

ETUC Position on the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe and the follow-up, including a Convention

Adopted at the Executive Committee Meeting of 22-23 June 2022

SHORT SUMMARY:

The ETUC has engaged in the Conference on the Future of Europe to put Social Europe at the center of the discussions. The ETUC considers the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe an ambitious and important roadmap to define a fairer and more social future of Europe.

The ETUC calls on the European institutions to take the necessary steps to ensure that the COFOE conclusions will become reality.

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 future of Europe, to ensure improved working and living conditions, as well as upward convergence – in the framework of a renewed social contract for Europe.

The ETUC calls on the European institutions to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Conference conclusions become reality also in the areas of Treaty changes.

The ETUC calls for a Convention to be convened on the basis of Article 48 TEU as soon as possible to open the discussions on the necessary Treaty changes for a more effective, social and progressive institutional framework for the European Union. The Convention must have a strong focus on the necessary advances on social issues.

Background

In her political guidelines in 2019, Ursula von der Leyen stated her intention to organise a Conference on the Future of Europe (COFOE).¹ In March 2021, the EU institutions finally agreed a Joint Declaration on the Conference.² The Conference was organised through different bodies and instruments: (i) an Executive Board ; (ii) a Plenary, including Working Groups ; (iii) an online multilingual platform ; (iv) European citizens panels ; and (v) national citizens panels.³ The first Plenary of the Conference took place in June 2021 and the last one in April 2022.⁴ The Conference concluded its works and delivered its proposals in a final report to the Presidents of the EU institutions on the 9th of May 2022 in Strasbourg.⁵

The ETUC has engaged in the Conference⁶ on the basis of the ETUC resolution on the Roadmap for the ETUC work on the Conference on the Future of Europe.⁷

¹ *A Union that strives for more. My agenda for Europe. By candidate for President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen. Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024*, 16 July 2019.

² *Joint Declaration of the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission on the Conference on the Future of Europe. Engaging with citizens for democracy – Building a more resilient Europe*, 10 March 2021.

³ More information on the Conference on the Future of Europe can be found on the [online platform](#).

⁴ Information on the Plenary meetings of the Conference on the Future of Europe can be found [here](#).

⁵ The final report (including the final proposals) can be found [here](#). The recording of the final event can be found [here](#).

⁶ Information on ETUC initiatives and actions can be found [here](#).

⁷ *ETUC resolution on the Roadmap for the ETUC work on the Conference on the Future of Europe, adopted by the ETUC Executive Committee*, adopted at the Executive Committee Meeting of 22-23 March 2021.

An ETUC Working Group on the Conference on the Future of Europe was established. The WG has been kept closely informed of the developments and was involved in defining trade union objectives and priority actions in the framework of the Conference.

The trade union proposals on the online platform of the Conference (defined with the WG on the basis of the ETUC Resolution – see Annex II) were the most supported or amongst the most supported in all the categories.

The ETUC was present and active in the COFOE Executive Board, as well as in the Plenary and Working Groups of the Conference. During the Plenary sessions, the trade union delegation organised meetings as well as initiatives (some together with civil society organisations), and participated in the meetings of the political groups to present and seek support for our priorities.

Initiatives at European and national level were organised by the trade union movement to present the trade union proposals for a fairer and more social future of Europe.

In carrying out these activities, the ETUC has coordinated closely and effectively with the Workers' Group of the EESC.

COFOE Conclusions – an ambitious roadmap for a fairer and more social future of Europe

The ETUC Resolution adopted in March 2021 stated: “*Social Europe should be at the centre of the Conference. The Conference should not be a bureaucratic exercise nor focus only on institutional matters, it should constitute a key moment in the process of construction of the European Union of the future and be based on an ambitious agenda*”.⁸ By reading the conclusions of the Conference (see a non-exhaustive summary in Annex I), it is clear that this objective has been reached.

The ETUC considers that the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe provide an ambitious and important roadmap to define a fairer and more social future of Europe. While not agreeing with all the COFOE conclusions, these constitute a progressive, ambitious and positive blueprint for the necessary change of direction for the European Union. The Conference proposals include key priorities which – if delivered by the EU institutions – would contribute to “*reshape the EU in a way that will guarantee its strategic autonomy, sustainable growth, improvement of living and working conditions and human progress, [...] in the framework of a renewed Social Contract*”.⁹

It is essential to ensure a real follow-up to the Conference conclusions by the EU institutions. This means changes to EU policies, budget and work programmes, including new legislative and non-legislative initiatives, as well as changes to the Treaties, with a strong focus on reinforcing the social dimension.

First reactions from the EU institutions to the COFOE conclusions

According to the Joint Declaration starting the Conference: “*The three institutions will examine swiftly how to follow up effectively to this report, each within their own sphere of competences and in accordance with the Treaties*”.¹⁰ In the past weeks, the European institutions already gave some indications on their view on the follow-up to the conclusions of the Conference.

⁸ ETUC resolution on the Roadmap for the ETUC work on the Conference on the Future of Europe.

⁹ Proposals of the Plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe, Chapter A stronger economy, social justice and jobs – introduction.

¹⁰ Joint Declaration of the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission on the Conference on the Future of Europe. *Engaging with citizens for democracy – Building a more resilient Europe*.

In June, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on the follow-up to the Conference.¹¹ The European Parliament adopted a further Resolution on 9 June triggering Article 48 TEU, including proposals for the amendment of the Treaties.¹² The EP proposals include: “• to enhance the Union’s capacity to act by reforming voting procedures, including allowing decisions in the Council by qualified majority voting instead of unanimity in relevant areas, such as the adoption of sanctions and so-called passerelle clauses, and in the event of an emergency; • to adapt the competences conferred on the Union in the Treaties, especially in the areas of health and cross-border health threats, in the completion of the energy union based on energy efficiency and renewable energies designed in line with international agreements to mitigate climate change, in defence, and in social and economic policies; to ensure the European Pillar of Social Rights is fully implemented and to incorporate social progress in Article 9 TFEU linked to a Social Progress Protocol into the Treaties; to support strengthening the competitiveness and resilience of the EU economy, with special attention paid to small and medium-sized enterprises and competitiveness checks and to promote future-oriented investments focused on the just, green and digital transitions; • to provide Parliament with full codecision rights on the EU budget, and with the right to initiate, amend or repeal legislation; • to strengthen the procedure for the protection of the values the EU is founded on and to clarify the determination and consequences of breaches of fundamental values (Article 7 TEU and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union)”.¹³ The EP Resolution includes already two specific amendments on QMV for external affairs and for the general passerelle clause.¹⁴ The EP Resolution also calls for representatives of the EU’s social partners, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Committee of the Regions, EU civil society and candidate countries to be invited as observers to the Convention.¹⁵

The European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen declared to be open to Treaty changes “if need be”. She also communicated the Commission’s intention, in the future, to give “Citizens’ Panels the time and resources to make recommendations” before the presentation of key legislative proposals.¹⁶ The Commission will present its first follow-up to the Conference on the 15th of June through a Communication. The State of the Union address in September will also be an occasion to announce further initiatives stemming from the Conference conclusions.

The Council will define its position vis a vis the proposals of the Conference in the next weeks. With regard to the issue of Treaty changes, some governments have expressed themselves positively,¹⁷ others negatively.¹⁸ French President Macron has expressed himself in favour of the launch of a Convention to modify the Treaties.¹⁹ The European Council will meet to discuss the follow-up to the Conference on 23-24 June.

¹¹ [European Parliament resolution of 4 May 2022 on the follow-up to the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe.](#)

¹² [European Parliament resolution of 9 June 2022 on the call for a Convention for the revision of the Treaties.](#)

¹³ Ivi, Par. 5.

¹⁴ Ivi, Par. 6.

¹⁵ Ivi, Par. 8.

¹⁶ The speech by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at the closing event of the Conference on the Future of Europe on 9 May 2022 can be found [here](#).

¹⁷ Amongst others, six governments have co-signed a non-paper in to stress they are “in principle open to necessary treaty changes that are jointly defined”. This non-paper has been signed by Germany, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Spain.

¹⁸ Amongst others, thirteen governments co-signed a non-paper to stress that they do “not support unconsidered and premature attempts to launch a process towards Treaty change”. This non-paper has been signed by Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and Sweden.

¹⁹ The speech by French President Emmanuel Macron at the closing event of the Conference on the Future of Europe on 9 May 2022 can be found [here](#).

There is the clear risk that the European Commission and the European Council will respond to the Conference on the Future of Europe simply by highlighting initiatives that are already being prepared or are under discussion, without following-up on the most ambitious proposals of the Conference, which would entail the much-needed change of direction for EU policies and institutions.

The follow-up to the COFOE conclusions: a change of direction for EU policies and new initiatives for a fairer and more social future of Europe

The COFOE conclusions call for significant changes in EU policies, objectives and budget, as well as for new policy and legislative initiatives (see Annex I for a summary of the COFOE proposals). The ETUC calls on the European institutions to take the necessary steps to ensure that the COFOE conclusions will become a reality.

The Conference proposals include amongst others the following priorities, which must be reflected in new initiatives and legislative proposals:

- The full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, a reinforcement of the competences of the EU in social policies, legislation to promote social policies and ensure equality of rights and upwards convergence in working conditions, actions to fight poverty, initiatives to ensure gender equality and to strengthen social dialogue and collective bargaining;
- A review of the EU's economic governance and the European Semester in order to ensure that the green and digital transitions, social justice and social progress go hand-in-hand with economic competitiveness, as well further consideration to common borrowing at EU level and to new indicators in order to complement macroeconomic ones;
- Guaranteeing fair digitalisation based on human rights, improved working conditions and collective bargaining, including establishing a 'human centric' approach that would incorporate the 'human in control' principle;
- Reinforcement of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and of the respect for the Rule of Law;
- Ensuring a Just Transition, including protecting workers and jobs, ensuring fairer taxation and anti-tax fraud measures and an inclusive governance approach;
- Preventing old age poverty by introducing minimum pensions and ensuring appropriate social and health care for older persons;
- Reinforcement of the role of trade unions at national and transnational level, as well as a reinforcement of the involvement of social partners in decision-making processes;
- Stronger investments in the health systems, in particular public and not-for profit, respecting the principles of full accessibility, affordability and quality of services, and ensuring that resources are not drained by profit-oriented health operators with little to no regard for the general interest;
- A reform of the European asylum system based on the principles of solidarity and fair share of responsibility;
- Ensuring the respect of the right to lifelong learning and the right to training, as well as a ban of unpaid internships through a legal instrument;
- Reforming EU trade and investment policy and relaunch of global multilateralism, and ensuring decent work standards along the global value chains.

The ETUC calls on the European Commission to swiftly prepare and propose the necessary initiatives to deliver on the conclusions of the Conference. The key focus must be to guarantee a more social future of Europe, to ensure improved working and living

conditions, as well as upwards convergence – in the framework of a renewed social contract for Europe. The ETUC calls on the Commission to include the necessary changes to EU policies and new legislative and non-legislative proposals in its Work Programme for 2023.

The ETUC has taken note of the proposals of the Conference on the Future of Europe with regard to participatory democracy. Any proposals on citizens' panels must ensure that their role is defined very clearly and that they would not slow-down decision-making in Europe nor undermine or interfere with democratic processes and actors, including social dialogue and social partners. This means amongst others:

- Ensuring full respect for the prerogatives of Social Partners as defined in the Treaties, including by guaranteeing that these participatory mechanisms are not applicable in the preparation of legislative proposals in the area of Social Policy;
- Reinforcing the involvement of Social Partners in decision-making processes, in line with the COFOE conclusions; and
- Ensuring that citizens panels be truly representative of the whole of society in Europe and selected in accordance with clear and transparent processes; they must not replace representative democracy decision-making processes and structures.

The follow-up to the COFOE conclusions: a Convention for Treaty changes for a fairer and more social future of Europe

The COFOE conclusions also call for changes in the European Treaties. Those changes include – amongst others: (i) incorporating a Social Progress Protocol in the Treaties “to ensure that social rights are fully protected and safeguarded in case of conflict with economic freedoms”; (ii) qualified majority voting in the Council on all matters (only exceptions being: admission of new membership and changes to the fundamental principles of the EU); (iii) reinforcing the powers of the European Parliament (including legislative initiative) and increasing transparency in decision-making processes, in particular in the Council; and (iv) implementing a forward-looking reform of the Economic and Monetary Union.

The ETUC calls on the European institutions to take the necessary steps to ensure that the COFOE conclusions become reality also in the areas of Treaty changes.

The ETUC calls for a Convention to be convened on the basis of Article 48 TEU, as soon as possible, to open the discussions on the necessary Treaty changes for a more effective, social and progressive institutional framework for the European Union.

In this framework, the ETUC calls for the Convention to have a strong focus on social issues, amongst others on the following necessary changes to the institutional framework:

- 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;
- Qualified majority voting for social issues, while fully safeguarding the role of social partners and ensuring a non-regression clause; qualified majority voting for other key issues of common European interest, in particular minimum corporate, capital and environmental taxation, own resources and the Multiannual Financial Framework;
- Guaranteeing a stronger role for the European Pillar of Social Rights, linking the achievement of its principles with the Treaty objective of a “social market economy,

aiming at full employment and social progress” to rebalance the economic governance instruments;

- A revision of the Economic governance to ensure that social justice goes hand-in-hand with economic competitiveness, and that people’s well-being is the objective of economic policies;
- A stronger role for social partners in decision-making process;
- Any discussions on stronger EU competences on health should be linked with the objective of ensuring universal and equal access to affordable and high-quality public health care services, guaranteeing that resources are not drained by profit-oriented health operators with little to no regard for the general interest. Health and care should not be opened up for more competition.

Recent developments and events, including the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and its consequences, the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit, and the rule of law in some EU member states, have put the European project and democracy at risk. The EU is at a crossroads and must rise to the challenges that it is facing: making a relevant change of direction and committing to its founding principles and to a more social Europe, or facing an unprecedented political crisis. The road to guaranteeing a fairer and more social future of Europe is also implemented through a Convention for Treaty changes with a strong social focus.

Next steps

The ETUC will continue to mobilise to push the European institutions to ensure a proper follow-up to the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe, in terms of both policies and legislative initiatives and Treaty changes with a strong social focus. The ETUC affiliates are asked to support the ETUC efforts and initiatives.

The ETUC Working Group on the Conference on the Future of Europe will remain active to work on the follow-up to the Conference. The Working Group will better define the trade union demands for the follow-up to the COFOE and will be responsible for coordinating trade union activities in this regard.

If a Convention to discuss Treaty changes will be convened, the ETUC will discuss and develop a comprehensive, ambitious and precise trade union vision for the necessary Treaty changes to bring a Social Europe closer. In this framework, the ETUC WG on the Conference on the Future of Europe will become the forum to discuss and coordinate the ETUC actions before and within the framework of a potential Convention.

Annex I

Summary conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe (non-exhaustive)

