



TOGETHER FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS

EL/LR
Brussels, 28 May 2025

TO: Prime Minister of the
Republic of Estonia
Mr. Kristen Michal

[Letter sent by e-mail]

ETUC Letter – Urgent Concerns Regarding the Undermining of Social Dialogue and Trade Unions in Estonia

Dear Prime Minister of the Republic of Estonia Mr Michal,

The European Trade Union Confederation is writing to express its deep concern regarding recent developments in Estonia that threaten the integrity of social dialogue and the rights of workers.

Our Estonian affiliate EAKL has alerted us of the Estonian Government's decision to bypass established tripartite mechanisms in the drafting and adoption of amendments to the Employment Contracts Act (ECA). The exclusion of trade unions from meaningful consultation contradicts the principles of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and undermines the European Union's commitment to social dialogue as enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Recommendation on Strengthening Social Dialogue in the EU.

The proposed amendments raise several critical issues:

- **Erosion of collective bargaining:** The removal of provisions requiring collective agreements for flexible working arrangements undermines the role of trade unions and weakens collective industrial relations.
- **Income insecurity:** Allowing employers to guarantee only 10 working hours per week introduces unacceptable levels of income instability for workers.
- **Lack of employee autonomy:** Workers would be bound to inflexible schedules for up to 12 months, with no right to renegotiate without employer consent.
- **Discriminatory provisions:** The exclusion of minors and new employees from hourly wage requirements undermines equal treatment principles.
- **Changing the nature of part-time work:** Part-time workers will no longer be able to work overtime or earn higher pay for extra hours.
- **Reduced social protection:** Lower working hours will diminish social security contributions, affecting unemployment benefits, health coverage, and future pensions.

These changes are not only regressive but also incompatible with **EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages**, which calls for stronger collective bargaining frameworks, especially in countries with low collective bargaining coverage rates such as Estonia.



We strongly regret to hear from our Estonian affiliate about recent statements from the Estonian Minister for Economic Affairs and Industry that collective agreements are outdated and have no place in modern society, while indicating that no new collective agreements will be concluded in the state sector under the new government. Such statements are counter to the EU Acquis and to the EU stance that considers collective bargaining the cornerstone of the social market model and a key driver of fair and sustainable economic growth.

We support the demands of our Estonian affiliate, EAKL, for the Estonian Government to:

- **Restore meaningful tripartite social dialogue** at the national level
- **Publicly support the development of collective bargaining** in the public and private sectors
- **Withdraw the proposed amendments** to the Employment Contracts Act and **fully engage in new tripartite negotiations**

We also call on the **European Commission** to monitor this situation closely and to engage with the Estonian authorities to ensure compliance with EU law and fundamental rights.

The ETUC stands in full solidarity with EAKL and the workers of Estonia. We remain committed to supporting efforts to protect and strengthen social dialogue and collective bargaining across Europe.

Yours sincerely,

Esther Lynch,
General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation