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ETUC ACTION PROGRAMME 2023-2027

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TOGETHER FOR A
FAIR DEAL
FOR WORKERS

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INTRODUCTION: WHY DO WE NEED A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS?

This European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) Action Programme is a call to action: An invitation for European trade unionists and other progressives to work together to win a fair deal for workers across our continent, and to build solidarity with workers in Europe and around the world.

The ETUC was founded in 1973, the year when the first oil shock saw soaring energy prices hit working peoples' jobs, incomes and living standards across Europe and beyond. From small beginnings 50 years ago, our Confederation now unites more than 100 affiliates that represent more than 45 million workers across the European Union, Balkans, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, UK and recently Ukraine and Moldova.

This Action Programme is a detailed set of objectives and actions that we will implement over the next four years. It builds on five decades of achievement to broaden and deepen European trade union organisation, to deliver better working and living conditions and to advance collective bargaining and social dialogue, as we mobilise to tackle another dramatic cost-of-living crisis. Trade unions and trade unionism is at the heart of this Action Programme, because collective bargaining and social dialogue are the most successful way for working people to create a fair and sustainable future for themselves, their families and their communities.

A shifting economic and social background

After years of austerity-driven policies, culminating in a catastrophic response to the 2008 global financial and economic crisis, the EU and national responses to the social and economic fallout of the COVID pandemic were more constructive and effective.

Spurred by strong interventions by the ETUC and its affiliates, the EU developed and implemented large-scale supports worth billions of Euros in the form of the NGEU (the Next Generation EU programme, established to help member states recover from the pandemic), the SURE (the Support to Mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency programme, which gave member states access to loans at advantageous rates), and introduced flexibility in the application of economic governance rules.

The ETUC worked hard to achieve these and other outcomes to protect jobs and incomes in the wake of the pandemic. We then won the adoption of the Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages in the EU. This landmark legislation will promote decent statutory minimum wages and promote collective bargaining throughout the EU.

Notwithstanding these important measures, recent signs of retrenchment are reminders that the European trade union movement must continue to mobilise in the fight for solidarity, an economy that delivers for working people, higher wages and quality jobs, reinforced social protection, strong collective bargaining and social dialogue, trade union and workers' rights. We must continue and reinforce our mobilisation for a fair deal for workers!

Inadequate European responses to the economic fallout from the war in Ukraine and the mounting cost-of-living crisis, as well as the lack of social conditionalities in the European Green Deal Industrial

Plan, threaten to undo the advances of recent times and have shown a lack of solidarity. This poor response is compounded by interest rate increases, which are entirely the wrong response to profits-pushed inflation. Meanwhile, the damage of the cost-of-living crisis has been deepened by attacks on trade union rights and working conditions in many European countries, while attempts to criminalise international trade union solidarity are a growing concern.

This Action Programme includes strong and specific measures aimed at building support for a progressive and fair response to Europe's economic and social challenges – based on solidarity and a strong social Europe, on improving working and living conditions, on sharing the benefits of new technologies, on defending collective and individual rights, on protecting and improving health, safety, and wellbeing, on preserving our planet and its environment through a just transition, on tackling inequality, and on reinforcing social inclusion and democracy.

Ending the cost-of-living crisis

Across Europe, the cost of food, energy and other essentials continues to rise far faster than wages, pensions and social supports, increasing existing inequalities, with low paid workers and vulnerable people hit the hardest. Even if the rate of price increases slows, there will be a long-term decline in living standards in the absence of higher pay, guaranteed job and income security, and EU action on the social dimensions of the emergency. Building on its six-point plan to tackle the cost-of-living crisis, the ETUC Action Plan commits to:

- Support affiliates and unions in their campaigns for real pay increases as part of a campaign for upwards convergence in working conditions and wages across Europe;
- Pressure the EU to protect jobs and incomes with decisive and practical measures to address the social dimension of the crisis;
- Give practical support to affiliates in strengthening collective bargaining, including through the transposition and implementation of the Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages;
- Deepen our campaign against all forms of precarious work by supporting union actions, collective bargaining strategies and legal initiatives to establish rights to permanent contracts and full-time work;
- Lobby for stronger EU action aimed at eliminating the gender pay gap while – including through the transposition and implementation of the Gender Pay Transparency Directive - developing tools to improve pay transparency, end the undervaluation of work done predominantly by women, and eliminate gender-based violence and harassment;
- Advocate for a legal ban on unpaid internships and insecure contracts that condemn young workers and others to unpaid or underpaid work, as part of a broader ETUC programme for inter-generational solidarity and young workers' rights.

Transformation that works for all

New business models and technological shifts – including automation, digitisation, artificial intelligence, platform work, and other new forms of work organisation – are changing our workplaces faster than ever before. The pace and impact of these trends demand a new approach where governments and international institutions work with unions to protect workers, communities and the environment, and ensure a just transition for all.



A 'market knows best' approach risks unprecedented economic upheaval that could devastate jobs and communities and fatally undermine public faith in democracy and its institutions. The ETUC Action Plan includes commitment to detailed actions to:

- Support affiliates and unions in their campaigns for strong national-level worker protections, jobs initiatives, and just transition to the new world of work;
- Advocate for a European Directive for Just Transition of the world of work through anticipation and management of change, with trade union involvement and collective bargaining as leading principles;
- Agitate for the 'human in control' principle for digitalization to be incorporated into EU law so as to establish a right to human decision-making at work;
- Facilitate and support union and other campaigns for reduced working time and other means of sharing the benefits of new technologies fairly;
- Support the implementation of the social partners' agreement on telework and the right to disconnect and a broader human-centric approach to new technology, including the prohibition of surveillance and monitoring practices, which are invasive or disrespect human dignity and privacy at work;
- Press for strong social and environmental conditionalities for public funding and public procurement contracts;
- Mobilise to make lifelong learning and the right to training a reality, not just a slogan.

Improving our social and economic fabric

Real reform of European economic governance frameworks is needed as an alternative to the failed austerity policies which, over the last two decades, have devastated public services, incomes, communities, and – as a result – much popular support for Europe and its institutions. The ETUC applauded the approach of the EU when they introduced large-scale intervention at the outset of the Covid pandemic. Our Action Programme commits the ETUC to:

- Seek the termination of the EU Fiscal Compact and the reform of the Stability and Growth Pact to align it with the ecological and social objectives of the EU Treaty and Charter of Fundamental Rights;
- Advocate to make the solidarity policy tools adopted during the pandemic permanent, including the activation of EU facilities for investment and employment stabilisation;
- Pursue the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights;
- Work with affiliates to advocate for a strong EU industrial policy with significant and effective public investment that underpins quality jobs and social progress including through social conditionalities;
- Demand investment in public services and social protection to eradicate poverty and inequality and advocate for a minimum level of public investment in national budgets plus a framework that better aligns private investment to common EU objectives within a sustainable finance framework;
- Advocate for a strong and fairer company taxation framework and to put an end to tax havens and tax evasion and avoidance;

- Make a strong case for the EU monetary policy to be focused on full employment and quality jobs;
- Work with affiliates, unions and civil society organisations to promote equity, equality and respect for diversity in the workplace and in all aspects of life;
- Campaign for a fair EU enlargement process.

Valuing peace, security and survival

As well as a global health pandemic, the years since our last Congress in 2015 have witnessed levels of international conflict, attacks on human rights, and environmental damage unprecedented in recent history. Each has come with huge, devastating and unacceptable human cost. The ETUC Action Programme includes detailed actions to challenge the rise of the far right and its hateful creed, and contains specific actions to:

- Work for strong climate action for a just transition to an environmentally sustainable planet, while reducing the ETUC's carbon footprint;
- Proudly support peace, democracy, human rights, global economic justice, and the rule of law – all of which are necessary to underpin economic security for workers in Europe and elsewhere;
- Work against racism in the workplace and elsewhere and give practical support to, and advocate for, those – including migrants and asylum-seekers – who suffer the impact of war, aggression, human rights abuses, and climate change, and lobby for a fair, rights-based migration and asylum system;
- Push for the inclusion of a Social Progress Protocol in the EU Treaties to guarantee that worker, trade union and social rights take precedence over economic freedoms in the event of conflict;
- Agitate for the reform of European institutions for a more social and democratic Europe.

A stronger voice for workers and their unions

For well over a century, trade unions and their European organisations have protected the rights and living standards of workers, their families and their communities. Strong trade unionism helped build and sustain post-war Europe, and it remains an irreplaceable pillar of the continent's social and economic fabric.

With peace, human rights and democratic institutions again under fire, strong trade union organisation is vital to ensure decent living standards, an effective voice for workers through collective bargaining and social dialogue, and a sense that workers and their communities have a stake in Europe, with control over the decisions that affect them.

Rooted in our vision of strong, independent, progressive trade unionism, the ETUC Action Plan includes robust measures to support trade union renewal and to:

- Assert a European agenda for trade union renewal and increased membership density, supporting affiliates and unions as they strengthen workers' rights, improve working and living conditions, and amplify the voice of workers through collective bargaining and collective action;
- Support the ongoing work of affiliates – whether national members or European trade union federations – to develop renewal strategies, including through digital trade unionism, the coordination of national and sectoral strategies, and the development of union structures that are inclusive to all;



- Reinforce and promote collective bargaining, including by building on the EU directive on adequate minimum wages, with the objective of increasing collective bargaining coverage, and ensuring respect for the universal right to organise and bargain collectively for every worker in Europe;
- Ensure that workplaces and trade unions are safe and inclusive places for women, people of colour, workers with disabilities and members of the LGBTI community;
- Lobby for improved public procurement rules so that public money goes only to organisations that respect workers and trade union rights, negotiate with trade unions and whose workers are covered by collective agreements;
- Enhance European social dialogue including through a social dialogue impact assessment, a legislative programme delivered through social dialogue, measures to report when social partners are side-lined in national and European policy-making, and embedding respect for trade union activities and rights.

A Europe for future generations

Over its first 50 years, the ETUC and its affiliates made huge contributions to the development of Europe's society and economy, placing collective bargaining and social dialogue at the forefront of their defence of workers' rights, decent living standards, equality and inclusion, and democratic European institutions and ideals.

Together with our Berlin Manifesto, this Action Programme represents an ambitious call to action for European trade unionists and others committed to defending our ideals and enhancing living standards, union and human rights, a clean planet, and respect for workers and their communities over the next half-decade.

Let's start work and build a Europe that we can be proud to pass on to future generations.

TOGETHER FOR TRADE UNION RENEWAL



1.1 Building our Mobilisation Capacity

State of Play and Challenges

- 1.1.1** The European trade union movement has to find new energy to empower workers interest and therefore time has come to assert a European trade union agenda. A stronger influence on the European political agenda and a stronger social dialogue need first and foremost a strong European trade union agenda with renewed energy to empower workers. This should be an agenda for trade union renewal and for a powerful and robust European trade unionism to defend and strengthen workers' rights and improve working and living conditions for all;
- 1.1.2** An ambitious ETUC agenda for trade union renewal is long overdue. With a strong agenda for trade union renewal, the ETUC and its affiliates will be able to deliver. Collective bargaining and collective action rely on strong, active and independent unions that unify and amplify the voice of workers. Through renewal, the trade union movement can identify emerging trends in the labour market and ways to organise and mobilise atypical workers and minority groups. Access to the workplace is essential for this;
- 1.1.3** An agenda for trade union renewal should respect well-functioning national labour market models and their associated traditions and practices. Trade union strength is built on these traditions and practices;
- 1.1.4** This renewal is already underway at European and national level. The ETUC will continue to support affiliates in developing and implementing their renewal strategies. To this end, a platform dedicated to this support needs to be discussed.

Actions

- 1.1.5** The ETUC will:
- Develop and implement an agenda for trade union renewal and a powerful, robust and solidarity-based European trade unionism. The ETUC needs to undertake the following actions to develop and implement this renewed agenda;
- 1.1.6** - Support, organise and coordinate trade union mobilisation and initiatives on demand and in close collaboration with national affiliates. Including demonstrations and initiatives in different countries in close collaboration with national affiliates, at regional level, and Euro-demonstrations, depending on the circumstances;
- 1.1.7** - Support affiliates' initiatives at national level by providing visibility and being present at demonstrations. Affiliates are encouraged to support European mobilisation, which could include organisational and financial resources;
- 1.1.8** - Facilitate the effective and efficient exchange of information between affiliates on initiatives and mobilisation at national and regional level;

- 1.1.9** - Set up a working group, open to all affiliates, to examine legal and organisational aspects for joint and coordinated collective actions in particular in border territories with the support or on the initiative of the IRTUCs;
- 1.1.10** - Set up a Solidarity Network for trade union action to rapidly support trade unions under attack due to employer hostility in collective bargaining or industrial disputes including double standards in multinational corporations or due to governmental attacks on the fundamental labour standards, especially the freedom of collective bargaining and the right to strike, with the assistance of the ETUCLEX. This network will provide a flexible and dynamic means for trade unions to seek and provide support to each other and will feed into the work of the Collective Bargaining and Wage Coordination Committee;
- 1.1.11** - In line with the declaration “European trade unions without borders” and the resolution “Towards a European System of Industrial Relations” adopted in the ETUC IXth Congress in Helsinki, the ETUC will explore and support generalising co-operation and mutual assistance agreements which defend the rights of workers on professional placements in European countries other than where they have their trade union membership. Develop a cross-border exchange program for trade union officials to have a better understanding of practices and strategies of trade unions in different countries, and to strengthen European trade union solidarity, with the involvement of the IRTUCs;
- 1.1.12** - Set up a Trade Union Renewal Centre to coordinate the ETUC strategy on trade union renewal, facilitating a more coordinated approach throughout the ETUC Committees and sharing best practices between European, national and sectoral activities. This will also be used to identify emerging/evolving sectors with potential for trade union growth. Coordination will be undertaken with the relevant ETUC committees;
- 1.1.13** - Organise an award, to be given during Congress and the Mid Term Conference, to give special recognition for outstanding trade union actions (e.g. in building European trade unionism, demonstrating cross-border solidarity, developing trade union mobilisation in adverse conditions, fighting against the far-right, digital trade unionism, member engagement and organising);
- 1.1.14** - ETUC policies and campaigns at all levels should apply a “generation test” to remain relevant for young workers and promote equal treatment, expanding social protection to NEETs, and fighting against abuse of traineeship schemes. The ETUC Youth Committee will coordinate this.

1.2. Digital Trade Unionism

State of Play and Challenges

- 1.2.1** Digitalisation continues to transform the world of work. Trade unions harness digital tools to come into contact with, support and empower workers. Since digital tools are often gender-biased and could reinforce gender stereotypes and norms, digital trade unionism needs to be gender-transformative;
- 1.2.2** The ETUC aims to build the necessary digital infrastructure to support affiliates to become digital unions. This infrastructure would provide digital tools for reps to recruit, retain and engage members, to mobilise workers, to improve laws and collective bargaining, and to enhance social dialogue. Nonetheless, there is no one size fits all solution;

1.2.3 The ETUC Action-Europe platform reinforces European trade unionism. This petition platform explains who trade unions are and why we run campaigns. The GDPR compliant platform contains a database of supporters who are willing to take action in support of trade union demands.

Actions

1.2.4 In order to develop and reinforce digital trade unionism, the following actions may be undertaken:

1.2.5 - Expand the Action-Europe platform to strengthen campaigns and grow a database for union, worker and public engagement, engaging them through the use of targeted surveys;

1.2.6 - Establish a network to support affiliates in developing their petition, campaigns and member engagement, building upon the experiences of unions across Europe;

1.2.7 - Provide dedicated training and workshops for affiliates to share and develop their digital approach to strengthen unions;

1.2.8 - Develop in close cooperation with the ETUFs digital tools to give negotiators the possibility to share collective agreement clauses and trade union priorities for collective bargaining rounds. Checklists, model agreements and model clauses will provide negotiators access to the collective strength of unions across Europe;

1.2.9 - Use digital tools to contact and engage members to share and spread information, positions and campaigns.

1.3 Social Dialogue

State of Play and Challenges

1.3.1 Strengthening the European Social Dialogue goes hand in hand with strengthening national social dialogue, which must include collective bargaining;

1.3.2 In their response to the COVID-19 crisis, social partners have demonstrated the role Social Dialogue can play, and continues to play, at all levels, protecting workers, their health and safety, jobs and livelihoods. As well as measures at the workplace, sector, national and EU level, for those who have lost their jobs and income;

1.3.3 The role of trade unions as the social partner representing the voice of workers needs to be respected in its entirety, as well as social partner autonomy. At the European level, this means prioritising and respecting the process of social partner consultations and recognising the role of the ETUC as the representative for cross-industry dialogue, and the European Trade Union Federations (ETUFs) at sector level;

1.3.4 Capacity building has been key for the ETUC for almost 20 years, and it remains a priority looking to the future. In the current 2022-2024 Work Programme, the European Social Partners commit themselves to evaluate and improve the implementation of the outcomes of the EU social dialogue;



1.3.5 Social dialogue at cross-industry and sectoral levels should be mutually reinforcing so that European social dialogue can establish European social minimum standards through cross-sectoral and sectoral social partner agreements based on both autonomous agreements and on agreements with binding, direct effect across the EU.

