, a representative of the upcoming Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union (July-December 2026), and a representative from the trade union movement. The panellists will discuss how cities can support the implementation of the quality jobs roadmap and set the scene for the later high-level meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria Luisa Cabral , Director of Quality Jobs, Working Conditions and Social Dialogue, DG EMPL (tbc) • Alicia Homs Ginel, Member of the European Parliament (tbc) • Ignacio Doreste, Senior Advisor, European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) • City representative (tbc) | | |
| 10:25 – 10:50 | <p>Coffee Break & Group Photo</p> | | |
| 10:50 – 12.45 | <p>Parallel workshops – Learning Labs</p> <p>Interactive session designed to equip city officials with practical skills, new insights, and actionable strategies to tackle urban challenges. These sessions provide a collaborative space where participants can exchange ideas, explore best practices, and engage with experts on key policy areas and offer a hands-on approach to understanding and</p> | <p>Funding Social Infrastructure, Building Futures – Directors of Social Services Community of Experts <i>Room: Aula de Formación</i></p> <p>This focus group brings together Directors of Social Services and senior municipal leaders to discuss local funding challenges and priorities, particularly in relation to</p> | <p>High level political meeting (invitation only) <i>Room: Biblioteca</i></p> |

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| | <p>applying innovative solutions in city governance.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mainstreaming Diversity & Inclusion training in the workforce <i>Room: Aula Escuela</i> 2. Social public procurement <i>Room: Plató</i> | <p>inclusive workforce and skills development across generations. In the context of rapid labour-market and social transitions, city leaders will exchange experiences, promising practices, and innovations. The discussions will inform the SAF Pulse – Social Urban Insights Report, one of Eurocities’ key tools for shaping European policy and funding decisions, as well as reinforce the Directors of Social Services Community of Experts.</p> | |
| 12.45 14.00 | – | Lunch Break | |
| 14:00 14:30 | – | Transfer to site visits | |
| 14:30 16:30 | – | <p>Parallel site visits</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gijon Local Agency for Economic Development and Employment & Second Chance School of Gijon: Municipal agency for employment, training and inclusion (by bus) 2. Botanical Garden & employment workshop: youth training and employment (by bus) 3. Science and Technology Park and the Mile of Knowledge + overview from the Laboral tower: innovation ecosystem and business hub (walking tour) 4. Jovellanos Maritime Safety Centre: Centre of maritime rescue, strengthening skills and employment in the maritime sector (by bus) 5. Collaboration with the University of Oviedo: Upskilling opportunities for Graduates. International Outreach and Employment (walking tour) <p><i>More info on each site visit at the end of the document.</i></p> | <p>Site visit dedicated to political representatives only</p> <p>Laboral City of Culture: originally a worker training hub in the 50s, it is the biggest building in Spain and now it hosts education, arts, and professional development.</p> |

SOCIAL EVENT

Venue: Colegiata San Juan Bautista (C. Colegiata, Centro, 33201 Gijón, Asturias)

19.30 – 22.00**Official Dinner**

After a second day of sessions and site visits, join fellow participants for an evening hosted by the city of Gijón at Colegiata San Juan Bautista. Dress code is business casual.

- Welcome remarks
- People of Eurocities celebration



DAY 3 – Thursday, 7 May 2026

Venue: Laboral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial
Los Prados, 121, Periurbano - Rural, 33203 Gijón, Asturias, Spain

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| <p>9:00 – 9:30</p> | <p>Registration</p> <p>Please don't forget to <u>sign</u> the participation lists.</p> | |
| <p>9:30 – 12:15</p> <p>Coffee break from 10:30 – 11:00</p> | <p>Parallel sessions</p> <p><i>Participants will be able to join only one of the following parallel session.</i></p> <p>Plenary – Shaping Skills in Cities: From Policy to Practice - Focus group on skills</p> <p><i>Room: Chill-out</i></p> <p>This session takes the form of a focus group, bringing together city representatives to gather evidence on how cities implement Principle 1 on Education, training, and lifelong learning of the European Pillar of Social Rights, as well as the Union of Skills initiative (aiming to help people build basic and advanced skills, regularly upskill and reskill throughout their careers, make skills more portable across EU countries, and attract and retain talent). The discussion will inform Eurocities' 2026 Social Monitoring Report on skills, which examines the role of cities in delivering EU social policies and shaping effective, locally grounded solutions.</p> | <p>Co-creation workshop 1 - Skilling, upskilling and reskilling (Fuenlabrada)</p> <p><i>Room: Aula Escuela</i></p> <p>Co-creation workshop 2 - Linking employment support with key services to promote long-term quality jobs and social inclusion (Turku)</p> <p><i>Room: Aula de Formación</i></p> |
| <p>12.15 – 12.30</p> | <p>Closing session</p> <p><i>Room: Chill-out</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angela Pumariega, Vice Mayor, Gijon | |

Afternoon session only for WG Employment members

Venue: Science and Technology Park Gijon, Edificio Impulsa

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| 12:30-14:00 | Lunch (only for WG Employment, Education and Children members and Eurocities staff) |
| 14:00-16:30 | Joint WG Meeting: Employment, Education, Children <i>Room: Sala Conferencias</i> |
| 20:00-22:00 | Informal dinner (at own costs) Please note that this evening is at participants own cost. |

Parallel site visits

Site visit 1. Gijón Local Agency for Economic Development and Employment & Second Chance School of Gijón (bus transfer; capacity 25)

Get a concise overview of Gijón's integrated employment policies. The Local Employment Agency coordinates training, career guidance, inclusion and entrepreneurship in close partnership with local businesses (est. 1996). The visit also features the **Second Chance School**, a flagship programme for young people (14–29) that strengthens motivation, core skills and employability through tailored guidance, transversal skills training and socio-educational support with a European dimension.

Site visit 2. Botanical Garden & employment workshop (bus transfer; return on foot; capacity 25)

This visit combines an employment programme with a unique learning setting. Start at the **“La Casina” workshop school**, which offers up to 18 months of training and work for unemployed young people (16–30): 3 months subsidised training followed by a 15-month training-and-work contract, with 24 places in gardening, carpentry and bricklaying, supporting services at the Garden. Then tour the **Atlantic Botanical Garden**, a specialised “vegetation museum” focused on North Atlantic flora, conservation, and scientific, educational and cultural outreach. Please wear comfortable walking shoes.

Site visit 3. Science and Technology Park and the Mile of Knowledge & overview from the Laboral tower (walking; capacity 30)

Explore Gijón's innovation corridor. Established in 1999, the Science & Technology Park, Spain's first locally promoted park, anchors the city's triple-helix model and serves as a testbed for entrepreneurship policy. As the hub of the **Mile of Knowledge**, it hosts nearly 200 companies and about 5,500 jobs, linking firms with technology and R&D centres and the University to accelerate research and technology transfer. The visit concludes with a panoramic view from the Laboral City of Culture tower's **Mirador**, overlooking the Park, the Atlantic Botanical Garden and the Asturian coast.

Site visit 4. Blue Economy: Jovellanos Maritime Safety Centre (by bus; capacity 25)

Explore Gijón's **blue-economy skills base** at a flagship maritime safety training hub (est. 1993). The Centre delivers training in maritime, port and industrial safety, occupational risk prevention and pollution control on a 140,000 m² campus. The visit showcases core assets: ship-handling simulators, aircraft/industrial fire modules, helicopter-ditching and abandonment trainers, chemical-spill scenarios, and a large wave pool reproducing 16 sea states with waves up to 4 m, illustrating courses in survival at sea, firefighting and marine-pollution response.

Site visit 5. University of Oviedo: Upskilling opportunities for Graduates. International outreach and Employment (walking; capacity 40)

Reinforcing the triple-helix, this visit shows how the University of Oviedo upskills graduates and connects them to the labour market. Since January 2023, the University has joined the **INGENIUM** alliance, expanding

mobility, training and knowledge-transfer opportunities. You'll tour the **Jovellanos Faculty of Commerce, Tourism and Social Sciences** at Laboral City of Culture, offering programmes in business management, tourism, public administration and social work. Learn about employment pathways supported by the University of Oviedo Foundation calls, the Employment Forum and the **TalentUO** platform, alongside the University's internationalisation strategy.

Site visit for politicians - Laboral City of Culture

Originally a mid-20th-century Labor University, **Laboral** is today Spain's largest civic building (270,000 m²) and a mixed public campus. Since 2001, the Principality of Asturias has reactivated the complex to host an arts centre, the regional public broadcaster, vocational training facilities, the University of Oviedo's Faculty of Commerce, Tourism and Social Sciences, the Professional Conservatory of Music and Dance, the Higher School of Dramatic Art, and creative companies, showcasing the effectiveness of political decision turned into a successful city project.