Key elements included in the conclusions with regard to ETUC priorities

Just transition

- Proposal 1 – Point 7 – 1(7): Eliminate social dumping and enhance a just and green transition to better jobs, with high quality safety, health and working conditions, in the agriculture sector.
- 3(8): Ensure a just transition, protecting workers and jobs, through adequate funding for the transition and further research, through reform of the tax system with fairer taxation and anti-tax fraud measures, and through ensuring inclusive governance approach in policy making at all levels (e.g. ambitious measures to reskill/upskills, strong social protection, keeping public service in public hands, safeguarding occupational health and safety rules).
- 3(11): Increase EU's leadership and taking a stronger role and responsibility to promote ambitious climate action, a just transition, and support to address the loss and damages, in the international framework with the United Nations at the centre.
- 5(2): Review global supply chains, including in agricultural production, in order to reduce dependency of the EU and shorten the chains.
- 5(13): Stricter manufacturing standards and fair working conditions throughout the production and entire value chain.
- 6(3): Promote and facilitate dialogue and consultations between all levels of decision making, especially with youth and at the local level.
- 8(3): Ensuring strategic autonomy at EU level to avoid dependency on third countries for medicines (in particular active ingredients) and medical devices (including raw materials).
- 11(8): Raising awareness among both companies and citizens how to behave in a more sustainable manner, and guarantee just transition, based on social dialogue and quality jobs.
- 12(5): Promoting policies for a strong industrial base and innovation in key enabling technologies, and a forward-looking climate policy coupled with industrial competitiveness with a strong social dimension, based on social dialogue and well-functioning industrial relations.
- 17: We propose that the EU take measures to strengthen its autonomy in key strategic sectors such as agricultural products, strategic economic goods, semiconductors, medical products, innovative digital and environmental technologies and energy.
- 17(4): investing further in the completion of the internal market, creating a level-playing field to make it more attractive to produce and buy these items in the European Union.
- 18: We propose that the EU reach more autonomy in the field of energy production and supply, in the context of the ongoing green transition.
- 18(3): ensuring a just and fair transition, supporting in particular vulnerable citizens, who face the greatest challenges in transitioning towards climate neutrality and who are already suffering from increasing energy prices because of energy dependency and the recent tripling of energy prices.

Equal access to affordable and high-quality public services, including health.

- 8(2): Adequate working conditions, in particular through strong collective bargaining, including in terms of wages and working arrangements, and harmonisation of training and certification standards for health professionals [...]
- 8(5): Investing in the health systems, in particular public and non-for profit, infrastructure and digital health and ensuring that healthcare providers respect the principles of full accessibility, affordability and quality of services, hence ensuring that resources are not drained by profit-oriented health operators with little to no regard for the general interest.
- 8(6): Issuing strong recommendations to the Member States to invest in effective, accessible, affordable, high-quality and resilient health systems, notably in the context of the European Semester. The impact of the war in Ukraine on public health demonstrates the need to further develop resilient health systems and solidarity mechanisms.
- 10(1): Establish common minimum healthcare standards at EU level, covering also prevention and accessibility as well as proximity of care, and provide support to achieve these standards
- 10(5): Ensure affordability of care, through stronger investment in healthcare, in particular of dental care including prophylaxis, and ensure affordable dental care is available to everyone within 15 to 20 years.
- 10(8): Consider the international dimension to health and recognise that medicines should be universally available, including in poorer countries

A renewed Social Contract for Europe for a fair recovery.

- A stronger economy, social justice and jobs – introduction: [...] From the recommendations and discussions, it is also clear that we need a comprehensive strategy to ensure better wellbeing for the European citizens in the different aspect of their lives. Some elements of this strategy can be found in already existing policies and can be achieved by making full use of the existing institutional framework at European and national level; others will require new policies and, in some cases, treaty changes. However, new policies and treaty changes should be seen as means to achieve better wellbeing and not as ends in themselves. It is both possible and necessary to reshape the EU in a way that will guarantee its strategic autonomy, sustainable growth, improvement of living and working conditions and human progress, without depleting and destroying our planet in the framework of a renewed Social Contract. [...]
- 13: We propose to improve the functioning of labour markets so that they ensure fairer working conditions and promote gender equality, employment, including that of young people and vulnerable groups. The EU, Member States and social partners need to work to end in-work poverty, address the rights of platform workers, ban un-paid internships and ensure fair labour mobility in the EU. We must promote social dialogue and collective bargaining. We need to ensure the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, including its relevant headline targets for 2030, at EU, national, regional and local level in the areas of “equal opportunities and access to the labour market” and “fair working conditions”, while respecting competences and the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and to include a Social Progress Protocol in the Treaties. While doing so, there should be a respect of national traditions and the autonomy of social partners and a cooperation with civil society.

- 3(1): Ensuring that statutory minimum wages guarantee that each worker can earn a decent and similar quality of living across all Member States. Clear criteria (e.g. living costs, inflation, above the poverty line, the average and median wage at national level) to be taken into account when setting minimum wages level should be set up. The levels of statutory minimum wages should be regularly reviewed in light of these criteria in order to ensure their adequacy. Special attention should be put on effective implementation of these rules and monitoring and tracking improvement in the standard of living. At the same time, collective bargaining should be strengthened and promoted throughout the EU.
- 14: We propose to reduce inequalities, fight social exclusion and tackle poverty. We need to put in place a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy that could include, among other, a reinforced Child Guarantee and Youth Guarantee, the introduction of minimum wages, a common EU framework for minimum income schemes and decent social housing. We need to ensure the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, including its relevant headline targets for 2030, at EU, national, regional and local level in the area of “social protection and inclusion” with due regard for respective competences and the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and to include a Social Progress Protocol in the Treaties.
- 14(2): Not compromising on welfare rights (public health, public education, labour policies).
- 15(7): Preventing old age poverty by introducing minimum pensions. Such minimum levels would need to take account of the living standard, the poverty line and purchase power in the respective Member State.
- 15(8): Guaranteeing appropriate social and health care to older persons. In doing so, it is important to address both community-based as well as residential care. Equally, measures need to take account of both care receivers and care givers;
- 29: Take action to harmonize living conditions across the EU and improve EU citizens’ socio-economic quality of life
- 41(4): Promoting upwards convergence on working conditions harmoniously throughout the Union to combat inequalities of working conditions and to ensure an efficient EU labour migration policy and workers’ rights. In this context, reinforce the role of trade unions at national and transnational level, in cooperation with employers’ organisations.

New EU economic model and governance, to be based on going ‘beyond GDP’ and building an inclusive and fair ‘European well-being’.

- See above.
- 11: We propose that the EU supports the shift to a sustainable and resilient growth model, considering the green and digital transitions with a strong social dimension in the European Semester, and empowering citizens, trade unions and businesses. The conventional macroeconomic indicators and the GDP could be complemented with new indicators in order to address the new European priorities such as the European Green Deal or the European Pillar of Social Rights and to better reflect the ecological and digital transitions and the wellbeing of people.
- 11(3): Reviewing the EU's economic governance and the European Semester in order to ensure that the green and digital transitions, social justice and social progress go hand-in-hand with economic competitiveness, without ignoring the economic and fiscal nature of the European Semester. In addition, there is a need to better involve social partners and the local and regional authorities in the implementation of the European Semester in order to improve its application and accountability;

- 12(4): Enhancing upward social and economic convergence in the Single Market, by completing existing initiatives, such as the Banking Union and the Capital Markets Union, and implementing a forward- looking reform of our Economic and Monetary Union;
- 16: We propose that the EU promotes future-oriented investments focused on the green and digital transitions with a strong social and gender dimension, taking also into account the examples of the Next Generation EU and the SURE instrument. The EU needs to take into account the social and economic impact of the war against Ukraine and the link between the EU economic governance with the new geopolitical context and by strengthening its own budget through new own resources. Citizens want to move away taxation from people and SMEs and target tax evaders, big polluters and by taxing the digital giants while at the same time they want to see the EU supporting Member States' and local authorities' ability to finance themselves and as well as in using EU funds.
- 16(5): Give further consideration to common borrowing at EU level, with a view to creating more favourable borrowing conditions, while maintaining responsible fiscal policies at Member State level;
- 29(1): In consultation with experts and social partners, developing transparent quality of life indicators including economic, social and rule of law criteria , in order to establish a clear and realistic timeline for raising social standards and achieving a common EU socio-economic structure, including through implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. These should be integrated in the economic governance framework and the European semester process

European Pillar of Social Rights for a social market economy.

- See above .
- 14(1): Reinforcing the competences of the EU in social policies and proposing legislation to promote social policies and ensure equality of rights, including health, harmonised for the entire EU, which take into consideration agreed regulations and the minimum requirements throughout the territory. The EU could support and complement the policies of Members State by among others proposing a common framework for minimum incomes to ensure that nobody is left behind; These actions should be carried in the framework of the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan;

Fair digitalisation.