Actions

1.3.6 The ETUC will therefore endeavour to:

- Establish an alert or complaint mechanism to implement the promise of the Quadripartite Statement, including the role of social partners in the semester process and identifying when trade unions are side-lined by policymakers. The Commission and/or the relevant Member State should be required to address any complaints made in a timely manner;

1.3.7 - Demand that the European Commission establishes a social dialogue impact assessment toolbox. This would ensure Social Dialogue has been respected and promoted. Ex-post evaluation of existing Regulations and Directives should be undertaken to identify and remedy any restrictions or practices that undermine social dialogue and collective bargaining at all levels. An annual report of the various social dialogue impact assessments should be provided to the Social Dialogue Committee;

1.3.8 - Identify issues to include in the legislative program in view of negotiating Directives with the employers through European Social Dialogue;

1.3.9 - Work with the European Commission so that the social dialogue representative in each DG (Directorate General) ensures the respect of social dialogue and the specific role of social partners at both the EU and national levels, as well as the protection of national collective bargaining systems. They should be a bridge between the Commission and the social partners and facilitate discussions and meetings;

1.3.10 - Evaluate how to improve the functioning of the Social Dialogue Committee and of the Tripartite Social Summit, where a gender perspective cannot be neglected. The ETUC recommends the establishment of a working group to include the social partners to review the format, and calls for a joint review of the formats of the SDC and the TSS, recognising the key role these play in ensuring exchanges between social partners and the EU institutions. The ETUC will also cooperate with the ETUFs to counteract any attempt to jeopardise EU sectoral social dialogue;

1.3.11 - Continue to develop and operate joint bipartite work programmes and integrated projects drawn up autonomously by the European social partners;

1.3.12 - Call for the creation of a dedicated budget line to back Social Partner Agreements (promoting implementation and supporting autonomy and access to capacity building, expertise and training). The work of the SDC sub-group will continue on the basis of a new mandate and will include dedicated work on the implementation of the active ageing autonomous agreement as well as actions linked to capacity building;

1.3.13 - Ensure the Commission lives up to its obligations under TFEU Article 155.2 regarding presenting agreements reached by EU inter-professional and sectoral social partners to the Council. This includes any attempt to set up further barriers to the adoption of social partner agreements. In that regard, the ETUC and the ETUFs will continue to lobby the Commission and/or the other European social partners to review and clarify the EU social dialogue rules and procedures and to remedy all problems caused by the Commission as revealed by the CJEU judgements;

- 1.3.14** - Develop, in partnership with ETUI, new innovative online tools and training on social dialogue for national trade unions in Europe;
- 1.3.15** - Lobby for an Ambassador for Social Dialogue mandated by, and reporting to, the Social Dialogue Committee. This position should support a cohesive political link between social partners and institutional actors;
- 1.3.16** - Examine the possibility of a permanent European secretariat for social dialogue, managed by the European cross-industry and sectoral social partners, with its budget and staff;
- 1.3.17** The ETUC will build on its previous European social dialogue academy to provide young trade unionists a better understanding of the European social dialogue structures, processes and mechanisms.

1.4 Reinforcing Collective Bargaining

State of Play and Challenges

- 1.4.1** Collective bargaining coverage in the EU currently stands at approximately 65%, with disparities among countries. The Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages in the EU, set a target of 80% collective bargaining coverage, as demanded by the Trade Union movement. Strong trade unions with active membership are the base for good collective agreements. Trade unions need to develop and implement recruitment and organising strategies to ensure that more European workers are covered by collective agreements, including atypical and self-employed workers.
- 1.4.2** The Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages in the EU also establishes the obligation to respect and promote the right to collective bargaining, provide protection for workers who wish to collectively bargain and prevent union-busting practices.
- 1.4.3** In parallel with the agenda for trade union renewal and stronger European trade unionism, the ETUC should continue to be active towards the European institutions to ensure their support for trade unions and collective bargaining.

Actions

- 1.4.4** The ETUC recognises the need for the full implementation of the ILO Conventions (C87 and C98), the Treaty on European Union, the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Council of Europe's European Social Charter, in order to ensure that the right of association and collective bargaining at all levels, as well as the right to a fair (minimum) wage, are fully implemented while respecting the autonomy of the social partners.



- 1.4.5** To reinforce social dialogue, the ETUC will:
- Implement its action plan to support affiliates in the transposition and implementation of the Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages in the EU. An adequate minimum wage is intended as providing for a decent standard of living and for the satisfaction of the needs of the worker and his / her family, and should be set in line with trade union demands and approaches such as living wages. The ETUC Secretariat will follow the transposition process and the use of the provisions and opportunities offered by the Directive at the national level and act accordingly. The Collective Bargaining and Wage Coordination Committee will be kept informed. The online Working Group on the Directive will continue to meet regularly to support affiliates and coordinate actions during the transposition process;
- 1.4.6** - Support affiliates in their actions for the respect and the promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining for the self-employed. This includes ensuring that the EU's new guidelines on competition law and solo-self-employed are applied in such a way that they safeguard the right to join a trade union, to bargain collectively and to take collective action;
- 1.4.7** - Provide specific support for affiliates regarding the development of multi-employer and sectoral forms of collective bargaining;
- 1.4.8** - Support affiliates which are confronted with attacks of governments and companies on the freedom of collective bargaining, including the right to strike;
- 1.4.9** - Explore the following actions to achieve the target of at least 80% of collective bargaining coverage in Europe:
- national affiliates may opt for setting national targets for collective bargaining coverage to be reached by 2027. This will be discussed within the Collective Bargaining and Wage Coordination Committee;
 - offer support and tools for affiliates in reaching their national targets for collective bargaining coverage and in developing and implementing recruitment and organising strategies to underpin this work.
- 1.4.10** - Provide, through the Collective Bargaining and Wage Coordination Committee, a forum for discussing the coordination on current collective bargaining initiatives which could include – amongst others – the following action areas:
- a bargaining agenda and dedicated support for trade unions to address issues linked to working time, including working time reduction while maintaining full pay and compensatory recruitment, including working arrangements that ensure a gender-transformative approach and for those in involuntary part time work to increase their contractual hours;
 - an accelerated upward convergence of the wages, incomes, living and working conditions in the Member States;
 - a comprehensive approach to anticipating and managing change in particular in the context of the green and digital transitions;
 - the right to permanent contracts as well as the right to work full-time. Flexible working arrangements should be voluntary and to the benefit of workers, on the basis of conditions laid down in collective agreements, and using a gender-transformative approach;

- basic negotiation principles to regulate surveillance, data collection, and the use of AI in workplaces and in the employment relationship;
- equal pay for work of equal value between men and women, as well as additional measures to close the gender pay gap, achieve pay transparency and end the undervaluation of work predominantly done by women;
- equal pay and equal rights for work of equal value for migrant workers;
- discuss the extension of collective bargaining agreements as a means to increase contractual coverage and decrease inequalities between workers and between Member States, ensuring a fair redistribution of wealth, in full respect of the understanding that collective agreements and extension mechanism are national competences.

1.4.11 - Push for a revision of the Directives on public procurement and concessions to make sure that only companies that respect workers and trade union rights, negotiate with trade unions and whose workers (including their subcontractors' workers) are covered by collective agreements, get access to any form of public funds, including grants and fiscal benefits;

1.4.12 - Continue to advocate for a European framework to promote upwards convergence on wages and to make sure that multinational companies recognise trade unions and negotiate collective agreements with them at national level in all countries in which they operate and to define a path towards equal pay for work of equal value with regard to wages paid to workers in different countries;

1.4.13 - Support and amplify narratives in the public, academic and policy domains, including the European Central Bank, that run counter to austerity policies and reinforce the importance and success of collective bargaining;

1.4.14 - Facilitate exchanges on joint cross-border collective agreements on both the new challenges facing workers in times of climate and technological change and the establishment of comparable and decent labour standards for all employees of a corporation, regardless of the location of its subsidiaries. The ETUC will raise awareness of the benefits of TCAs.



1.5 Organising and Worker Engagement

State of Play and Challenges

- 1.5.1** The cornerstone for a strong trade union movement is an active and growing membership. On average, trade union membership in Europe currently stands at 27.5% (a drop from 38.9% in 2000). Beyond fighting against trade union-busting practices and legislation, trade unions have a responsibility, at national and European levels, to continue to find new ways to build a strong, unified and dynamic trade union movement together;
- 1.5.2** Strong cooperation is required to support affiliates to remove barriers to increasing trade union power and develop trade union structures to engage with workers in a fast-changing world of work. The ETUC Trade Union Renewal Centre will enable this coordination with the support of an organising network bringing together the ETUC, ETUI, ETUFs and national confederations;
- 1.5.3** The participation rate of young people in the trade union movement is low. This issue needs to be addressed in the short term to build a movement capable of facing the changes foreseen in the labour market in the future and of solving the problems related to youth precariousness in the present. Young people need to be an active part of trade union leadership, decision-making bodies and collective bargaining at European, national and sectoral levels.

Actions

- 1.5.4** The ETUC will coordinate a network involving the ETUI, ETUFs and affiliates that will exchange information and help map the work undertaken to identify emerging/evolving sectors and categories of workers where trade unions can further organise and mobilise. This network will explore the possibility of establishing trade union action centres to support affiliates at regional, national and sectoral levels to develop and deliver their organising strategies;
- 1.5.5** Towards an increased trade union membership base, the following actions need to be undertaken by the ETUC:
- ETUC national affiliates are encouraged and supported to define national strategies for greater trade union density by 2027, following exchanges in the Collective Bargaining and Wage Coordination Committee. Such strategies, which may include specific targets, will be discussed in the Executive Committee before the end of 2023;
- 1.5.6** - Enable coordination and sharing of information, strategies and best practices to identify areas for growth through the work of the Collective Bargaining and Wage Coordination Committee. This could include coverage of precarious work and forms of and non-standard workers, as well as migrants and other particularly vulnerable groups of workers, taking into account a gender perspective;
- 1.5.7** - Discuss, within the Collective Bargaining and Wage Coordination Committee, common areas of action and mobilisation to support affiliates' efforts on member engagement and organising workers;
- 1.5.8** - Seeks to map in cooperation with national trade unions the trade union membership, in cooperation with the ETUI, respectful of national models, including data on age/gender to develop strategies to increase unionisation among young workers and other workers across sectors and in non-standard forms of work (e.g. platform workers, care work in private households), including the self-employed;

- 1.5.9** - Support the setting of clear annual quantitative targets for recruiting young members into trade unions;
- 1.5.10** - Liaise with the ETUFs upon request to support existing organising projects;
- 1.5.11** - Continue to strengthen women's structures and participation in member organisations. Ensure that women are included in decision-making bodies at all levels of the ETUC;
- 1.5.12** - Continue to actively invest in youth and capacity-building programs for young trade unionists (in cooperation with ETUI) in support of Youth structures and participation in member organisations and promote and facilitate youth quotas;
- 1.5.13** - Continue seeking financial resources to empower youth structures in member organisations, including through EU funding and cooperation with foundations;
- 1.5.14** - Encourage the unionisation of women in sectors mostly occupied by men and facilitate their access to union representative positions via training and capacity-building;
- 1.5.15** - Promote specific campaigns aimed at the representation and affiliation of migrant workers.

1.6 Ensuring Democracy at Work – Intensifying Workers' Involvement

State of Play and Challenges

- 1.6.1** Democracy is one of the essential fundamental values on which the EU is based. In recent years, the European democratic foundation has been threatened by recurrent and unprecedented crises, but also by the far-right, which draws its strength from the frustration of many people who feel they no longer have a say in the issues that determine their daily lives. And indeed, in many Member States, the effective exercise of democracy, unfortunately, decreases where most citizens spend a considerable amount of their time: at the workplace. Giving workers a say in the world of work is a cornerstone of a democratic society and an antidote to far-right and anti-worker populism;
- 1.6.2** Trade unions engaging in collective bargaining and workers' information, consultation and participation are two sides of the same coin we call Democracy at Work. Workers, their representatives and trade unions want to have a say in managements' plans which may affect their pay and their working conditions and shape the transformation of their workplaces;
- 1.6.3** The effective exercise of democracy at work by involving workers in the strategic decision-making processes plays a crucial role in protecting workers' rights, quality jobs and working conditions, ensuring companies' and public services' long-term sustainability and fair anticipation and management of change. It is a concrete step towards true and full democracy at work: collective bargaining for every worker;
- 1.6.4** The ETUC strategy will remain to anchor Democracy at Work at the top of the EU and national agenda to counteract trends whereby employers and investors circumvent or undermine existing national workers' rights, weakening democracy at work. Our demands for democracy at work include all workers – even those who lack employee status but suffer from an imbalance of power, and wherever they perform their work;



1.6.5 The ETUC will further fight for the right to organise and collective bargaining as well as adequate information, consultation and, where applicable, participation rights for trade unions and workers' representatives in every new social and economic policy proposal of the EU Commission.

Actions

1.6.6 The ETUC will:

- Promote democracy and equality at work as a horizontal demand in the public and private sectors. Strengthening information, consultation and participation rights of trade unions and workers' representatives in all relevant areas and sectors remains a key priority, including equal electoral capacity in trade union representativeness. All initiatives in this field must respect national labour market models and collective bargaining practices;

1.6.7 - Build on the European Parliament's call for the revision of the European Works Council Directive to push for a legally binding initiative to secure the effective compliance and enforcement of EWCs' rights. The ETUC will also provide its full support to affiliates who challenge the transposition of the EWC Directive into their national legislation and urge the European Commission to launch infringement procedures;

1.6.8 - Focus on the improvement of information, consultation and participation rights of workers, including those stemming from the 2002/14 Directive, in all sectors and seek to end outstanding exclusions of groups of workers/sectors, including public administration;

1.6.9 - Build on the success of the ETUC 'More Democracy at Work' mobilisation actions over the last mandate, the ETUC will continue its high-level engagement to further strengthen democracy at work at all political levels with a set of concrete priorities, including the ETUC initiative "Democracy at Work goes local";

1.6.10 - Advocate, in the run-up to the 2024 European elections, for the European political parties to include in their election manifestos the ETUC demands for more democracy at work. This focuses, in the first place, on strengthening collective bargaining and also includes promoting more information, consultation and participation rights;

1.6.11 - Actively participate in the hearings of the incoming Commission in autumn 2024. The new Commission must commit itself to more democracy at work and to deliver on:

- an EU framework on improving information, consultation and participation in both public and private sectors, and board-level representation, for European company forms and for companies making use of EU company law instruments enabling company mobility, with no exclusions for any category of worker or employer;
- strengthening the EWC Directive through a legally binding initiative, including deterrent sanctions to make it effective;
- an EU binding initiative on anticipation of change and restructuring processes. This initiative should be inspired by the Cercas report and include mandatory rules on timely and quality information, consultation and participation of trade unions and worker representatives at local, national and European levels, as well as social safeguards for workers in the case of restructuring processes;
- the evaluation and revision of the 2019 company law package to ensure EU law does not endanger/diminish national law and/or collective bargaining practices;

- the involvement of trade unions in due diligence initiatives of the companies;
- full implementation of the directive on women on boards (Women on Board Directive, 2022) in all large listed companies in Europe.

- 1.6.12** - Renew its demand to evaluate and revise the company law package to close remaining loopholes. In particular, the ETUC will fight to end regime shopping by unscrupulous companies using artificial arrangements such as letter box companies to minimise or infringe their legal obligations towards workers and their representatives;
- 1.6.13** - Carry out in-depth exchanges with affiliates and EWC members at the annual EWC Conference. The focus shall be placed on improving transnational information and consultation rights to anticipate changes, restructuring, and secure the effective work of EWCs to guarantee their rights and implement them, and meet and influence European policy decision-makers;
- 1.6.14** - Continue to work closely with the ETUFs on all issues related to democracy at work in a cooperative spirit;
- 1.6.15** - Build on its close cooperation with the ETUI to bring scientific solid evidence on the impact of democracy at work at national, sectoral and cross-sectoral, and transnational levels to support the ETUC political demands.

1.7 Protecting and Promoting Trade Union Rights

State of Play and Challenges

- 1.7.1.** The case law of international and European human rights bodies (UN, ILO and Council of Europe), as well as the ITUC 2022 Global Rights Index, clearly demonstrate that violations of human rights, and in particular of trade union rights by governments and companies are on the increase, within Europe.
- 1.7.2.** Subsequent crises have also been (ab)used by the EU, governments and companies to attack further and downgrade the rights of workers and trade unions unacceptably.
- 1.7.3.** To better respond to affiliates' needs and demands, the ETUC has, since 2019, considerably enhanced its activities and the support to affiliates to defend and enforce human, labour and trade union rights, in particular via the ETUCLEX, the new ETUC human rights, legal and strategic litigation support structure/network. Given the repetitive threats and challenges to human rights in the EU and beyond, the ETUC as human rights defender will enhance its actions to ensure that proposals for EU law and policies and their implementation fully recognise and respect human rights, labour and trade union rights.
- 1.7.4.** The EU must also ensure better enforcement of these rights by providing or establishing the necessary bodies, monitoring procedures and/or tools (including campaigns, and training programmes for their knowledge) and making those available or accessible to trade unions and workers.



