

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002021/26
to the Commission
Lefteris Nikolaou-Alavanos (NI)
(13 May 2026)**

Subject: EU framework for contract work at Hellenic Petroleum and the permanent employment of contract workers

Contract workers at Hellenic Petroleum (ELPE) are on strike, demanding the signature of a company-level collective agreement, i.e. their direct recruitment as permanent staff by ELPE.

The unacceptable system of contract work — integral to the EU's overall anti-worker framework — prevails in the refinery sector, where it is used to reduce labour costs and perpetuate a state of permanent job insecurity. The just struggle of contract workers is being met with threats and suppression by ELPE and subcontracting firms/intermediaries, while the Nea Demokratia Government — holding 31.18% of the shares in HELLENiQ ENERGY through the Hellenic Corporation of Assets and Participations (HCAP) — turns a blind eye.

At the same time as ELPE workers are demanding health and safety measures, Energy Commissioner Jørgensen is calling on governments to defer refinery maintenance to address shortages in energy reserves due to the US-Israeli military escalation against Iran.

Can the Commission answer the following:

1. What view does it take on the inalienable right to work in a permanent, stable job with full labour rights and the full restoration of collective agreements?
2. What view does it take of the fact that it is European directives — particularly Directive (EU) 2019/1152 — that have paved the way for the dismantling of permanent, stable employment, legitimising a regime of job insecurity and flexible employment relationships, with the sole condition being that workers are aware of the unacceptable terms under which they will be employed?
3. What view does it take on the call for the abolition of subcontracting and all kinds of intermediaries so that workers are employed in permanent and stable employment relationships, with collective protection, dignity and guaranteed rights?

Submitted: 13.5.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Mînzatu on behalf of the European Commission
(2 July 2026)**

The Commission has no power to interfere with management decisions on work organisation and contractual relations between workers and employers.

Directive 2019/1152 ⁽¹⁾ sets out minimum requirements to improve working conditions by promoting more transparent and predictable employment while ensuring labour market adaptability.

The directive does not constitute valid grounds for reducing the general level of protection already afforded to workers in Member States and does not prevent Member States from applying national provisions or collective agreements more favorable to workers ⁽²⁾.

The directive respects the autonomy of social partners by allowing for different arrangements to be set out in collective agreements as long as these ensure the overall protection of workers ⁽³⁾.

All employers, including in subcontracting chains, employing workers in the EU must apply EU labour and health and safety rules.

Moreover, on 4 December 2025, the Commission presented the Quality Jobs Roadmap ⁽⁴⁾, an initiative to improve job quality and create high-quality and future-proof jobs in the EU.

It initiated a consultation of EU social partners on an envisaged Quality Jobs Act ⁽⁵⁾, aiming to ensure protection of workers' rights while keeping up with technological, economic and societal changes and ensuring competitiveness of the EU economy.

⁽¹⁾ Directive 2019/1152/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on transparent and predictable working conditions, OJ L 186, 11.7.2019, p. 105-121; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32019L1152>.

⁽²⁾ Article 20 (2).

⁽³⁾ Article 14.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0944>.

⁽⁵⁾ https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/059a1e18-2508-4520-9b15-5831c50e0f91_en?filename=Consultation_Quality-Jobs-Act_2025.pdf.

The protection of workers' rights in subcontracting chains is one of the topics submitted to consultation. At the same time, the European Labour Authority is looking into the use of labour intermediaries and enforcement of labour mobility and social security coordination rules. Its report is expected to be published in 2027.
