



ETUC Resolution on ensuring fair recruitment for migrant workers in the EU

Adopted at the Executive Committee meeting of 19 and 20 November 2025

This Resolution outlines the demands from the European trade union movement for European labour migration policies that ensure **fair recruitment, equal treatment and promote decent work** for all migrant workers, regardless of their immigration status.

This ETUC call comes at a crucial moment when new European policy initiatives are expected, including the [Quality Jobs Roadmap](#), and the Fair Labour Mobility Package, alongside the revised Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the overdue implementation reports on the Seasonal Workers and the [Employers' Sanctions Directive](#). At the same time, the ETUC firmly rejects the proposed [EU Talent Pool](#), which is expected to be voted soon.

While at European policy level discussions are centred on the 'need of migrants to fill [labour shortages](#)', restrictive and repressive asylum policies, such as the proposed '[Return Regulation](#)', combined with limited safe and regular labour migration pathways, create more **irregularity, precarity and exploitation**.

It is well-recognised that migrant workers are more vulnerable due to their irregular or precarious status, the lack of knowledge of their working conditions and rights, and their dependency on the employer, not only in terms of income, but in many cases also accommodation and work permits. Women migrant workers might be exposed to specific gender-based risks in recruitment. All too often, workers do not know the identity of their actual employer, due to **long chains of subcontractors**. Exploitation of migrant workers is widespread across [sectors](#), including agri-food, road freight transport, construction, care and domestic work, delivery and logistics, hospitality, tourism, industrial manufacturing, amounting in some cases to human trafficking or forced labour.

Abuses in recruitment are becoming more and more common in relation to **intra-EU postings of third-country nationals**. This is an increasing phenomenon in many Member States, as confirmed by the [European Labour Authority](#) (ELA). Fraudulent transit/hiring postings and non-genuine postings through agencies and letterbox companies are increasingly used to circumvent national labour migration rules in the search for cheap and flexible labour.

Migrant workers increasingly find themselves trapped in exploitative systems of [labour intermediation](#) that control every aspect of their life, from obtaining work permits to their wages, accommodation and transportation. These forms of labour intermediation encompass unscrupulous actors, such as gangmasters in the agricultural sector or the various forms of **private recruitment agencies**. Trade unions are increasingly encountering migrant workers who have had to pay huge recruitment fees and costs to these agencies and intermediaries in order to obtain a work permit in Europe. These



workers find themselves deceived, isolated, often highly indebted and without any support or access to decent accommodation and working conditions.

Fair recruitment has been described as “the origin of decent work”. However, ILO research and data show that [recruitment-related abuses remain widespread](#), particularly for migrant workers, as they are more susceptible to being trapped into deceptive or coercive recruitment and without the necessary information and support networks to access justice in case of abuse. Migrant workers are three times more likely to be in situations of [forced labour than other workers, largely due to unfair recruitment practices](#). The [illegal profits generated by charging recruitment fees](#) and other related costs from migrant workers account for an estimated US\$5.6 billion annually globally.

Against this background, ETUC is calling for dedicated actions as part of a more holistic approach to ensure fair recruitment and decent work for migrant workers in Europe:

- **Regulate subcontracting and labour intermediation:** ETUC reiterates its demand for an [EU Directive](#) to regulate labour intermediaries and introduce an EU-wide legal framework to limit subcontracting and ensure joint and several liability throughout the subcontracting chain.
- **Tackle abusive recruitment actors and practices:** EU actions must align with ILO Convention C181 on Private Employment Agencies and the [ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment and Definition of recruitment fees and related costs](#) ensuring recruiters adhere to minimum requirements, can be held liable and are prevented from shifting risks and costs onto workers.
- **Permanent EU funding for a trade union counselling network for mobile and migrant workers:** access to information and support services for migrant workers should be improved throughout the recruitment process and once employed. EU support for counselling, cooperation and capacity-building is key to expand and coordinate trade union-related advisory and counselling services for mobile and migrant workers on the ground and across Europe.
- **Ensure access to justice and effective complaints and redress mechanisms,** also for recruitment-related abuses. All workers, independently of their employment or residence status, should be able to report violations of their labour rights without risking retaliation, detention and/or deportation. [Firewalls between immigration authorities and labour inspectorates must be ensured](#). Residence permits should be granted to workers reporting exploitation, including fair and timely compensation. **Ensure every migrant worker has access to decent accommodation**, preventing employer dependency and eliminating substandard housing such as shanty towns and informal settlements.
- **Ensure the correct enforcement of the Posting Directives**, to effectively tackle bogus postings, fight exploiting employers and better protect posted migrant workers.
- [Extend the mandate of ELA](#) to include the Seasonal Workers, the Employers' Sanctions and the Anti-Trafficking Directives to better protect migrant workers in the EU. Importantly, however, ELA's role must remain limited to the enforcement of working conditions as opposed to migration rules, so as to ensure compliance with fundamental labour rights, and preserve the trust, independence and efficiency of labour inspectors.
- **Enhance the capacities and resources of European labour inspectorates** to ensure effective monitoring of labour recruiters, detection of recruitment related abuses, enforcement of applicable labour standards, and accessibility of justice mechanisms for migrant workers in line with ILO C81 and R81.