Actions

1.7.5. The ETUC will continue to enhance and increase its legal and litigation activities and capacities within the ETUCLEX to better support the ETUC affiliates in their (litigation) actions to hold governments and companies accountable for human, labour and trade union rights violations. It will:

- Make strategic use of existing (quasi or extra-) judicial monitoring and enforcement mechanisms at UN, ILO, Council of Europe and EU level, where appropriate in consultation/ cooperation with the ITUC;
- Promote joint strategies among the member organisations or through the ETUC itself;
- Provide targeted training and analysis (e.g. in the form of guides, and dedicated projects) on both procedural and thematic aspects of human rights, legal and litigation issues;
- Use communication/ social media tools to enhance knowledge and understanding of the importance of human, labour and trade union rights in a democratic society, and to name and shame governments and companies that violate human, labour and trade union rights.

1.7.6. The ETUC will work towards an effective and binding EU law on Corporate Sustainable Due Diligence (CSDD) and, subsequently, follow and act accordingly to ensure an effective implementation. Similarly, the ETUC will continue to work to ensure effective EU (legislative) initiatives in related areas, such as banning forced labour products and services or products and services linked to violations of other ILO (core) conventions.

It will also:

- Support its affiliates, in cooperation with the ETUI, in organising training and meetings related to CSDD to ensure the involvement of trade unions in due diligence processes;
- Contribute to strengthening international and European trade union action actions to ensure the defence of the human labour rights of the working class employed in supply chains.

1.7.7. The ETUC will also:

- Follow and act accordingly to ensure effective implementation of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive. Continue its work within the EFRAG to ensure that further standard setting on reporting obligations fully ensure and certainly does not undermine, the rights and prerogatives of trade union and workers representatives and workers in general;

1.7.8. - Work towards the adoption and ratification of an ambitious UN Treaty on Business and Human Rights, which provides for effective trade union involvement and protects trade union rights and fundamental social rights. Its application should also be promoted by negotiating transnational company agreements and due diligence plans;

1.7.9. Furthermore, the ETUC will also:

- Intensify actions to pressure the EU to accede to and ratify the Council of Europe European Convention of Human Rights, the Revised European Social Charter, the 1995 Additional Protocol providing for a system of collective complaints and the (Revised) European Code of Social Security;

1.7.10. - Continue to take actions towards the EU and Member States to ratify, implement and apply relevant UN, ILO and European human rights instruments. Furthermore, the ETUC will join forces with the ITUC in demand for a global campaign to the ILO for the ratification and implementation of ILO Fundamental Conventions;

- 1.7.11** - Continue to call on the EU institutions to ensure that in the design, interpretation and implementation of EU legislation and policy, in particular when launched under the EPSR and European Semester, all relevant UN, ILO and Council of Europe human rights instruments are respected and duly taken into account to avoid that EU (case) law and policies contradict, restrict or adversely affect human, labour and trade union rights, as recognised in those instruments to which the EU and/or MS have signed up to;
- 1.7.12** - Follow and act accordingly to ensure effective implementation and enforcement of the rights and prerogatives of trade union and workers' representatives in current Directives as well as in forthcoming Directives which might affect the promotion and defence of trade union, workers and social rights;
- 1.7.13.** - Ensure that the EU provides and/or improves the necessary bodies, procedures and tools accessible for workers and trade unions to enforce their rights amongst other things by:
- Pressing for an EU legally binding instrument on the effective enforcement of workers and trade union rights, including the right to representation in all (including digital) workplaces and protection from victimisation, and the need for MS to put in place appropriate remedies, including collective complaints, and dissuasive sanctions;
 - Pushing for an EU legally binding instrument setting out minimum standards for labour and social law inspection services and complaint mechanisms in line with the ILO Conventions n° 81 and N° 129 and the new ILO guidelines on general principles of labour inspection, thereby fully respecting the roles of social partners in implementing the legal instrument and in particular trade unions on national level;
 - Calling for the establishment of a chamber for labour and social law in the European Court of Justice, for which European trade union (con)federations should be able to send representatives as lay judges;
 - Following up on how the Whistleblower Directive has improved the protection of workers, to assess the need for a broadened scope;
 - Pushing for the adoption of an EU Directive protecting human rights defenders from strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) including workers and trade unions, when exercising their freedom of expression or assembly.

1.8 Developing a Golden Rule to protect well-functioning systems

- 1.8.1** A core task for the ETUC is to promote social rights and workers' rights in the EU legal framework. The challenges facing workers in the EU member states are different, yet the fight for higher wages and better working conditions are universal. The integrated EU internal market makes the strive for a level playing field without social dumping and with respect for social and employment rights more important than ever.

The ETUC will always support its national affiliates in their strive for collective bargaining and their freedom to maintain, conclude and enforce collective agreements which may be a better tool to implement and complement EU-legislative initiatives according to national practices and frameworks. In this respect acknowledging the importance for the social partners to have room for negotiating and collectively bargain. Negative impact and misuse by employers or 'yellow' unions must be prevented.



TOGETHER TO CHANGE THE FUTURE OF WORK FOR GOOD



2.1 Improving Working Conditions and Ensuring Quality Jobs

State of Play and Challenges

- 2.1.1** Whereas the economic activity shrank significantly in 2020 due to the social impact of the Covid-19 health and economic crisis, employment in the euro area fell only slightly due to the role played by job retention schemes, such as short-time work schemes, with the support of the European program SURE.
- 2.1.2** The pandemic has contributed to labour market tightness. Labour shortages have been recorded in some sectors, particularly those involving intensive social contact, due to the poor level of health and safety provided (mainly in the health sector, but not only), former employees have either been hesitating to return to fill in vacancies (especially for low wages and precarious working conditions) or have moved on to other safer sectors, putting upwards pressures on nominal wages.
- 2.1.3.** Employment and unemployment have quickly recovered from the pandemic but not the total hours worked levels, already impacted by a downward trend, attesting of the creation of more precarious jobs.
- 2.1.4** Women and specific groups such as migrant workers, frontier workers and other cross-border mobile workers, and young people and low-skilled, low paid workers have nevertheless been more affected, and the cost-of-living crisis will only exacerbate this tendency.
- 2.1.5** The real wages of millions of workers all over Europe suffered in a very short time a reduction not seen for many years. This is a core task of trade unions, and it demands actions. Workers need a pay rise in order to afford the most basic standard of living. Protecting purchasing power in the current cost of living crisis and closing the gap between high and low wages is crucial. Wage increases have, for too long, lagged behind productivity in many Member States. At the same time, the last two years have been characterised by huge profits for many large companies and multinationals. The distribution between capital and labour has worsened rather than improved.

Actions

- 2.1.6** The ETUC will:
- 2.1.7** - Contribute to the integration of the most vulnerable groups in the labour market ensuring fair working conditions and equal treatment with a focus on persons with disabilities;
 - 2.1.8** - Work for strengthening public employment services, effective labour market policies, and interventions on employment creation, with social conditionalities in terms of quality jobs for public hiring subsidies;
 - 2.1.9** - Discuss the idea of a legislative initiative on a European Job Guarantee;
- Have a position on quality standards and access to unemployment benefits;

- 2.1.10** - Implement the employment package for workers with disabilities with the participation of the recently created ETUC taskforce on workers with disabilities;
- 2.1.11** - Mobilise to support the affiliates in the transposition of the Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages, which establishes the principle of “a decent standard of living” and recognises the ETUC threshold of decency as a guiding principle for assessing their adequacy. Support affiliates in increasing statutory minimum wages where they exist. Statutory minimum wages should never fall below the threshold of decency of 60% of the national median wage and 50% of the national average wage, and should, in any case, ensure at least a decent standard of living, and the ETUC will support affiliates in their demands such as reaching the living wage level. The ETUC will support affiliates that want to safeguard their national collective bargaining and wage-setting systems in the implementation of the directive;
- 2.1.12** - Work for new and improved rights and conditions for workers through EU law, European social dialogue and/or a more effective implementation and application of the EU legally binding Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Declaration of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Hence, the ETUC will continue to ensure the full respect of different labour market models and traditions. The ETUC rejects the gold-plating narrative set by employers, which undermines the non-regression clause of EU directives;
- 2.1.13** - Assist affiliates where requested to ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of the rights enshrined in recently adopted and/or forthcoming directives in the field of employment rights/labour law;
- 2.1.14** - Continue working towards enforcing equal pay for work of equal value, eradicating the gender pay gap, the gender pension gap and the undervaluation of work predominantly done by women;
- 2.1.15** - Work towards a better application and enforcement of the Working Time Directive, including by addressing the (ab)use of the possibility of exemptions/exclusions provided in the Directive, in close consultation with national and European trade unions and with full respect for social partner autonomy to improve compliance with the existing rights and obligations set out in the Directive, as opposed to a revision; also work towards a comprehensive and gender-transformative EU framework on working time.

2.2 End Precariousness

State of Play and Challenges

- 2.2.1** Some employers try to impose a new economic model based on bogus self-employment to circumvent rules and responsibilities and bypass collective bargaining.
- 2.2.2** The ETUC has achieved a draft Directive on digital platforms. This includes the presumption of the employment relationship and the reversal of the burden of proof and the right of information of algorithmic management for workers and trade unions. Further work is needed to improve this proposal to guarantee respect for national industrial legislation and practices.



2.2.3 Research shows that jobs and employment are the biggest concern of young people today, followed closely by poverty and inequality. Their precarious position in the labour markets forced them into unemployment following the pandemic, often without any safety net. Many were engaged in short-term and non-standard contracts, and employers were not obliged to pay a social security contribution. The number of NEETs (not in employment, education or training) also increased rapidly. We must step up our fight for European measures to guarantee quality jobs and swift reintegration into the labour market for young people taking into account the green and digital transition.

2.2.4 The new precarious forms of work and the rapid transformation in the world of work risk to push towards the individualisation of the employment relationship and the reaffirmation of the individual over collective interests. This trend risks to limit and reduce the trade union collective bargaining action to defend workers collective rights and interests and increases inequalities between workers.

Actions

2.2.5 The ETUC will:

2.2.6. - Ensure that the negotiation and implementation of the Platform Work Directive brings the employee status to all workers working with platforms acting as employers while protecting genuine self-employed from subordination from digital labour platform;

2.2.7 - Obtain a ban on on-demand and zero-hours type contracts, and other arrangements and forms of precarious work, making permanent contracts the standard;

2.2.8 - improve the social rights of genuine self-employed workers, in line with the recent ruling C-356/21 of the European Court of Justice granting protection against discrimination to self-employed workers, and combatting involuntary part-time work;

2.2.9 - Set up a European trade union action plan to fight against precarious forms of employment, which should include the establishment of a European trade union action day;

2.2.10 - Assess which non-standard forms of employment in which sectors and Member States could benefit from a presumption of an employment relationship in national law and how EU legislation might contribute to protecting these non-standard workers;

2.2.10 - Advocate for the legislative initiative to ban unpaid and bogus internships in the open labour market and unpaid and bogus traineeships as part of active labour market policies (ALMP);

2.2.11 - Promote binding quality standards for jobs and particularly those created with EU or national funds, and promote better involvement of social partners in the design, implementation, and monitoring of youth-specific programs, such as Reinforced Youth Guarantee, through European Semester and ESF+ partnership principle;

2.2.12 - Strengthen alliances with student organisations, youth organisations and national youth councils, which should include the trade union voice, to promote democracy at work and in society;

2.2.13 - Stand up for the right to adequate, decent and affordable housing, which is a necessary condition for the autonomy of young people.

2.3 Safeguarding Occupational Health and Safety

State of Play and Challenges

- 2.3.1 In the EU, there are 12 fatal work-related accidents per day, despite some improvement in the total number of occupational diseases, accidents and casualties, these are still far too many. Work-related cancer due to exposure to hazardous substances is responsible for 53% of all work-related deaths, amounting to 100.000 workers passing away annually. Furthermore, traditional hazards remain at a high level. In June 2021, the European Commission presented its Strategic framework on health and safety at work.
- 2.3.2 The challenges in the workplace are increasing, also due to technological and digital innovation. The last two years have shown how a virus is easily contracted at work and is a risk factor for professionals in the health and social care sectors. Workers in precarious jobs and migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to occupational health and safety risks.
- 2.3.3 Climate change –including extreme temperatures, growing exposure to UV-radiation and weather events – is also increasing risks for working people affecting their physical and mental health and sometimes causing their death.
- 2.3.4 Work-related stress and psychosocial health issues account for more than half of all working days lost in the EU and affect female workers to a greater extent; in addition there is a growing number of workers in need of protection because they are subject to online harassment and shaming.
- 2.3.5 Workers, particularly women, face work-related violence, from the employer, third parties or even co-workers. The duty of care of employers includes putting in place measurements for ensuring a workplace free of harassment and violence.
- 2.3.6 There are at least 23 dangerous carcinogens that workers are exposed to that still need to be addressed as a priority. Arduous and strenuous work is still a major OHS problem and the reason for physical pain, musculoskeletal disorders, reduced employability and early retirement for millions of workers in the EU.

Actions

- 2.3.7 The ETUC will:
- 2.3.8 - Continue working to achieve Zero Deaths by 2030, by bringing the realities of work-related deaths and occupational illnesses to the forefront. It seeks to persuade stakeholders across Europe to commit to Zero Deaths at the workplace and because of work. It will give particular attention to the safety and health of migrants on construction sites, including undocumented migrants, and including the right to decent housing;
- 2.3.9 - Mainstream the gender dimension in the field of occupational safety and health;
- 2.3.10 - Advocate revising EU legislation on OSH to better protect workers against new and long-standing risks, such as MSDs. Support the extension of the scope of the Framework Directive on Health and safety and its individual directives to domestic servants, currently exclude;
- 2.3.11 - Address psychosocial risks, including online harassment and shaming, at work through a European Directive that creates the conditions for trade union action against growing risks with an organisational and collective approach that e.g. takes into account staffing levels;



- 2.3.12** - Work to improve the REACH regulation in the light of providing better protection of workers against exposure to chemical substances and nanomaterials;
- 2.3.13** - Move towards EU legislation that establishes temperature limits for people to work outdoors in order to prevent injuries and accidents at work;
- 2.3.14** - Support the development or re-establishment of dedicated OSH instances with dedicated resources for workers' representatives and trade unions in the workplace, respectful of national models, to support, defend and enforce OSH in the workplace;
- 2.3.15** - Support the implementation of the CMRD (Carcinogen, Mutagen and Reprotoxic Directive) and its revisions to include new BOELs on CMR substances while supporting alternative risk-free substances and protecting from poly-exposure;
- 2.3.16** - Build on the recognition of ILO Conventions on OSH as fundamental principles to support trade unions' campaign for their swift ratification at national level and their actions dedicated to OSH.

2.4 A Right to Training and Reinforcing Lifelong Learning

State of Play and Challenges

- 2.4.1** The energy transition, digitalisation and technological progress, and the need for a transition to a sustainable economy and green technologies, provide new challenges to European workers. These changes impact workers of all skill levels. They need support to improve their skills, qualifications and consequently wage levels, working conditions and career and transition prospects. Education and training must enable people to shape the world of work and society in a way that is oriented towards democracy, humanity and justice.
- 2.4.2** The Action Plan of the EPSR targets at least 60% yearly adult participation rate in learning and access to basic digital skills for at least 80% of people aged 16-74. According to the latest Cedefop report¹, 46.1% of the adult population, approximately 128 million adults in the EU-27 Member States, the UK, Iceland and Norway, need upskilling and reskilling. In the imminent future we will face skill mismatches and an increase in labour reallocation. Especially low-skilled workers often lack access to training. The workers, especially women workers, young workers, migrant workers and the unemployed, urgently need support, including financial support, not only in accessing quality and inclusive training for upskilling and reskilling but also in validating their skills and competencies and in accessing quality guidance and counselling.
- 2.4.3** It is essential to continue pushing for the effective implementation of the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights at European and national levels within the green and digital transition. This should ensure the right to education and training for all by guaranteeing high-quality and inclusive employee training and paid educational leave for all workers, preferably during working time, and the right to access to full qualifications, validation of non-formal and informal learning and work experience, and free and quality career guidance and counselling. It is important to ensure this right by law or collective agreements.

¹ CEDEFOP: Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways. Volume 1: adult population with potential for upskilling and reskilling, 02/2020



Actions

- 2.4.4** The ETUC will:
- Contribute to meeting the targets of the EPSR Action Plan within social dialogue on reducing skills shortages and skill mismatches to support job-to-job transition, and by defining quality indicators of measuring and achieving this target in accessing training, including tackling gender gaps;
- 2.4.5** - Advocate for the guaranteed right and access to high quality and fully inclusive employee training for all workers as an individual, enforceable right to training vis-à-vis the employer established either by law or collective agreements, with possible development of principles for a quality framework on employee training which enables national trade unions to find collective solutions through bipartite or tripartite agreements;
- 2.4.6** - Ensure, through the European Semester process and the use of the RRF, that quality apprenticeship provision, adult participation in lifelong learning and employee training are a priority with special attention to the inclusion aspects;
- 2.4.7** - Ensure the use of EU funds allocated to employers upon meeting social dimension targets include: existing provision of the right of employee training during working time; guaranteed inclusive access to training; provision of fair paid educational leave; access to validation of skills and competences and skills and career guidance application; and respect of the European Framework of Quality and Effective Apprenticeship;
- 2.4.8** - Contribute to strengthening social dialogue, aiming at fostering re- and upskilling driven by social dialogue and that social partners have a more strategic role in European and national policies and in funding mechanisms for training, in particular in identifying skill needs for the future, designing competence frameworks, adapting training curricula and its design in the workplace;
- 2.4.9** - Strengthen cooperation with ETUFs, notably with the education sector workers (ETUCE), as well as with the EU institutions and EU agencies.

2.5 Fair Labour Mobility

State of Play and Challenges

- 2.5.1** Labour mobility should not only be free and chosen freely but must also be free from unfair competition and social dumping. Fair labour mobility can and should contribute to better working and living conditions. Unfortunately, today's reality is different, workers are played off against each other, creating a race to the bottom.
- 2.5.2** Frontier, seasonal, posted, and other cross-border mobile workers are often the most vulnerable and the least protected. The pandemic also underlined the challenges and opportunities of digitalisation in terms of compliance and control. Lack of cross-border cooperation and enforcement, coupled with gaps in the EU legal framework and socially unfavourable rulings from the EU Court of Justice, further contribute to precarity. With increasingly international labour markets, precarious work in sectors such as maritime transport and beyond represents a global risk of labour exploitation and undermines fair competition in the European and domestic labour markets.

- 2.5.3** The quest for cheap labour drives fraudulent business models based on flexibilization, short-termism, and abuse of workers' rights. Complex subcontracting chains and intermediaries, including temporary work agencies, recruitment agencies, housing facilitators and letterbox companies, are used by cross-border businesses to escape liability, blur employment relationships, circumvent tax and social security law, and hide from inspections. All too often, the existing control is powerless against this.
- 2.5.4** Frontier and cross-border workers make an important contribution to the economy but experience particular problems in exercising their freedom of movement. The Interregional Trade Union Councils play a key role in regional labour markets by providing support and advice to these workers. For five decades, the IRTUCs have brought together regional organisations of national confederations, including through EURES Cross-Border Partnerships. They help to improve the quality of cross-border mobility, identifying obstacles and guaranteeing respect for workers' rights and equal treatment.

Actions

- 2.5.5** The ETUC will:
- Improve the enforcement of labour mobility rules by pushing the European Labour Authority (ELA) to increase cross-border inspections and social partner involvement at all levels. The ELA should work together with the social partners to develop sectoral approaches to risk assessments and inspections. The ETUC will assess the performance of the Authority in relation to its objectives, mandate and tasks to suggest improvements to its functioning. Cross-border enforcement should be further improved through digital tools such as a European Social Security Pass and a European framework on social ID and labour cards;
- 2.5.6** Defend the principle of equal treatment for mobile workers. This entails a fair conclusion of the revision of the EU Regulations on Social Security Coordination and the implementation review of the Posting Directives, ensuring that Member States can put in place effective control measures, including administrative requirements, risk assessments, workplace inspections, and effective sanctions. The ETUC will also advocate for the abolition of exemption periods from social security contributions affecting, in particular, seasonal workers. Likewise, problems of double taxation affecting highly mobile workers must be addressed, preferably at the EU level;
- 2.5.7** Create stronger incentives for direct and good quality jobs for mobile workers by tackling the fraudulent use of labour market intermediaries and abuse of workers' rights in supply chains, by calling for an EU general legal framework limiting subcontracting and ensuring joint and several liability throughout the chain; Advocating for the use of prohibitions and restrictions to temporary agency workers in fraud sensitive sectors as well as an EU register and certification for compliant temporary work agencies in the internal market; Pushing for EU rules to strengthen the accountability of private recruitment agencies operating in the internal market by introducing minimum obligations; calling for legally binding EU minimum standards on decent accommodation for all mobile and migrant workers;
- 2.5.8.** - Empower mobile and migrant workers by advocating for rights-based enforcement approaches and reporting mechanisms within ELA and the Platform tackling Undeclared Work. The ETUC will, in close cooperation with affiliates, call for dedicated permanent EU funding for national and trans-national trade union counselling and support services helping workers exercise and claim their rights under EU mobility and labour migration rules;
- 2.5.9** - Promote, with regard to intra-European mobility, the exportability of social benefits previously obtained, as well as full access to the local welfare and health system in the host Member State;

- 2.5.10** - Improve the functioning and visibility of existing IRTUCs, by strengthening their funding, training and communication, and promote the setting up of new ones wherever useful and/or necessary. National Confederations are encouraged to promote, through concrete actions, collaboration and exchange between trade union representatives in the respective IRTUCs, including by fostering mutual membership recognition agreements for cross-border and frontier workers.

2.6 Gender Equality

State of Play and Challenges

- 2.6.1** The situation of women at work and in society is far from being equal. The COVID crisis, the cost-of-living crisis, the war in Ukraine and the rise of the far-right affect women in particular and significantly threaten past achievements and present struggles. At the international level, progress on gender equality has begun to reverse (SDG 5).
- 2.6.2** The weakening of women's working and living conditions is likely to continue and even escalate with the cost-of-living crisis. Single mothers, migrant women, women with a low level of education, young women and older women will be most impacted.
- 2.6.3** Violence against women is far from being eradicated. Sexual harassment in the world of work, including bullying, is a persisting phenomenon. Violence against women, online or offline, causes economic harm and significantly reduces prospects for economic independence and equal working and living conditions.
- 2.6.4** Family care and domestic work is still disproportionately carried out by women to the detriment of their career advancement, further exacerbating gendered inequalities. Promoting an equal distribution of caring responsibilities and work-life balance is necessary. Care work and incorrectly branded "low-skilled" jobs, heavily feminized, need to be urgently re-evaluated to combat low pay, staff shortages and poor working conditions.
- 2.6.5** The backlash against women's rights, fuelled and funded by far-right parties and political forces keeps increasing. Hate speech and hate crimes, offline and online, are on the rise. The digital sphere is still dominated by men, resulting in a gender-biased digital infrastructure.

Actions

- 2.6.6** The main ETUC actions in the area of Gender Equality will be to:
- 2.6.7** - Deliver concrete tools to end the undervaluation of work predominantly done by women and the gendered labour market segregation through collective bargaining, social dialogue and legislation; and continue to support national trade union actions to;
- Support affiliates towards an ambitious transposition of the Pay Transparency Directive, leading to a re-evaluation of work predominantly done by women, and to stronger support to collective bargaining to closing the gender pay gap and to promoting professional growth;
- 2.6.8** - Continue to monitor the gender pay gap, including on a monthly and annual basis, to take into account part-time work;
- 2.6.9** - Provide practical tools to address all forms of violence and harassment, online and offline, including third-party violence via workplace policies and collective bargaining. Raise awareness



on solutions to support victims and survivors of all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic violence and explore in particular the introduction of paid leave for victims of domestic violence, as well as other workplace related measures, such as relocation. Reach a common understanding of the various forms of cyber-violence, psychological violence and economic violence. Advocate for a strong Directive combatting violence against women and domestic violence that foresees a strong role for trade unions; and, if relevant, propose the update of the cross-sectoral framework agreement on violence and harassment (2007);

- 2.6.10** - Advance a swift ratification of the ILO Convention 190, eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work in all European countries;
- 2.6.11** - Continue to advocate for EU accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women ('Istanbul Convention');
- 2.6.12** - Push for legal frameworks guaranteeing the right to free, safe and legal abortions for all women. Provide training and improve knowledge on equality bargaining, with strong involvement of women negotiators. Work towards solutions in collective bargaining and social dialogue that allow for gender-transformative workplaces, addressing sexual and reproductive health and rights and well-being of women (for example, regarding menstruation, abortion and menopause) and support for victims and survivors of all forms of violence against women;
- 2.6.13** - Push for investment in care and counter the commercialization of social care to create a high quality public infrastructure of inclusive and non-profit care services that are available and accessible to all and provide high quality jobs in public care service. High-quality public services are a fundamental right and must support demographic, democratic and socio-economic development. Their availability, which must be gender-responsive, is a main instrument for combating inequalities and unequal distribution of caring responsibilities while providing opportunities and high-quality jobs for all;
- 2.6.14** - Follow the effects of the Work Life Balance Directive and act accordingly from an intersectional perspective. Continue to defend the equal distribution of caring responsibilities for children or (chosen) family members;
- 2.6.15** - Follow the implementation of the Women on Boards Directive and act accordingly;
- 2.6.16** - Follow and influence the evolution of AI and its use in the world of work. Push towards gender-responsive regulation of the use of AI that excludes the possibility of intrusive tracking or emotional management tools in person-to-person occupations that are heavily feminized;
- 2.6.17** - Provide practical information and tools on how to deconstruct gender stereotypes aiming to attract more girls and women in mathematical, technical professions and more boys and men in the female-dominated social professions.

2.7 Guaranteeing Equality and Combating Discrimination

State of Play and Challenges

- 2.7.1** Europe is a continent of diversity, and although the EU policies over the past couple of years are trying to respond to the situation and fight against a different form of discrimination, the soft policy approach, often overlooking the role of social partners, is not an appropriate tool to

protect marginalised communities make all European citizens feel safe and allow them to be and love whomever they want.

- 2.7.2** Trade Unions must promote and welcome diversity and be equipped to deal with discrimination faced by workers. Collective bargaining and collective agreements need to be used to actively foster diversity, tolerance and inclusion at all levels and oppose all possible grounds of discrimination and work-related violence and world of work.
- 2.7.3** The ETUC will support LGBTIQ equality in the world of work and lobby with MEPs and national governments for effective implementation of the EU LGBTIQ equality strategy.
- 2.7.4** Eliminating racism at work must be a priority horizontally embedded in all trade union activities. Trade Unions must have a meaningful role in the implementation of the EU anti-racism Action Plan with regards to EU strategy to combat antisemitism and EU Roma strategic framework on equality, inclusion and participation.
- 2.7.5** Finally, the systems deployed to make our lives better must be accountable to make our lives better - The trade union movement must preserve its strong role and capacity to defend workers' interests in the new environments governed by new technologies such as AI.

Actions

- 2.7.6** The ETUC will undertake to:
 - 2.7.7** - Ensure broader participation of the ETUC affiliates in meaningful exchanges and mutual learning on concrete topics, such as policy issues preventing discrimination and harassment at the workplace;
 - 2.7.8** - Continue strengthening cooperation with EU institutions (EU-FRA) NGOs, Civil Society and Equality Bodies (where relevant) while strongly insisting on differences between those and highlighting the added value and the representativeness that social partners are bringing to the discussion;
 - 2.7.9** - Guide and encourage its affiliates to use the European funding to develop campaigns, strategies, and training activities to alleviate inequalities, helping to create a workplace of open values and diversity by discussing examples and sharing best practices in collective agreements;
 - 2.7.10** - Advocate for EU funding to strengthen the capacity building of trade unions to fully understand and detect discrimination via AI-based systems and establish a platform for experience sharing and reporting channels for affected workers and job seekers;
 - 2.7.11** - Urge the European Decision-making bodies to implement the EU strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 and monitor closely the Disability Employment package to set up obligations to employers for offering a reasonable adaptation of the workplace for a worker with a disability. The ETUC will also monitor the European Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 to guarantee equal access for persons with a disability not only in workplaces, but also in public areas and public services.



2.8 Anticipation of Change and Ensuring Just Transitions

State of Play and Challenges

2.8.1 Urgent and drastic action is needed to limit global warming to 1.5°C. The last decade has been the warmest in modern record. Extreme weather events accompany this increase in temperature. These consequences particularly affect the most vulnerable workers and people in our society, including workers responding to extreme weather events, sometimes putting their own lives in danger.

2.8.2 The ETUC supports the objective of reaching climate neutrality by 2050 and the interim target of at least -55% GHG emissions by 2030. However, the underlying changes that will need to happen will severely impact workers in many sectors and regions and risk increasing inequalities. This, therefore, requires an ambitious just transition agenda, through concrete legislation as part of the European Green Deal agenda and the national energy- and climate plans – In line with the ILO guidelines on just transition and compatible with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The ETUC wants to ensure that no public funding goes to companies that foster the green transition without social conditionalities (or public compensation schemes to counter the negative aspects of a transitional period to companies), such as an applicable collective labour agreement, minimum social standards (and reporting) and workers protection.

2.8.3 When it comes to the new services and goods created as a result of the green transition, the ETUC wants to ensure that they serve a social and ecological purpose and provide for quality jobs. Those jobs should be created at the same time that other jobs are phased out to provide alternative opportunities to workers negatively affected. The promotion of unionisation, social dialogue and collective bargaining in new green sectors remains of key importance, together with the development of just transition plans.

2.8.4 The ETUC is aware of the historical responsibility and the disproportionate weight of rich countries in GHG emissions. Ensuring solidarity at a global level is a priority.

Actions

2.8.5 The ETUC will:

2.8.6 - Continue its work to operationalise the concept of just transition of the workforce as defined by the ILO in European legislation. The ETUC will also advocate for better integration of the social and labour dimension in NECPs and through a greater coordination with the European Semester and the follow-up of NRRPs. The ETUC will also continue to support its affiliates in the development and implementation of their Just Transition Territorial Plans;

2.8.7 - Advocate for a European Directive for Just Transition of the world of work through anticipation and management of change, with trade union involvement and collective bargaining as leading principles;

- 2.8.8** - Promote the role of social dialogue and collective bargaining in managing the green transition and encourage actions at the shop-floor level, including by building upon its previous project 'Greening the workplaces' and looking for more recent data and case studies. The ETUC will also develop tools and a campaign to support trade union delegates to play a more active role in the development of just transition agreements at the workplace level and will work further with the ETUFs to extend it at a sectoral level;
- 2.8.9** - Build on its project 'adaptation to climate change and the world of work', to raise awareness around the risks caused by climate change consequences for workers;
- 2.8.10** - Advocate for new adaptation measures to protect workers from health and safety risks and adverse effects on employment. In addition, the ETUC will undertake to promote, in all workplaces, continuous training courses aimed at adapting the skills of workers to the new scenarios;
- 2.8.11** - Demand more transparency in the supply chains (for example, via CSDDD) to make sure it is absolutely clear where (parts of) products come from and if labour and sustainability rules are followed;
- 2.8.12** - Participate in COPs and UNFCCC negotiations, in cooperation with ITUC, to promote the concept of Just Transition of the workforce and to integrate aspects relative to the world of work, workers' rights and solidarity in international climate agreements. The ETUC will also push for a more significant role for the ILO in the UNFCCC process;
- 2.8.13** - Promote a circular economy in Europe to reduce the consumption of natural resources and production of waste.

2.9 For a Human Centric Digitalisation

State of Play

- 2.9.1** Digital transformation has already profoundly impacted the way we work. It will continue to significantly reshape the world of work in the coming years, particularly through the use of data and data driven technologies in particular artificial intelligence.
- 2.9.2** The ETUC actively mobilises to ensure that digital innovation and technological change aim to improve working and living conditions for workers and are environment-friendly.
- 2.9.3** The ETUC recognises the danger posed by technology in workplace surveillance, control of workers and invasion of privacy, which undermine or breach legal provisions protecting workers.
- 2.9.4** It is essential to know how to carry out the digital transition. Digital governance requires transparency in the management of artificial intelligence, but also the involvement of trade unions in the digital transformation of companies to ensure that the 'digital added value' is used to improve conditions for workers and to maintain jobs.



2.9.5 The European Digital Decade sets the goal for a fully digitising Europe by 2030. Despite the fact that digital technologies should also be designed to protect people's rights, support and ensure democracy, and contribute to reducing inequalities, especially from an equal and regional perspective, no concrete measure has been provided so far for the necessary protection for workers. Moreover, the European Digital Decade does not include the involvement of trade unions. The digital factory is not in line with EU social values and principles, let alone with workers' rights.

Actions

2.9.6 The ETUC will:

- Negotiate within the European social dialogue a framework agreement to be incorporated into a Directive that will revise and update the 2002 Telework Agreement and ensure the right to disconnect; develop a concrete action plan for and together with its affiliates to ensure effective and full implementation of such agreement/Directive;

2.9.7 - Advocate for a specific EU social Directive on Algorithmic Systems in the Workplace to ensure a gender-responsive worker protection approach to how these systems are deployed at work and in particular to strengthen their individual and collective rights, such as information, consultation and participation, questions related to new and existing occupational health and safety issues as well as the protection of their data;

2.9.8 - Advocate, in the run-up to the 2024 European elections and the Commission hearings, for a just digital transformation and a human centric digitalisation;

2.9.9 - Advocate for the 'human in control' principle to be incorporated into EU law, so that humans are always in control of machines and not the other way around;

2.9.10 - Enhance actions to ensure also through collective bargaining that high quality jobs is an essential requirement and outcome of the digital transformation at work. This includes the full respect of workers' rights and the opposition to a new or intermediate status for workers, particularly concerning working time, occupational health and safety, and training and workers' data protection. Special attention should be dedicated to vulnerable groups that may face the risk of being further marginalised in the digital economy, such as migrants, ethnic minorities or people with disabilities;

2.9.11 - Be better equipped to shape fair and sustainable digital innovation at work, at company, sectoral and cross-sectoral levels: trade union rights and workers' information, consultation and participation rights should be strengthened, and unions should get digital access to workplaces; digital skills needs should be anticipated, and adequate paid training provided preferably during working time;

2.9.12 - Ensure that unions have a say in shaping digital transformation for workers at work;

2.9.13 - Build on and continue its close cooperation with the ETUI and EU tripartite social agencies to substantiate and bring scientific solid evidence for the important features of a just digital and sustainable transition;

2.9.14 - Ensure that digitalisation of public services is not undermining public services' quality, accessibility and coverage, with dedicated attention to EU outermost regions, and does not negatively affect public servants.

TOGETHER FOR AN ECONOMY FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE PLANET



3.1 A New Sustainable Economic and Social Model

State of Play and Challenges

- 3.1.1** Given the crises of the last 15 years, the EU is rethinking its development model. The Green Deal and the European Pillar of Social Rights were the first steps towards sustainability. However, the risk of neoliberal and austerity-based rules is still high. The EU is going through unpredictable and unprecedented times. Focusing on resilience, the green and digital transition and open strategic autonomy, the EU doubled its resources by putting in place the NGEU and the SURE instruments. While the EU is showing a new capacity to promptly react to sudden shocks with greater solidarity, a new economic and social model that have sustainability and equality at its core is needed. In 2015, the UN2030 Agenda looked like the most advanced policy framework that should lead the world toward a sustainable future in the interest of current and future generations. This model should be built on the pivotal role of SDG 8 on decent work and scaled up to drive the full implementation of the SDGs and make the EU the most sustainable well-being economy and society in the world.
- 3.1.2** The sustainability model envisioned by the ETUC pursues full employment and high standards for working conditions at its core and along the value chain. This model envisages resilient services of general interest as well as services generally ensuring accessible and quality public infrastructures, good administration, and health and care services. An economy that works for people should work for the planet as well. It implies that all private and public actors contribute to sustainable change.
- 3.1.3** Building an economic model based on the 'sustainability first' principle and fighting inequalities in Europe and globally must be the ETUC's priority. Sustainability means thinking holistically in a way that bases the economy on respect for the planet and on social justice. The Europe we want must deliver a social-ecological transition that answers environmental change with social progress. This requires a change in our economic model moving away from the current focus on growth and consumption. It means directing the economy and employment towards achieving sustainability, equality, well-being and the collective good.
- 3.1.4** The new economic and social model requires a reinforced financial market framework that ensures fairer redistribution of revenues between capital and labour. It should ensure capital that is patient, non-speculative, underlines more sustainable development and is oriented to investments in the real economy, creating new quality and sustainable jobs. All economic and other EU policies should contribute to developing quality public services as all sectors benefit from this.
- 3.1.5** To balance environmental and social investments, ambitious quality criteria for labelling investments as social, should be elaborated to promote genuine social investments and bind the financial market players to social objectives.

Actions

3.1.6 The ETUC will:

- Put forward ambitious proposals that rethink fundamentally the EU institutional framework, terminating the Fiscal Compact and reforming the Stability and Growth Pact into a new “Solidarity and Growth Pact”, which commits governments and EU institutions to engage with investments for quality job creation and with social objectives and conditionalities of the same weight and relevance of fiscal and economic ones. This pact has to be aligned to the ecological and social objectives indicated in the EU Treaty, the SDGs and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU;

3.1.7 - Advocate to make solidarity policy tools permanent through the EU lending capacity that activates EU facilities for investment and employment stabilisation during a crisis, modelled on the RRF and the SURE, and finance an EU fund for investments in the projects of EU interest;

3.1.8 - Advocate to increase the EU budget, including more EU own resources;

3.1.9 - Call for social dialogue and collective bargaining to be recognised as central processes in shaping the new economic and social model and in adapting it to a new cross-border dimension of sustainable development;

3.1.10 - Advocate for an adequate minimum level of public investment in national budgets and for a framework that better aligns private investment to common EU objectives within a sustainable finance framework;

3.1.11 - Advocate for a monetary policy that aims at (i) full employment, (ii) decent work, (iii) supporting the ecological transition while fighting climate change and (iv) ensuring the stability of the Euro Area, decent work and high employment and the stability of the Euro Area, in the overall interest of all Europeans. Providing room for autonomous (cross-)sectoral and national collective bargaining systems and positive wage trends in line with inflation and productivity growth;

3.1.12 - Support the European integration process by reinforcing the democratic development of the EU institutions; also reinforcing the involvement of social partners in the economic governance of the EU at national and sector levels;

3.1.13 - Work to reduce inequalities and tackle excessive wealth in the internal market with the EPSR at its core. This will include a social protection system that safeguards peoples’ right to ageing in dignity, building on the ETUC SociAll project, and protects people of all ages from any adverse events of life with a particular focus on those affecting the integration of individuals into the labour market and the consequences of unemployment;

3.1.14 - Continue to develop its Index of sustainable growth and decent work and work with the EU institutions and employers to build sound metrics that could complement GDP as a measure of success and reliability of national economies and of the EU as a whole;

3.1.15 - Protect workers’ jobs and livelihoods in an EU social taxonomy by linking it to the respect of fundamental labour rights and the implementation of the EPSR; advocate for a scope of the CSDDD that includes financial institutions;

3.1.16 - Promote cooperation with the ITUC and the TUAC, with stakeholders and academics to enable a more significant influence of workers on future regulation of sustainable finance in Europe and the EU;

- 3.1.17** - Advocate for the setting up of a European network of public regulators that supervise the lawful and smooth functioning of the sustainable finance market, in close contact with international regulators and UN-related agencies;
- 3.1.18** - Advocate the role of public ownership to better guarantee equal access for all to high quality and affordable public services; Support the role of public ownership and not-for-profit economic activities in Europe's social market economy. Act for a stronger role of the State, not-for-profit organisations and social economy for a new economic and social model;
- 3.1.19** Reinforcing the trade union offer for a new economic model that goes “beyond growth” and links up with sustainable development. The ETUC will work to elaborate quantified objectives, leverages and monitoring indicator;
- 3.1.20** Continue to engage with all institutional actors and political allies to ensure further that the EU Green Deal will catalyse social-ecological transition in Europe and globally; Advocate for European and global economy that fits with planetary boundaries and notably global water use, land use change and erosion of biodiversity; Ensure that the ‘sustainability first’ principle, and climate urgency in particular, will be a political priority in dossiers such as macroeconomic policy, trade, taxation and the EU budget.

3.2 A Reform for Fairer Socio-Economic Governance and Taxation

State of Play and Challenges

- 3.2.1** The recent crises demonstrated the deficiencies and lack of resilience of the economic governance structure of the European Union. The responses to the pandemic (including EU debt) proved particularly effective in stabilising the economy and mitigating the social impact of the economic shocks. This reflects the need for the EU to reinforce its open strategic autonomy and resilience in both economic and social dimensions.
- 3.2.2** It highlighted the need to reform the economic governance rules to deal with the digital and ecological transitions. While the current state of play should be conducive to better coordination between monetary policy and fiscal policies, their discrepancies are detrimental to enabling the needed socio-ecological transformation of our economies with a ‘leave no one behind’ approach through a strong and wide offer of public services. It calls for the creation of a budget for the Union or, at least, for the Euro area, based on own resources up to 3% of GDP (instead of 1,11% of the current MFF), together with tax coordination and approximation of systems. It emphasises our calls for better income and wealth distribution and more progressive taxation schemes as the tools to fight inequality and bring about social justice.
- 3.2.3** However, current EU proposals for a new enforcement tool and the EU common fiscal framework empowers the European Commission in designing, setting up and assessing a medium-term fiscal-structural plan for the Member States to be endorsed by the Council. If implemented very strictly, this proposed framework risks to be austerity and sanctions driven, with too little room for investments, which are hardly needed in the light of the climate, energy and circularity transition.



Actions

3.2.4 The ETUC will:

- Lobby to make EU stabilisers for investments and for employment permanent instruments in the EU policy toolbox; The ETUC supports the SURE mechanism and calls for the establishment of a permanent European unemployment reinsurance scheme;

3.2.5 - Advocate for new European own resources via a European Financial Transactions Tax, a tax on the extra profits generated by companies that in certain sectors have speculated and profited from the pandemic and the current crisis, and other progressive, regulatory taxes, as per the Interinstitutional Agreement;

3.2.6 - Call for a new fiscal framework which should support Members States having their fiscal targets country-specific, with different adjustment paths, integrating, with minimum thresholds, a golden rule for public investment, whereby new public investment would be debt-financed and anchored to the European social and green agenda for ecological transition; an expenditure rule for current budgets including revenues, while allowing urgent spending for public sectors' needs; and the end of asymmetries in tackling macroeconomic imbalances. While a new EU state aid framework, associated with strong social conditionalities, further vigilance and restrictions on tax relief for companies and their impacts on public finances and greater action against tax avoidance, fraud and evasion, could create further asymmetries and inequalities between the European Member States, jeopardising the resilience and integrity of the Internal Market, the ETUC calls for a fiscal capacity, such as European Sovereign Fund, financed through the issuance of common EU-denominated bonds to support a strong European industrial policy and investments in socially just green and digital transitions;

3.2.7 - Coordinate European and national policies pursuing resilience and strategic open autonomy to adapt and preserve high social standards and fight poverty, with strong involvement of social partners at European and national levels;

3.2.8 - Advocate for aligning the EU timelines of the fiscal, macroeconomic, and social cycles by linking the social, fiscal and macroeconomic objectives to each other and additional environmental targets;

3.2.9 - Develop and link indicators of the social scoreboard to ambitious targets of upward convergence of working and living conditions in Europe and to a procedure that tackles social imbalances, i.e. a social imbalance procedure, having respect of national laws and practices of collective bargaining. The EU Social Scoreboard must be revised to reflect national situations better regardless of a mere comparison between the performances of EU Member States;

3.2.10 - Fight for enlarging the ECB mandate to include full and quality employment, and support to the ecological transition while fighting climate change in addition to its price stability one. Its secondary mandate for economic development should also be more prominent;

- 3.2.11** - In full respect of personal taxation policy remaining a national competence, call for greater progressivity in taxation of all kinds of income – including i) increasing taxation rates of the richest and ii) raising capital taxation rates at the same level as labour taxation iii) a taxation framework that better targets wealth accumulation and capital gains to increase taxation on wealth and real estate - while stressing the need for upward convergence of this progressive tax system in the Member States;
- 3.2.12** - Explore the option of establishing progressive social contributions systems while fully respecting national competencies in this domain and fighting against unfair exemptions for businesses;
- 3.2.13** - Advocate for a strong and fairer Company Taxation framework based on i) The implementation of the Commission’s BEFIT plan for corporate taxation, which should include a minimum effective corporate tax rate of 25% and the possibility to tax companies in the country where they are running their activities – according to their sales, assets, and employment; ii) A new European mechanism allowing to tax windfall profits;
- 3.2.14** - Advocate to put an end to tax havens and tax avoidance, including by criminalising such practices, also by implementing measures such as preventing access to public tendering and means (such as subsidies) for those companies that have engaged in tax avoidance as well as the repatriation of funds held in tax havens and low tax jurisdictions to enable investment and job creation, including in public services;
- 3.2.15** - Demand that the EU directive on public country-by-country reporting be extended to all multinational companies, in each country where they operate and for all kinds of incomes, in and beyond the EU and, beyond its invalidation by the European Court of Justice, demand public registries of beneficial owners of companies, trusts and similar legal structures, and advocates for a stronger criminalisation of businesses that practices tax evasion and optimisation. European supervision is necessary for the quality, accessibility and usability of the relevant registers;
- 3.2.16** - Develop proposals and an appropriate strategy and put this into practice, together with national trade unions and European trade union federations, around lobbying for a European digital tax, a European or international tax on financial transactions and/or the adaptation of international and European corporate tax and VAT rules to the digitalisation of the economy.

3.3 Reforming the European Semester to Boost Public Investment, Job Creation and Crises-management

State of Play and Challenges

- 3.3.1** The European Semester, the coordination of economic and social policy of the EU, has recently undergone repeated changes in how it operates (i.e. the activation of the general escape clause and the adoption of the Recovery and Resilience Facility). The Semester is now mainly focused on monitoring the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience plans.
- 3.3.2** This most recent evolution reinforced some aspects of the social dimension of the European Semester, and some Member States made improvements whereby the Social scoreboard and the Employment guidelines support the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). However, the social dimension of the Semester relies on article 148 TFEU, which is a weak counterbalance of the Treaty rules on fiscal and macroeconomic coordination. Furthermore, some reforms are recommended sometimes through a fiscal perspective, but not only, to the contrary of the EPSR and the UN 2030 Agenda.

- 3.3.3** The outputs, mainly country specific recommendations, better orient national policies toward achieving social objectives, but this is still insufficient. In fact, the macroeconomic or fiscal conditionalities imposed within the Semester framework cause a substantial decrease in social spending in many Member States. Moreover, the Semester cannot count on stabilisers of investment and employment necessary to balance monetary, economic and social objectives. In this regard, the SURE proved to be effective.
- 3.3.4** The Trade Union Involvement in the Semester process has slightly improved at the national level over the past years. However, the effectiveness of such involvement depends on the goodwill of governments and very rarely reaches a satisfactory outcome.
- 3.3.5** The TUSLO network proved to be an effective way to give a voice to the TU movement in the EU Semester. However, not all trade union organisations have the same capacity and motivation to participate.

Actions

- 3.3.6** The ETUC will:
- Continue to coordinate the TUSLO activities and offer the same opportunities to all members. All the ETUC members will engage in the EU Semester according to their needs and traditions and in a spirit of solidarity with all European workers. Resources may be mobilised for that purpose;
- 3.3.7** - Engage with the European Commission to set minimum binding criteria for trade union involvement in the Semester to promote a concerted space between the Member States which gives the social partners a say in economic and budgetary policies and trajectories and a capacity to negotiate on all matters directly related to jobs, wages and social rights. Engage with the European Commission to introduce binding minimum criteria for TU involvement in the EU Semester in respect of the national system whereby social partners affiliated to recognised European social partners organisations can have adequate means to be consulted at the milestones in a meaningful and timely manner;
- 3.3.8** - Work to improve the functioning of the Semester by guaranteeing the involvement of the national social partners in each stage of the process. A procedure for social convergence that detects and removes social imbalances should be finally endorsed to guarantee that all Member States respect a level playing field for social objectives;
- 3.3.9** - Continue monitoring the social dimension of the RRF and the impact of national plans for social progress and social convergence;
- 3.3.10** - Reinforce its internal coordination to cover better the economic, social and environmental issues dealt within the EU Semester. Trade unions need to be more involved in the Semester, both at the national and EU levels.

3.4 Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights

State of Play and Challenges

- 3.4.1 The EPSR has been a valuable policy framework in dealing with the social urgencies of the pandemic, and its Action Plan will continue to be a valuable tool for building the social model.
- 3.4.2 The UN2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a valuable framework for designing a policy mix that ensures just transitions to transform the EU's economy into a more resilient, autonomous, advanced and green one. The ETUC developed the "Sustainable Growth & Decent Work Index" (#EU_SDG8i) to measure the potential for a country's social and economic sustainability, in terms of well-being, employment and decent work while exploring correlations with other SDG targets, digitalisation and the Green Deal indicators.
- 3.4.3 The ETUC needs to adapt its demands to the speed with which the world is changing and be able to protect people from social risks while enlarging the package of rights and freedoms of European workers. A regular mapping of social risks will focus our action on the most vulnerable groups to lift people out of poverty and trigger an upward spiral improving living and working conditions. The combination of collective bargaining and legislative measures with better-defined social objectives in the coordination of national policies offers a direction for the future.
- 3.4.4 The advancement of a social dimension requires a more structured participation of social partners in the designing and implementation of policies at the EU and national levels. The ETUC will advocate for a framework of minimum rights and upward convergence of working conditions that fit with the current and future social challenges, prioritising redistributing wealth and defending workers' interests, while pursuing just transition measures.

Actions

- 3.4.5 The ETUC will:
- 3.4.6 - Assess and monitor, together with the TUSLOs and members of other Permanent committees, the implementation of the EPSR and the realisation of the Action Plan through an annual review: "ETUC status of the implementation of the EPSR" and update its policy proposals accordingly;
- 3.4.7 - Develop a process that tackles social imbalances, to establish, within the Semester, a framework for social convergence that detects and removes the social imbalances with the EPSR as a compass, and exploit the updated Social Scoreboard for qualitative/quantitative country-based analysis;
- 3.4.8 - Elaborate a proposal for an EU instrument to help protect people in jobs, those facing professional transitions (job requalification, upskilling and reskilling, as well as for jobs at risk of disappearing), and at risk of poverty or in poverty, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups;
- 3.4.9 Build on the new EU Recommendation on minimum income to realise the right to an adequate minimum income in all Member States;
- 3.4.10 - Continue updating and using the #EU_SDG8i to analyse the evolution of sustainability and social progress in the EU, and to steer its policy proposals at the EU and national levels, including a specific action to promote the rule of law and legality and fight corruption and exploitation of work;



- 3.4.11** - Pursue social progress by measuring and monitoring with our affiliates progresses under key social areas: economic well-being at all stages of life, quality of employment and removal of workers' vulnerabilities, while fostering strong social protection and social security systems;
- 3.4.12** - Take the necessary initiatives for the realisation of the SDGs through the European Semester and the NRRPs. The support provided under the RRF underpins a significant number of reforms and investments that are expected to help Member States make further progress towards the SDGs. Moreover, all SDGs should be translated, as much as possible, into European and national quantitative objectives.

3.5 Reinforcing Welfare and Social Protection

State of Play and Challenges

- 3.5.1** Over the last years, workers' living standards and health being have been eroded by cuts in public services and the weakening of our social protection systems. The lack of public investment and spending in key areas such as health and social care, education, public transport, affordable housing, internet or public administration negatively impacts on living standards and well-being. The ETUC and affiliates defend the right of all workers and their families to universal and high quality public services and social protection.
- 3.5.2** The cost of living crisis has shown that poverty can happen to anyone. More and more families, including low wage and middle class, struggle to make ends meet. The COVID pandemic had already exacerbated inequalities in society and this crisis will increase these inequalities even further if Member States and the EU fail to tackle this crisis sufficiently. The cost of living crisis can have a long-lasting impact on workers, families and society. Living in poverty can lead to stress, social health inequalities and social exclusion.
- 3.5.3** It is necessary to have a fully inclusive intergenerational solidarity-based approach to welfare, rooted in decent work as the guarantee for fair social security and adequate social protection for all. Member States struggle with increasing and newly emerging forms of poverty, social exclusion, inequalities and unmet basic needs such as health and care - disproportionately affecting women and vulnerable groups. Regional, rural, and group divide across societies deepen and worsen. The EU economic governance rules and national fiscal positions hinder effective reforms ensuring adequate minimum standards and full coverage, adequacy and effectiveness of social protection systems for all workers and self-employed, thus hindering the implementation of the EPSR. Coordination among social and fiscal priorities is slow and not systematically tackled via monitoring of progress towards the achievements of the headline 2030 Porto targets. Lack of gender equality, equal opportunities and inclusiveness in labour markets penalise all social protection systems.
- 3.5.4** Public authorities must deliver universal access to affordable and high quality social and public services via consistent resources, including from NGEU. The marketisation of public services and PPPs (public-private partnerships) must be rejected. Social clauses must be streamlined in public procurement. In this respect, the synergy between trade unions and the social economy could strengthen their respective roles.
- 3.5.5** The cost of living crisis and energy and housing poverty disproportionately affect the working poor and pensioners – especially women. Indexation and alignment to the cost of living of pensions and minimum standards are needed.

3.5.6 Workers' living standards and health have been eroded by cuts in public services and the weakening of our social protection systems. The lack of public investment and spending in critical areas such as health and social care, education, public transport, affordable housing, internet or public administration negatively impacts living standards and well-being. The ETUC and affiliates defend the right of all workers and their families to universal and quality public services and social protection.

Actions

3.5.7 The ETUC will:

- Demand public investment in social and enabling services, eradicating and preventing poverty and inequalities, and ensuring social inclusion and protection; call for enhanced education and care from the earliest stage of life and along the whole life-cycle – especially in critical socio-economic junctures
- Formulate policy demands and actions based on the annual reviews of the “Status of implementation of the EPSR” to monitor progress and ensure new social risks are effectively prevented;

3.5.8 - Set up an interactive trade union monitoring and consultation system for the implementation of the Council Recommendation on access to Social Protection for workers and the self-employed, including national feedback on any reform and development. The ETUC shall build on this monitoring to support their affiliates, including in their interaction with EU institutions, and ensure greater support to oppose any reforms that undermine the right to social protection;

3.5.9 - Reinforce the narrative of Dignity of Ageing based on a comprehensive approach to welfare rights, including minimum dignifying safety nets, amongst other measures adequate minimum income, and long term care for all ages and on the intergenerational solidarity principle;

3.5.10 Demand that social protection needs are addressed firstly by ensuring quality jobs across all ages and enabling women participation in the labour market; focus on policies allowing to reduce the gender pension gap; and collect evidence on the fiscal potential of the fight against undeclared work in all sectors;

3.5.11 - Advocate for an approach to pension policy in line with the EPSR, embedding fair and people-centred retirement age, deletion of gender pension gap, pension income has to be adequate, income- and work-related, with the guarantee of adequate minimum pensions for all generations indexation of pensions according to raise of inflation and cost of life, income-related pensions and adequate minimum pensions above poverty protection fully in line with the principles of universal coverage, adequacy effectiveness;

3.5.12 - Make the ETUC SociAll a Trade Union platform to design an EU social protection model that is a leader in welfare economy, based on modernised trade union demands for rights and upward convergence.

3.6 Trade Unions for Effective Cohesion Policy and EU Funds

State of Play and Challenges

3.6.1 The EU has proved capable of reacting promptly to unprecedented challenges by gathering resources for recovery and resilience. However, a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to all EU funds and programmes is needed.



- 3.6.2** The financial allocation for the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 is not fit for purpose. Reducing cohesion policy funds is the wrong response to persistent social, economic and territorial challenges.
- 3.6.3** All EU funds must be used coherently with EU social policy priorities. Financial principles and application rules must comply with the priorities set out in the EPSR, the SDGs, and the EU acquis.
- 3.6.4** Cohesion policy remains a crucial, modern tool for enhancing shared opportunities, upward convergence and prosperity. It must support growth and public investments and address shortfalls in infrastructures and stagnating regional services development. New, simplified governance rules are also needed.
- 3.6.5** Imbalances caused by lack of coordination among the EPSR, the EU Semester guidance for macro-economic development, and the use of cohesion funds must be removed; cross-cutting assessment must ensure monitoring of the progress and overall coherency of achievements.
- 3.6.6** Complementarity between the RRF and cohesion funds must enhance socio-economic development and job creation via clear coordination on what to devote the funds for, how to align the use of resources and to assess progress and overall results coherently.
- 3.6.7** The involvement of social partners in EU funds must be enhanced in all phases.
- 3.6.8** The principles of the Code of Conduct on Partnership must be applied to all EU funds and programmes, not via mere “informing” practices, but through substantial consultations, enhanced at the territorial level, from design to evaluation of programs.
- 3.6.9** Funds for capacity building must be well planned, coordinated and truly “appropriate” to align the preparedness needs of SP to the common challenges while tailoring the needs to the local level.

Actions

- 3.6.10** Concerning cohesion policy and funds, the ETUC will:
- 3.6.11** - Pursue a substantial involvement of the social partners at all levels and in all actions aimed at making the most efficient use of the EU funds; have systematic TU inputs in multi-governance fora;
- 3.6.12** - Demand enhanced resources and actions in support of capacity building of trade unions, both at the national and EU levels; advocate to encompass all ESIFs use in the EU advisory committee on ESF+ where Social Partners’ voice has due relevance in identifying challenges and formulating recommendations; enhance TU monitoring of ERDF;
- 3.6.13** - Develop a series of tools to monitor coherence between the EU funds and the EPSR. Develop additional tools, with affiliates, to assess how programmes and regional initiatives contribute to the goals of increasing economic, social and regional cohesion and convergence in a measurable way; to assess that EU funds, and ESIF in particular, are disbursed under the effectiveness of the social clause;
- 3.6.14** - Work to ensure greater coherence between the use of funds and the EU Semester monitoring and governance steps; the partnership principle must be extended to all EU funds and effectively implemented;

- 3.6.15** - Strengthen TUs' role in setting priorities, contributing to management and monitoring and evaluating the use of the funds ;
- 3.6.16** - Organise a series of actions aimed at assessing and providing answers to the needs of trade unions at the national and local levels to realise upward convergence.

3.7 A Social and Sustainable Internal Market

State of Play and Challenges

- 3.7.1** The internal market is not an end in itself, but should serve the well-being of people through the constant improvement of their living and working conditions. Labour is not a commodity and cannot be subject to the same market dynamics as other factors of production, which can be negotiated for the highest profit or the lowest price.
- 3.7.2** This principle of non-commodification is fundamental also to ensure universal and equal access to affordable public services of high quality. With the public sector being a key economic actor in providing infrastructure, supporting innovation and protecting industries against unfair competition, good public administration is essential to the well-functioning of the internal market. Public services are essential to ensure people can enjoy their human rights (such as the right to education, housing, water and sanitation, energy, health and social care, mobility, independent media and much more). Whereas socially responsible public procurement, antitrust, merger and state aid control can contribute to fair and sustainable competition, these policies must not be used to liberalise public services further.
- 3.7.3** To contribute to fundamental EU values and objectives such as social progress and sustainable development, market freedoms cannot be relied upon in a way that undermines social, workers' and trade union rights or everyone's right to a clean and healthy environment. EU legislation should deliver for all as a long-term investment in the general interest. It must not be driven by cost and burden reduction for business or used to put pressure on national regulatory frameworks, public services and decent work.

Actions

- 3.7.4** The ETUC will:
 - Defend fundamental social, workers' and trade union rights by calling for a Social Progress Protocol to be added to the Treaties and a 'Monti clause' to be included in all relevant new internal market legislative initiatives. These fundamental rights, including the right to collective bargaining and action, must be safeguarded and given precedence in cases of conflicts with economic freedoms;
- 3.7.5** - Call for a social progress test as part of the Commission's impact assessments to ensure all new EU legislation is socially responsible and just. The Commission's 'one in, one out' calculator should be replaced by a more sustainable and long-term approach to quality law-making whereby economic, social and environmental aspects are considered with the same level of detail;
- 3.7.6** - Advocate tools and remedies for workers in subcontracting chains to better hold businesses accountable and claim their rights, including through the introduction of a general EU legal framework to tackle artificial arrangements, increase transparency and improve access to remedies for workers in subcontracting chains;



3.7.7 Push for more socially responsible competition policies and public procurement, with social and green conditionalities and public interest tests to deliver not only for business and consumers, but also for workers, citizens, communities and the environment. Collective bargaining, trade union involvement and workers' rights must be given greater attention in competition enforcement to tackle adverse impacts on the labour market and exclusionary and exploitative business behaviours. Competition enforcers must address abusive labour practices by employers such as non-compete, non-poach and wage-fixing agreements. The use of competition clauses in employment contracts must be limited to what is strictly necessary while ensuring that workers always get full compensation.

3.8 Industrial Policy for More and Better Sustainable Jobs

State of Play and Challenges

3.8.1 European industrial policy is crucial for the socio-ecological transformation of the economy and to make Europe as a whole more competitive and an engine for sustainable growth and employment in all European countries, while paying attention to the territorial consequences of all related processes. Progressive industrial policy should link green transition, fair taxation and decent work agenda while preserving the international level playing field. Managing such systemic transitions requires a strong political determination, well-defined and coordinated policies supported by social dialogue at all levels, medium and long-term public and private investments, increased fiscal capacity, predictability and buy-in of key actors, particularly trade unions and workers. A key element of an industrial policy for Europe is to safeguard fair competition within the internal market, and in trade relations with countries outside the EU. For European industry not to lag behind competitors and for the common market to be preserved, we need investment plans in common strategic sectors to ensure the EU strategic autonomy.

3.8.2 Liberalisation policies, austerity and recent geopolitical developments have multiplied the pace and extent of this deep transformation. These changes have further disrupted the energy market supply, and shed light on EU strategic dependencies in many sectors. They jeopardise employment and competitiveness, and intensify inequalities. They threaten climate and reduction of GHG emissions targets.

3.8.3 A good European industrial policy should be responsive and combine green transition with regulated and human-centred digitalisation and automation in a responsible, just and inclusive manner.

3.8.4 The European trade union movement, with the financial support of the European Union and EFTA, contributes to the elaboration of selected European (CEN) and international (ISO) standards that address working conditions and other workers' related issues.

3.8.5 Standardisation has progressively extended its reach beyond product safety and interoperability to address a wide range of issues. Standards are today increasingly used to underpin legislation and policy goals, especially in the framework of the European industrial strategy. However, standardisation remains a private and industry-led activity, where trade unions have limited representation. The conditions governing the international standardisation organisations, mainly ISO and IEC, do not ensure any inclusiveness nor respect for EU principles and law.

- 3.8.6** The European strategy on standardisation has developed a political ambition to push for an inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach to standardisation. On this basis, the ETUC has invested in this avenue to build capacity and increase trade unions' representation and action in standardisation at the European and national levels. It is therefore key for the ETUC to call for a revision of the EU regulation on standardisation for better involvement of trade unions in standardisation bodies at the national and EU levels. It is key to revise the primacy principle of international standards in the EU so that the EU strictly monitors international standards compliance with the EU principles, values and rights when applied in the EU.
- 3.8.7** European citizens have seen energy prices surge, with millions of households unable to afford energy bills, adding to those already at risk of energy poverty. This crisis also negatively affects the economic prospects of European countries and could, in turn, result in stagflation, job losses and rising unemployment. Energy-intensive industries have already been affected, but high energy prices threaten future investments in strategic industrial value chains such as hydrogen or batteries.
- 3.8.8** The security of our energy supplies and energy dependency of the EU in the context of geopolitical uncertainty cause great concerns. The current crisis also raises questions about the EU's strategic dependencies towards autocratic regimes that violate human rights and trade union rights.
- 3.8.9** The answer should be to massively invest in Europe's domestic energy system to strengthen its strategic autonomy while reaching the European Green Deal objectives and implementing a just Transition leaving no one behind.
- 3.8.10** Policymakers should also question the liberalisation of the EU energy market and rethink its current functioning while keeping the EU energy system interconnected. The revision of the EU energy market system, based on solidarity and cooperation, will be a priority for the ETUC during this mandate.
- 3.8.11** The ETUC underlines the necessity of ensuring European state aid rules are aligned with the objectives of the Green Deal, and deliver a just transition for workers. Public funding can be a booster to a fossil-free industrial future and decent jobs.

Actions

- 3.8.12** The mobility system must be compatible with climate and sustainability goals, shifting passenger and freight transport to more environmentally friendly means of transportation. The transformation must be shaped in a way that does not lead to economic and social disruptions but brings social progress. For the ETUC, this also means job security, more co-determination, and quality public transport accessible for all;
- 3.8.13** An ambitious and sustainable EU open strategic autonomy policy is the way forward; the ETUC will:
- Focus on the supply and sustainable use of affordable clean energy, strategic raw materials and technologies such as microchips; The debate about redesigning and possibly relocating or diversifying global supply chains has to be guided by the objectives of sustainable development, to take into account the ongoing struggle against social dumping across Europe, guaranteeing the right to just transition for all workers whose income depends on the distribution of labour worldwide.
- 3.8.14** - Translate social progress as the guiding compass for a European industry strategy in line with the European Green Deal, the Digital Compass 2030 and the European Pillar of Social Rights.

3.8.15 - Trade Unions, with their economic expertise, are key players for joint European and national policy-making and should be involved in the creation, design, implementation and monitoring of structural (crisis-targeted) solutions such as the single market emergency instrument as well as common European investment and protection mechanisms that strengthen transnational capacity, mitigate spillovers and complement Member State resources;

3.8.16 - Call for the following social conditions to be included in the Green Deal Industrial Plan:

- Bargain with trade unions and respect for collective agreements;
- Information and consultation with unions on merger and investment decisions;
- Avoid redundancies and deterioration of working conditions;
- Ban extraordinary dividend payments and increase the share of profit that is re-invested in the company and shared equitably with workers while a company is in receipt of any form of public funding;
- Reskilling and the creation of high-quality apprenticeships and graduate roles.

