



TOGETHER FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS

EL/LR/TM/eb
Brussels, 22 July 2025

To: Mr Plamen Dimitrov, CITUB President

Solidarity letter from the European Trade Union Confederation to CITUB

Dear Plamen Dimitrov,
Dear CITUB colleagues,

We are deeply concerned by the news of unacceptable actions taken by Bulgarian authorities during the peaceful protest organised by the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) on 14 July 2025.

On behalf of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the 45 million workers we represent, I expresses our strong condemnation regarding of these actions. Repression and intimidation can never be the answer to people exercising their fundamental democratic rights. We call on the Government of Bulgaria to act now to remedy the situation, ensure that all trade union representatives can carry out their duties without fear of repression or intimidation and engage in genuine negotiations with trade unions to address the grievances of working people in all the sectors concerned.

The detention of Todor Kapitanov, Vice President of CITUB and Chair of the National Strike Committee, during a peaceful demonstration by forestry workers on the Trakia highway, represents a serious violation of fundamental trade union rights. The protest, which was organised in full compliance with trade union rules, human rights standards and democratic principles, aimed to draw attention to long-standing demands for fair wages and decent working conditions - demands that had been met with silence by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

Instead of engaging in meaningful dialogue, the authorities responded with an excessive police presence, intimidation of participants, and the violent detention of a trade union leader. Mr. Kapitanov was held in handcuffs for hours, reportedly sustaining injuries during his arrest. This is an act that constitutes not only an abuse of power but also a direct attack on the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly as well as an inappropriate and unnecessary use of force resulting in harm to Mr Todor Kapitanov.

Such actions are in clear breach of Bulgaria's obligations under international and European law. As a Member State of the European Union, Bulgaria is bound by Article 12 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which guarantees the right to freedom of assembly and association, including the right to form and join trade unions. Furthermore, the European Pillar of Social Rights affirms the right of workers to fair working conditions and collective bargaining. These rights are also enshrined in ILO Conventions 87 and 98, both ratified by Bulgaria.

The ETUC stands in full solidarity with Todor Kapitanov and CITUB and supports your demands for justice, accountability, and the protection of trade union freedoms. The repression of trade union activity is not only a violation of fundamental rights - it is a threat to social peace and democratic governance. The ETUC will continue to monitor the situation closely and raise this issue with relevant European institutions to ensure that the rights of workers in Bulgaria are upheld.

In solidarity,

Esther Lynch,
General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation