

**Intervention by Ludovic Voet, ETUC Confederal Secretary**  
**EPSCO Council – 24 June 2025**

I would like to thank the **Danish Presidency** for the questions raised in today's steering note. They touch on a crucial tension we must confront honestly: **how can we pursue administrative simplification without undermining workers' rights?** We will only find meaningful answers if we start with that assumption: **rights and protections are not optional.**

This morning's visit to **Siemens Gamesa** illustrated this perfectly. That company thrives **not despite**, but **because of** strong collective bargaining, good wages, and solid working conditions. It confirms what we say consistently: **quality jobs are not a barrier to competitiveness—they are a driver of it.**

The future of Europe lies in boosting internal demand, investing in high-quality industrial production, and reinforcing workers' rights—not in cutting wages, loosening protections, or chasing a low-cost model that has already failed in too many regions.

It confirmed something we know from the ground: **a company that chooses to invest in its workers, to train them, and to engage with unions, is a company that performs.** Their collaboration with **VET schools**, supported by social partners, is working. This should inspire the Union of Skills.

**About simplification**, if the goal is to simplify reporting tools, streamline overlapping procedures, or digitalise paperwork, then fine. But if it becomes a pretext to **weaken labour law, working time or undercut collective rights**, we say clearly: **that is not simplification—that is social regression.**

Governments can reduce the administrative burden on workers too by making access to social rights and employment-related services simpler, faster, and more automatic. This means streamlining procedures to claim unemployment benefits, pensions, health insurance, and training rights—so that workers no longer have to deal with fragmented systems or provide the same documents repeatedly. Governments should also ensure that workers are not penalised for administrative mistakes by introducing a “right to error” and offering real-time support. For digital services to be inclusive, every online process must be backed by human assistance.

On labour market participation: we must offer jobs that are **safe, secure, and pay enough to live on.** Women won't return to work if there's no affordable childcare. Seniors won't stay longer if their jobs break their health. And young people won't commit to futures built on zero-hour contracts.

Let's be honest: if the only response to every problem is “more flexibility,” “less regulation,” and “more pressure on workers,” then you're not solving labour shortages—you'll be deepening them. **Workers will continue leaving those sectors where**

**conditions are deteriorating.** You can't fix shortages by offering jobs that people can't sustain, can't live off, and can't believe in.

**Europe will not win the global race by copying low-cost models.** The strongest economies in Europe – like Denmark– are not those with the lowest labour standards, but those where collective bargaining, trade union rights, and quality public services are solidly in place. That is not an accident. It is the foundation of real competitiveness.

Finally, we urge you to turn the Social Dialogue recommendation and the **Pact for Social Dialogue** into action. Social dialogue is not a checkbox. It must mean real co-decision, respect for autonomous agreements, and full involvement in transition strategies and EU funding.

Ministers, a competitive Europe must be a **fair** Europe. Let us not trade long-term prosperity for short-term deregulation. Workers are ready to engage—but only if they are respected, protected, and empowered.

Thank you.