- 3.8.17** - Strengthen advocacy work, and the trade union role to enhance Industry 4.0 with human-centred digital innovation and transformation in a fair and responsible way, the focus being on workers' protection, employability, and well-being;
- 3.8.18** - Advocate for quality jobs as a top priority for policymakers when designing and implementing industrial policies via the Industrial Forum, industrial alliances, transition pathways, important projects of common European interest (IPCEI);
- 3.8.19** - Promote a stronger role for innovative public services and quality public infrastructures and intensify efforts to support industrial regions in need (less developed regions or regions damaged by economic desertification). Establishing European public enterprises (general interest entities), for example in the production of solar power panels, pharmaceuticals, public cloud and digital services, must be an option to guarantee people in Europe are supplied with goods and services in a safe, affordable and accessible way that contribute to fulfilling the EU's objectives;
- 3.8.20** Concerning standardisation, the ETUC will:
- Continue to reject an expansion of European and international standard-setting activities to fields that can be better regulated by national or European legislation or collective agreements, especially in the fields of OSH, working conditions, workload, payment and social protection and oppose standards that risk encroaching upon national labour laws, public services, collective agreements and collective bargaining, and prevent any attempt to use standards for a parallel recodification or circumvention of labour laws and collective agreements;
- 3.8.21** - Contribute to the decision-making process of the standardisation bodies where the ETUC and its affiliates can exert influence;
- 3.8.22** - Monitor and, where appropriate, contribute to the drafting of European (and international) standards where trade unions can improve the text to ensure standards guarantee the highest quality working conditions in full respect of EU law, in particular of labour law, and trade union prerogatives. For sector-specific standards, the ETUC will actively collaborate with the respective ETUFs in the first instance, and the national affiliates;
- 3.8.23** Exchange good practises on social labelling initiatives (e.g. successful examples like "Autohaus Fair", Fair Hotels & Restaurants, etc.) and, where relevant, coordinate with the ITUC by mobilising their non-European affiliates (and respective national standardisation bodies), to achieve global action/influence in international standardisation work;
- 3.8.24** Conclude a new 2025-2028 Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) – with EC/EFTA - to maintain an in-house ETUC competence on standardisation, to build and coordinate trade union input and expertise;
- 3.8.25** In light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the REPower EU strategy and taking into account the climate emergency, the ETUC will;
- 3.8.26** - Advocate to reduce Europe's energy dependency through the development of domestic sustainable energy sources and demand reduction measures while fighting energy poverty in Europe. The ETUC will push for accelerated deployment of renewable and decarbonated energy, the circular economy, and more ambitious energy efficiency and energy savings measures on the basis of a strong just transition legal framework. To achieve this transition, it will also be crucial to secure a sustainable supply of critical raw materials and energy with strong Human rights safeguards;



- 3.8.27** - Highlight the importance of coordinated energy distribution between households and energy intensive industries in case of gas shortages, especially during winter months, to avoid irreversible damages to European industrial basis and value chains;
- 3.8.28** - Develop a trade union vision of the concept of sobriety, insisting on dimensions such as decent work, quality jobs, working time reduction, local production and consumption, maintenance, reuse and repair;
- 3.8.29** - Advocate with EU policymakers to revise and improve the design of the energy market, notably when it comes to price setting mechanisms, strict restrictions on speculation emergency mechanisms to regulate energy prices, joint infrastructure investment plans financed from common resources, increased consumer rights in energy contracts, reinforcement of public service obligations, the recognition of energy as a public good, the promotion of public ownership and energy cooperatives when applicable, joint infrastructure investment plans as well as the creation of a right to clean and affordable energy. The ETUC will also engage in a reflection process with its affiliates to develop shared proposals concerning the energy architecture of Europe, turned towards solidarity between States instead of overcoming the divisions between States which are based on a competitive logic;
- 3.8.30** - Continue to work with coalitions and allies, including where relevant NGOs, CSOs, consumer associations, academics, think tanks and employers to push for ambitious measures against energy poverty in Europe and to consider always the social impacts of climate and energy policies;
- 3.8.31** - Advocate for a fairer taxation system that ensures a shift from labour taxation to capital taxation and the taxation of windfall profits made by energy companies and their shareholders. The exceptional profits generated by the external impacts on the energy markets must be reinvested and used coherently to advance the social and ecological transformation of companies and the future reinforcement of the European industrial fabric. When it comes to environmental taxation, the ETUC will ensure that it is designed in a fair way to reduce inequalities. Such taxation should tackle the biggest polluters and the revenues generated should be redistributed in a progressive manner;
- 3.8.32** - Lobby for a European industrial strategy for the manufacturing of clean energy equipment and technologies;
- 3.8.33** - Monitor the impact of the energy crisis on European foundation industries (steel, basic metals, cement, basic materials, chemicals) in collaboration with the ETUFs, and press the EU to implement the necessary support measures in line with the imperatives of a just transition to a sustainable economy.

3.9 A Rights-Based Trade Policy for Workers' Rights and Jobs

State of Play and Challenges

- 3.9.1** The ETUC has developed a general policy on EU trade and investment. European trade policy must put people before profit and promote sustainable global value chains. Sourcing from different parts of the world provides greater flexibility during disruptions, thus strengthening Europe's strategic autonomy.

- 3.9.2** The challenges to the international trade system have shown that a reform of EU trade policy is more important than ever. The ETUC favours a progressive rules-based trade system that is open, just and sustainable, providing equal rights and benefits for workers and all citizens, and has the ILO, as global leader in social regulation, working with the WTO to regulate multilateralism.
- 3.9.3** The new EU policy to incorporate sanctions in upcoming trade deals on labour and environmental standards is a welcomed change of direction, but it must ensure the implementation of enforceable labour clauses; the effective investigation of violations of labour rights in trade partner countries and their sanction; the guarantee of redress and access to justice for victims. Trade union access to enforcement mechanisms, including the new Chief Trade Enforcement Officer, should be facilitated and supported by structured cooperation between ILO and EU DG Trade and offices in partner countries using the ILO supervisory mechanism and tools to identify violation of social standards. Sanctions and enforceable labour clauses should also be included in all existing FTAs. The ETUC welcomes the DAGs' stronger role in monitoring trade agreements involving trade unions. The ETUC acknowledges the important evolution of the remit of EU-UK TCA DAG, tasked with monitoring the impact of the whole agreement.
- 3.9.4** The ETUC works with trade unions in partner countries to promote common trade union positions. The EU must promote a trade policy that reduces global inequalities, ceasing Economic Partnership Agreements that pressure Global South countries to open their markets to EU goods at prices that undermine domestic industries and do not contain requirements that ILO conventions are respected.

Actions

- 3.9.5** The ETUC will:
- 3.9.6** - Continue to engage with all institutional actors to further reform EU trade and investment policy to:
- I. benefit workers and citizens through raised labour standards and social protection minimum floor;
 - II. to protect public services through investment in accessible and quality public services and their exclusion from trade or investment agreements. The ETUC will also reject privatisation or aggressive liberalisation agenda in developing countries without taking into account the possible social and ecological implications.
- 3.9.7** - Engage with trade unions in partner countries to influence trade negotiations and advocate the revision of existing trade deals that fail to protect and promote human, labour and environmental rights. The ETUC will file complaints on behalf of trade unions in partner countries on violations of labour clauses in trade agreements via the Single Entry Point;
- 3.9.8** - Advocate for the ratification by all parties of ILO Fundamental Conventions, including the Occupational Safety and Health Convention (No.155) and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention (No. 187), prior to the signature and entry in force of FTA;
- 3.9.9** - Advocate WTO reform to give an observatory status to the ILO to include rules that ensure respect for fundamental ILO standards and for WTO rules to be scrapped where these prevent the production of affordable medicines, support for domestic agriculture and industries, and undermine protections for workers data;



- 3.9.10** - Advocate for trade policies that promote the SDGs and reduce global inequalities;
- 3.9.11** - Support trade union members on Domestic Advisory Groups in their monitoring of agreements and coordinate trade union action for improving workers' rights based on the sustainability chapters of these agreements. The ETUC will also call for the Groups to be granted powers to trigger investigations into labour violations rights. Working with MEPs;
- 3.9.12** - Oppose:
- Investor State Dispute Settlement mechanisms (ISDS);
 - intra-EU investment treaties as incompatible with EU law;
 - an Investment Court System (ICS) and a multilateral investment court (MIC) as parallel legal systems for foreign investors that bypass domestic legal systems.
- 3.9.13** The ETUC also considers that the Energy Charter Treaty, in its current version, limits the sovereignty of States to regulate, adopt public policies and develop public services in the interest of their citizens, is not compatible with the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal's objectives and constitutes an obstacle to a just transition of the workforce. The ETUC will therefore call for a termination of the treaty or collective withdrawal of EU countries combined with inter se agreement if negotiations to modernise the ECT are blocked;
- 3.9.14** The ETUC acts for the Involvement of trade unions in the dispute resolution mechanism instated by the Agreement between the EU and the UK to safeguard non-regression on fundamental rights at work, occupational health and safety standards, fair working conditions and employment standards, information and consultation rights at the company level and restructuring of undertakings;
- 3.9.15** The ETUC advocates for a trade policy that ensures the diversification/mix and a high level of energy transport/supply security, including (greener) raw materials, with strong Human Rights and trade union rights safeguards. This of a crucial importance for the green transition, the re industrialisation of the EU and the relocation of industrial activities as well as for our strategic autonomy;
- 3.9.16** The ETUC will work to ensure that the plurilateral WTO negotiations on the liberalisation of the digital economy do not prevent national and EU authorities from monitoring the e-operators' respect of fiscal and social regulations, including the GAFA's.

TOGETHER FOR OUR EUROPEAN FUTURE



4.1 Building a Fairer Future of Europe

State of Play and Challenges

- 4.1.1** Events in recent years, such as Brexit, the violations of the rule of law in some EU Member States, the pandemic, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, have put the European project and democracy in Europe at risk. The EU is at a crossroad and must rise to the challenges that it is facing. European institutions must focus on delivering a more social future for Europe, based on social dialogue, on a fairer, more inclusive and sustainable European economy and society, on the improvement of working and living conditions, on the balanced development of each area of Europe that overcomes the excessive inequalities still present and on a Renewed Social Contract for Europe, as well as on the defence and promotion of peace.
- 4.1.2** The European institutions developed a comprehensive response to the Covid-19 crisis, including new instruments to support economic growth and social protection, in particular NextGenerationEU and SURE. The EU institutions have failed until now to take the necessary measures to deal with the social and economic crisis following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, including the cost-of-living crisis.

Actions

- 4.1.3** It is necessary to ensure changes to EU policies, budget and work programme, including new legislative and non-legislative initiatives. The key focus must be to guarantee a more social and sustainable future for Europe, to ensure improved working and living conditions, as well as upward convergence and gender equality – in the framework of a renewed social contract for Europe;
- 4.1.4** The ETUC will increase its mobilisation towards the European institutions ensure a reinforced focus on delivering better working and living conditions, promoting upward social convergence and taking the necessary actions against the cost-of-living crisis in Europe. This mobilisation will target the last part of the current parliamentary term, in view of the European elections and the definition of the priorities of the next European Commission, with the aim of progressing towards a more social EU.

4.2 Reinforcing Democracy and the Fight Against the Far-right

State of Play and Challenges

- 4.2.1** Trade unions and the far-right are opposites. This is not only because of the trade unions' history and proud tradition of countering the far-right in the past, but because of what trade unions stand for today. Trade unions believe in solidarity, gender equality, improving lives, social justice and opportunity for all working people. They stand for unity over division, regardless of ethnicity, origin, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, and/or religion. They stand against racism, xenophobia, and all forms of discrimination.

4.2.2 The ETUC needs to build a strong response to counter far-right disinformation, strategies, narratives, and practices and to develop coherent trade union actions to defend and strengthen democracy.

- Promoting the positive trade union message of improving the lives of all working people in work and in life.

- Fighting for democracy, solidarity, workers' participation, workers' power, women's rights, equality, and non-discrimination.

- Raising awareness about the far-right's hateful and divisive strategies, narratives, and practices of dividing workers on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, gender, origin, sexual orientation, and/or religion.

- Strengthening and better coordinating affiliates' efforts on historical memory and research on trade unions' values and their fight against fascism and Nazism in Europe.

Actions

The ETUC will:

4.2.3 - Mobilise to address the crisis of democracy in Europe and the normalisation of far-right movements and parties by promoting initiatives and campaigns to stress the need for reinforcing democracy, also in the economy and society, including the recognition of the role and support for the social partners and social dialogue;

4.2.4 - Promote a broader definition and assessment of the respect of the Rule of Law by the European institutions in all Rule of Law mechanisms. Beyond the strict respect of the division of powers (executive, legislative and judicial), the respect for the Rule of Law should include a strong focus on respecting social rights, in particular workers and trade union rights for each citizen, as well as recognising the role of the trade union movement as an agent of change and progress;

4.2.5 - Work on the proposal of a European public holiday day for democracy. This day would be an opportunity to recall our trade union values of solidarity, social justice, equality and the fight for democracy and peace. This would also be the demonstration of the importance of the European dimension to counter the nationalist, racist and xenophobic messages of the far-right;

4.2.6 - Map the influence of the Far-Right at the workplace. In the continuity of regional, national, and European projects; the ETUC will submit a new project focused on mapping the influence of the far-right in the workplace and the reasons for an increase in workers' support for far-right parties. The ETUC will also continue its work to identify collective agreements and negotiated clauses to combat racism, discrimination, and the influence of the far-right at the level of the workplace;

4.2.7 - Coordinate a training offensive for European workers. In partnership with the ETUI, the ETUC will develop the training strategy to focus on three key elements: (1) Networking and exchange of training practices; (2) Specific communications training; and (3) Political education;

4.2.8 - Develop tools to counter the narrative of the Far-Right. The ETUC will use social media to actively counter far-right ideas and attacks on solidarity as well as use and promote the petitions platform Action-Europe, enabling affiliates to post petitions and use the data from their petitions to organise and mobilise workers and supporters. It can also provide for a database that allows trade unions to communicate directly with members and supporters, equipping them with counter-arguments to racism, xenophobia, discrimination and to other far-right ideas that they can share;

- 4.2.9** - Implement the ETUC Policy on countering the far-right in the European Parliament and the related action plan. The ETUC will continue with its cordon sanitaire towards far-right MEPs, parties and movements and engage in discussions in the European Parliament on the fight against the far-right. The ETUC will disclose the votes of far-right MEPs and Groups, which go against workers' and trade unions' interests, in key dossiers. Consequently, it will prepare a comprehensive dossier for affiliates in view of the next European elections and will mobilise to outline the detrimental actions of far-right MEPs, parties and governments regarding dossiers of high-importance for workers and trade unions in Europe. If a Convention to change the Treaties is opened, the ETUC will engage to include in the Treaties a specific reference to resistance to fascism and Nazism as a fundamental value of the EU;
- 4.2.10** - Actively promote alliances against the far-right and for the promotion of democracy, with political parties, employers and civil society. The implementation of these priorities and actions will be followed by the Working Group of the dedicated contact persons against the far-right.

4.3 Rights-Based and Fairer Approach to Migration and Asylum

State of Play and Challenges

- 4.3.1** The war in Ukraine led to the activation – for the first time - of the Temporary Protection Directive, which covers and supports millions of Ukraine refugees in Europe to access their basic rights. This was the correct European approach to this emergency, which should have been triggered in other situations and for other people who suffer from wars (Syria, Afghanistan, etc), without discrimination. Its activation showed a pathway for greater equality of treatment in Europe that should lead to future migration and asylum policies in Europe and its Member States. The development of support in access to employment, education, housing, social protection, social assistance, and healthcare are necessary conditions for welcoming and integrating migrants and refugees, whatever their status.
- 4.3.2** As the issue of this crisis is uncertain, and as many other migrants, including asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants, are in the same need of assistance, these essential services to refugees should be supported, strengthened and stabilised in the long term as an essential component of an open and inclusive European migration and asylum policy, while providing and supporting especially specific services, programmes and assistance centres for women and children who are victims of violence in conflicts, offering medical, psychosocial and legal help. Immediate solutions for undocumented migrant workers and regular channels for labour migration should complement a too-long-awaited rights-based approach to European migration and asylum policies. The ETUC recalls the words of the founding Declaration of Philadelphia for the ILO that “labour is not a commodity”.



For this reason, the ETUC will prioritise the following four aspects:

- 4.3.3** A comprehensive migration and asylum agenda for Europe that commits all countries; based on solidarity, responsibility, the application of international laws, standards and conventions and full respect of human rights, including the revision of the Dublin Regulation, the support to search and rescue at sea and stricter scrutiny of Frontex. Currently, there is no institutional search-and-rescue activity carried out by the EU in the Mediterranean, except by NGOs, which should be supported and not criminalized for their humanitarian work.
- 4.3.4** - Improve regular labour migration pathways for all migrant workers across sectors and skill levels and an integration and inclusion policy based on equal treatment of all migrants, regardless of nationality, in the labour market, including through the concrete implementation of the European Partnership for Integration.
- 4.3.5** - Fight against labour exploitation and human trafficking and improve the protection of all migrant workers. All migrant workers, including undocumented ones, must be able to enforce their labour rights on the same basis as a national worker without risking legal proceedings, immigration enforcement and/or deportation. Effective complaint mechanisms must be available for all workers regardless of status.
- 4.3.6** Support and organise migrant workers – including those undocumented – by trade unions is essential in helping workers claim their rights. Joining a union remains key for the successful inclusion of migrants who work and live in communities and societies.

Actions

The ETUC will:

- 4.3.7** - Lobby to improve the overall migration legislative framework and reinforce the equal treatment and protection of all migrant workers, particularly in the Recast of the Single Permit Directive;
- 4.3.8** - Lobby to improve the implementation of the Employers Sanctions Directive in cooperation with its members, including providing residence permits for workers reporting labour exploitation and reinforcing labour and social law inspection services. The ETUC will lobby for an EU legally binding instrument setting minimum standards on labour inspections and complaints mechanisms based on ILO Conventions No. 81 and No. 129 and the new ILO-guidelines on general principles of labour inspection, thereby fully respecting the roles of social partners in implementing the legal instrument and in particular trade unions on national level;
- 4.3.9** - Continue to coordinate and support the work of the UnionMigrantNet and seek funding opportunities to continue and enhance the network's activities;
- 4.3.10** - Support members' activities to organise migrants and refugees and collectively bargain to ensure all workers, no matter their immigration status or nationality, are treated equally and have their rights respected. The ETUC, together with the ETUI, will continue to develop training on migration issues, including the exchange of national best practices.

4.4 Reform of the EU Treaties to Anchor Social Progress

State of Play and Challenges

- 4.4.1 In the past years, European institutions have struggled to progress in policy areas that require unanimity in the Council. Also, contrary to its engagement at the beginning of its mandate, the Commission has failed to follow-up on the European Parliament demands in key areas. These developments have once more confirmed the need to reform the European institutions and decision-making processes, with the full involvement of social partners and trade unions.
- 4.4.2 It is necessary to ensure a reform of the EU institutions to guarantee a more effective, social and progressive institutional framework for the European Union to deliver better living and working conditions.
- 4.4.3 Trade unions actively participated in the Conference on the Future of Europe (COFOE). The conclusions of the COFOE set an ambitious and important roadmap to build a fairer and more social future for Europe.

Actions

- 4.4.4 The ETUC will mobilise and push for the necessary reforms to achieve better functioning European institutions and decision-making processes. This includes enhancing democracy and transparency in decision-making processes;
- 4.4.5 A Convention to modify the Treaties with a strong social focus should be convened. The focus of the ETUC will be – amongst others – on;
 - 4.4.6 - the inclusion of a Social Progress Protocol in the Treaties to guarantee that workers' rights, trade union rights and social rights take precedence over economic freedoms in the event of a conflict;
 - 4.4.7 - qualified majority voting for social issues while fully safeguarding the role of social partners and ensuring a non-regression clause, as well as for other key issues, in particular taxation, own resources, all issues linked to the rule of law and the Multiannual Financial Framework;
 - 4.4.8 - a stronger role and reinforced powers for the European Parliament, including the right of initiative and more transparency in decision-making processes, in particular within the Council;
 - 4.4.9 - guaranteeing a stronger role for the European Pillar of Social Rights in the EU institutional framework linking the achievement of its principles with the objective of a “social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress” to rebalance the economic governance instruments and to ensure strong welfare states;
 - 4.4.10 - revision of the Economic governance to ensure that social justice, social progress and improving people's working and living conditions, the protection of the environment are considered key objectives of economic policies, including by strengthening investments in public services;
 - 4.4.11 - a stronger role for social partners in the decision-making process;
 - 4.4.12 - the respect of the EU legal obligation to accede to the ECHR, to introduce a legal obligation in the Treaties for the EU to also accede to the (revised) European Social Charter, the 1995 Additional Protocol providing for a system of collective complaints and the (Revised) European Code of Social Security;



4.4.13 The ETUC will continue its engagement to deliver on the proposals of the Conference on the Future of Europe, continuing to build synergies with political parties, civil society organisations and movements.

4.5 Engagement Towards European Institutions

State of Play and Challenges

4.5.1 Since the last Congress, the ETUC has increased its mobilisation to advocate for trade union priorities vis a vis the European institutions. Concerning the European Parliament, the activities and support of the Trade Union Intergroup have continued to play a key role. The next European Parliament elections will take place in 2024. The campaign for the 2024 elections and the definition of the new college of European Commissioners, as well as its priorities, will be key for delivering the trade union priorities in the next years.

Actions

The ETUC will:

- 4.5.2** - Mobilise to ensure that trade union priorities are reflected in the public debate at the national and European levels and included in the proposals of the European political parties in view of the next European elections;
- 4.5.3** - Mobilise towards the future European Commission to make sure social issues are amongst the key priorities of action for the European institutions in the next Parliamentary term;
- 4.5.4** Continue and reinforce its lobby activities towards the European Parliament advocating for the re-establishment of the Trade Union Intergroup and towards the European Council and the Council of the European Union to achieve the necessary advances for trade unions and working people across Europe. In order to strengthen its influence, the ETUC will build upon its work in the current mandate to coordinate trade union actions throughout the process of negotiation and adoption of European pieces of legislation, including through online working groups and workplans identifying key actors and steps;
- 4.5.5** Outline the negative actions by far-right MEPs, parties and governments with regard to dossiers of high-importance for workers and trade unions in Europe, in view of the elections and in line with its policy and action plan.

4.6 A Fair Enlargement Process

State of Play and Challenges

- 4.6.1** Throughout its history, the European Union has seen numerous enlargements and continues to expand, despite the UK's decision to leave the EU. The Enlargement Process is part of the broader European Neighbourhood policy and currently there are nine candidate countries at various stages of the accession process. Candidate countries must be stable democracies respecting the rule of law, human rights and minorities. They must ratify ILO core conventions, especially those on freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and the right to equal pay.
- 4.6.2** The European Neighbourhood Policy should help foster stability, security and prosperity in neighbouring countries in the east and south on the basis of good governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The ETUC contributes to this process by cooperating directly with candidate countries, supporting their trade unions' capacity building and arguing for social dialogue to be embedded;
- 4.6.3** Ukraine and Moldova were recently granted candidate status. Their unions have successfully applied to become full members of the ETUC. The ETUC will actively support these countries' unions during the accession to the EU. These countries must introduce the necessary reforms to conform their legislation and practices with EU labour and social law.

Actions

The ETUC commits to:

- 4.6.4** - Press for the fulfilment of social and labour market policy criteria for admission to the EU. Enlargement has to be a success for workers in both new Member States and existing ones: socio-economic divergences among these countries are immense and unfair competition must not be allowed;
- 4.6.5** - Participate actively in the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy to ensure an effective equal partnership that meets the needs and aspirations of workers and citizens and respects ILO standards and the European Social Charter;
- 4.6.6** - Continue to assist trade unions in candidate countries, to successfully influence the accession process, ensure a social dimension and stop reforms contrary to the EU social acquis and values during the process, concentrating on social policy issues, human rights, trade union and labour law in the accession process for candidate countries; the ETUC will set up a special committee on labour law reform in Ukraine and reconstruction and will continue to engage with Georgian trade unions, open to their membership in line with its affiliation rules;
- 4.6.7** - Set up a specifically dedicated group to work with all the candidate countries for a systematic and coherent trade union approach to accession.



4.7 A Stronger Role of Europe in the World, Based on our Social Model and Trade Union Values

State of Play and Challenges

- 4.7.1** The EU's international role is fundamentally changing as a consequence of the war and armed conflicts and violations of freedoms and human rights globally. The ETUC supports a stronger geopolitical role of the EU in the world. The ETUC strongly condemns the Russian war against Ukraine, which has had a devastating humanitarian and economic impact on the Ukrainian people, on some developing countries facing famine, and is affecting the livelihood of European workers with increased energy prices and inflation. Trade unions call for the withdrawal of Russian troops, reject war and are committed to restoring dialogue, cooperation between States and the social consensus essential for lasting peace. The ETUC continues to support the independent trade union movement of Belarus and to mobilise to ask the immediate and unconditional release of arrested trade unionists, human rights defenders and political prisoners, and the end of the harassment and reprisals against independent trade unions.
- 4.7.2** The ETUC is developing its international activities within the context of an ever-changing international role for the EU, its external action and the policies that are impacted by external factors, such as migration, energy supply and climate change. In its international activities, the ETUC cooperates with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) to complement and strengthen trade union influence at a global level.
- 4.7.3** The EU remains one of the most prominent players in development cooperation. In 2021 the European Commission adopted the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), enlarging the EU's capacity to support third countries. It became the main instrument for EU development cooperation and the EU's main financing tool for poverty eradication and promotion of sustainable development, prosperity, decent work, peace and stability.
- 4.7.4** It is necessary to develop further the ETUC's international activities in support of more progressive EU action that promotes workers' and human rights through the ILO, the UN, the WTO and the OECD.

Actions

- 4.7.5** The ETUC will:
- Continue to call on governments to partake in an international peace conference for the resolution of the war of aggression on Ukraine and a post-war international peace conference for the prosecution of the war-crimes, application of the international law, introduction of recovery plan based on the principles of decent work and social dialogue, as well as recognition of free and democratic trade unions and sufficiently resourced public services, infrastructures and social protection as the cornerstones of any reconstruction phase;
- 4.7.6** - Advocate for stronger social safeguards in the various instruments of support of private investment in non-EU countries (guarantees and loans), especially through more robust due diligence mechanisms for investments in countries at risk (where serious violation of ILO Convention occurs). Particular attention will be devoted to the external investment plan (EIP) managed by the EIB and other similar instruments;

- 4.7.7** - Call on the EU to step up and play a more prominent role in peace building as part of the European External Relations Services' mission;
- 4.7.8** - Promote peaceful resolution in Palestine, Syria, the Kurdish region and Western Sahara and elsewhere; demand the respect of international law and the right of all peoples to self-determination, in accordance with UN resolutions; demand the EU ensures the respect of the geographical scope of its Association Agreements; demand that the EU considers the impact on workers when deploying sanctions and blockades. The ETUC will advocate for regulatory measures that stop EU legal entities both importing products originated in illegal settlements and exporting to occupied territories, aiding or assisting such unlawful situations in conformity with EU Treaties and compliance with international law. The ETUC reaffirms the need for a negotiated agreement between Israel and Palestine that will result in a lasting and peaceful "two-states" solution, representing solidarity, justice and the legitimate rights of both peoples to co-existence in security, independence and two sovereign viable states. The ETUC calls to enhance, under the auspices of ETUC and their affiliated unions, the cooperation between the Histadrut and PGFTU to assist the Palestinian workers who are employed in Israel and in particular, the vocational training which is given to the latter in the industry sector.
- 4.7.9** - Contribute to develop a more social G7 and G20 agenda through strong cooperation with TUAC and the L7 and L20;
- 4.7.10** - Demand the accountability and transparency of European institutions, ensuring that the increasing share of public funding is contributing to the achievement of the SDGs; continue to demand more policy coherence at the international level; and demand due diligence for human and labour rights and environmental standards for private sector actors receiving public funding for development cooperation, with a clear policy framework for their engagement in contributing to achieving the SDGs;
- 4.7.11** - Support with the ITUC, the Workers' Group in the ILO Governing Body and ACTRAV against attacks aimed at weakening ILO supervisory bodies' role in general and the right to strike in particular;
- 4.7.12** - Support the universal labour guarantee, broaden the fundamental principles and rights and work beyond the right to occupational safety and health (OSH), to an adequate minimum wage and to a maximum working time;
- 4.7.13** - Contribute to a coherent, holistic and full implementation of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises through effective political pressure and demand a clear position in favour of the UN binding instrument on business and human rights;
- 4.7.14** - Put pressure on the EU and international institutions to provide enabling environments for civil society, including trade unions.



TOGETHER FOR A STRONGER ETUC



A Stronger ETUC to Deliver on our Priorities

- 5.1** The European trade union movement constitutes a formidable force for social progress at the national and European levels. Over the years, it has delivered important results and real gains for workers and their unions throughout Europe. At the same time, the European trade union movement is facing new and significant challenges. To overcome these challenges, there is the necessity for a strong and united ETUC that can lead change in solidarity and in an open and transparent manner. We need an ETUC that places the needs and priorities of working people and their trade unions at its very core and that can deliver new momentum for a trade union led vision for Europe.
- 5.2** The capacity to achieve social progress is closely linked with the capacity of the trade union movement to define priority objectives and mobilise to achieve these objectives. This requires an ETUC which is fit for purpose. It entails improvements to our working methods and adapting and strengthening the organisation to deliver on the priorities set by Congress.

Secretariat

- 5.3** The ETUC Secretariat acts in a collegial manner under the leadership of the General Secretary (GS) to deliver on its tasks and the Congress priorities. The Secretariat bears collective responsibility for delivering on the strategic priorities and towards the Executive Committee. In this framework, under the leadership of the GS, each member of the Secretariat has clear areas of responsibility. Regular and reliable Secretariat meetings provide for the necessary exchange of information, discussions and collective decision making.

Presidency

- 5.4** The Presidency should be closely involved in preparing the ETUC Statutory meetings. If necessary and opportune, specific tasks may be conferred to the Presidency at the request of the General Secretary and in agreement with the Executive Committee.

Executive Committee

- 5.5** The Executive Committee (ExCo) of the ETUC must focus on the strategic agenda of the trade union movement, discussing and taking decisions on key choices and developments. Discussions with key political leaders will be organised during specific sessions of the Executive Committee. The meetings need to be relevant to the elected leaders; therefore discussions which are too technical and detailed should be avoided;
- 5.6** Documents submitted to the ExCo should be shorter (2 pages supported with Annexes), better focused and shall be sent to Committee Members at least a week in advance – with exceptions possible. A stronger role for the ETUC Committees should be foreseen in preparing the documents, bearing in mind that this is not always possible considering the calendar of the Committee and ExCo meetings and the topics under discussion;
- 5.7** As per the ETUC Constitution, there will be four meetings of the Executive Committee every year;

- 5.8** Executive Committee meetings will take place in person. For extraordinary and urgent circumstances, meetings of the Executive Committee may be convened online.

Steering Committee

- 5.9** The Steering Committee (SC) needs to be empowered to take strategic decisions on financial and administrative matters to ensure the financial health of the ETUC, in line with the Constitution, on the basis of timely, accurate and transparent information. In addition, the SC should be able to take decisions on urgent matters to carry out priorities determined by the Congress or the Executive Committee;
- 5.10** As per ETUC Constitution, there will be eight meetings of the Steering Committee every year;
- 5.11** Steering Committee meetings will take place online (apart when organised immediately before or after the Executive Committee meetings).

Summer Schools and Mid-Term Conference

- 5.12** The Summer Schools and the Mid-Term Conference must provide significant opportunities for exchange and of engagement of trade union leaders. The dates, agenda and objectives should be published well in advance. The Summer Schools and the Mid-Term Conference topics need to be agreed by the first ExCo of the year.

Committees

- 5.13** The number of the Committees should be reduced and follow the priorities adopted at the Congress, based on a proposal to be put forward to the Executive Committee following the Congress. The Secretariat will submit to the ExCo updated Rules of Procedure and Terms of Reference for the Committees by the end of 2023. Remote participation in Committees will be explored;
- 5.14** The lists of the official members of the different Committees, including the ETUC Secretariat members and advisors, will be sent annually to the ExCo and Member Organisations. Where more than one trade union exists in a country, the member of the Committee shall inform the other unions and coordinate their positions with regard to the issues under discussion;
- 5.15** The organisation of Committee meetings will be improved. The meetings shall be convened sufficiently in advance. Documents and meeting agendas shall be sent to Committee members a week in advance – except in extraordinary circumstances. Committees shall be able to give guidance on the concrete implementation of decisions and priorities already defined by the Executive Committee. Minutes of the Committees shall be produced (containing only essential information and decisions taken) and circulated to the Committee members, and to the Executive Committee for information as an attachment to the GS communications. Attention will be given to advocacy and strategies.

A Stronger Coordination with the ETUFs

- 5.16** The capacity to develop joint mobilisation and coordinated and effective advocacy with national affiliates and the ETUFs is key, particularly for closer coordination on initiatives at national level and at European level.



5.17 The Trade Union movement has several actors at the European level, and they should continue to strengthen forces. The ETUC and the different ETUFs are equally important in delivering European trade union demands, but this must happen in close coordination, transparency and cooperation. The ETUFs recognise the key role the ETUC must play on cross-sectoral topics, while the ETUC recognises the importance of the ETUFs given their sector-specific know-how and experience and the direct contact they have with sector trade unions. Further improved cooperation between the ETUC and the ETUFs is an important answer to the evolution of trade union resources at the European level.

5.18 The ETUC Secretariat will have periodic meetings (at least once a year) with the General Secretaries of the ETUFs.

5.19 The ETUC Executive Committee will receive a regular update on the development of the cooperation with ETUFs.

Stronger Coordination with the ETUI

5.20 Reinforced coordination between the ETUI and the ETUC will be guaranteed, to ensure that the institute maintains its scientific research and training role and can continue to stimulate and provide support in delivering on the priorities set by the trade union movement.

Stronger Coordination with the EESC Workers' Group

5.21 The ETUC will continue and reinforce its cooperation with the Workers' Group in the European Economic and Social Committee, including through periodic exchanges between the Secretariat and the Workers' Group bureau. An annual summit co-organised by the ETUC and the Workers' Group is to take place each year and in advance of the State of the Union address.

Stronger Coordination towards the European institutions

5.22 The ETUC will continue to guarantee close coordination with affiliates in the activities and advocacy. Amongst others, specific coordination will be guaranteed with affiliates from Member States whose governments hold the Council Presidency, grouped by trio Presidencies. The key European Council meetings will be prepared in advance to ensure effective and coordinated initiatives and advocacy efforts. The network of National Officers will continue to play an important role in coordinating advocacy actions by affiliates.

5.23 The ETUC will organise an annual High-Level Trade Union Conference in the European Parliament.

5.24 The ETUC will continue its activities and engagement in the Council of Europe, and particularly in the monitoring bodies/procedures to the European Social Charter. The ETUC will intensify its work to support affiliates in their advocacy with EFTA and other European institutions outside the EU.

Campaigns

5.25 The ETUC will develop and run campaigns. These campaigns will be discussed and agreed by the Executive Committee and will include proposals – if needed – for the resources, staff, or finances from affiliates.

Respect

5.26 Building on the ETUC Code of Conduct and in line with the ETUC Charter of Values, the ETUC will actively promote inclusive trade unions. Trade unions have to represent society and organize and be a safe place for women, people of colour, the LGBTI community and workers with disabilities. Together with ETUI, the ETUC will develop training on organising and attracting members. The ETUC will promote, with ETUI, trade union leadership programs for female trade unionists, of colour, LGBTI and with disabilities.

Environmental Footprint

5.27 The ETUC will also work to make its activities more sustainable by reducing their environmental foot print.



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