- See above.
- 13(3): Introducing or reinforcing existing legislation that regulates so-called 'smart working' and incentivising companies to promote it. The EU should ensure the right to disconnect, do more to address the digital divide at the workplace and assess the implications of remote work on health, working time and companies performance. There is a need to guarantee fair digitalisation based on human rights, improved working conditions and collective bargaining.
- 35(1): The introduction or reinforcement of legislation that regulates (human-centric) 'smart working', taking into account the impact on workers' physical and mental health for example by ensuring a right to disconnect. A 'human centric' approach should incorporate the 'human in control' principle;
- 35(3): Ensuring human oversight of decision-making processes involving artificial intelligence in the work place and transparency of algorithms used; giving consideration to negative impacts of illimited digital surveillance in the workplace; informing and consulting workers prior to the introduction of digital technologies

that impact working conditions; ensuring that new forms of work, such as platform work, respect worker rights and provide appropriate working conditions

Strengthen the enforceability of Human Rights Instruments.

- See above.
- 25: Systematically uphold the rule of Law across all Member States
- 25(1): Ensuring that the values and principles enshrined in the EU Treaties and in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights are non-negotiable, irreversible and sine qua non conditions for EU membership and accession. EU values must be fully upheld in all Member States also so they can act as an international standard and pole of attraction through diplomacy and dialogue. Enlargement of the EU should not undermine the EU acquis with relation to fundamental values and citizens' rights
- 25(3): The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights should be made universally applicable and enforceable. In addition, annual conferences on the rule of law (following the Commission' Rule of law Report) with delegations from all Member States involving randomly selected and diverse citizens, civil servants, parliamentarians, local authorities, social partners and civil society should be organised. Organisations, including civil society, which promote the rule of law on the ground should also be further supported;
- 25(4): Effectively applying and evaluating the scope of the 'Conditionality Regulation' and other rule of law instruments, and considering extensions to new areas regardless of their relevance for the EU budget. Any necessary legal avenues, including Treaty changes, should be considered to punish breaches of the rule of law
- 38(1): Ensuring the protection of EU values laid down in the treaties, including the rule of law and a strong social model, which are at the core of the European democracy.

Gender equality.

- See above.
- 13(6): Ensuring gender equality, in line with 2020-2025 EU Gender Equality Strategy. The EU should continue measuring the gender equality through a gender equality index (i.e. attitudes, salary gap, employment, leadership, etc.), monitor the strategy yearly and be transparent with the achievements; and encourage the sharing of expertise and best practices and set up a possible direct citizen-feedback mechanism (e.g. an Ombudsperson); There is a need to address gender pay gap and introduce quotas in senior positions. There should be more support for women entrepreneurs in the business environment and women in STEM

A common migration and asylum policy, based on respect for rights and equal treatment.

- 43(1): Developing EU-wide measures to guarantee the safety and health of all migrants, in particular pregnant women, children, unaccompanied minors and all vulnerable people
- 44: Strengthen the EU's role and reform the European asylum system based on the principles of solidarity and fair share of responsibility
- 44(1): Adopting EU common rules concerning procedures for the examination of claims for international protection in Member States, applied uniformly to all asylum seekers. These procedures will have to be respectful of human dignity and

international law. As the reception of asylum seekers involves different actors at a national level, the EU should encourage Member States to simplify and speed up this process through a better interoperability amongst the different relevant administrations, and to set up a unique desk (one stop-shop or entry point) for asylum seekers to streamline national administrative procedures.

- 44(2): Revisiting the Dublin system in order to guarantee solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility including the redistribution of migrants among Member States; additional forms of support could also be envisaged.
- 44(3): Enhance the minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers laid down in directive 2013/33/EU through stronger legislative measures to improve reception facilities and accommodation.
- 44(4): Special attention should be given to pregnant women, children, and particularly unaccompanied minors
- 44(5): Strengthening and increasing financial and human resources as well as management capacities of the EU Agency for Asylum to coordinate and manage the relocation of asylum seekers within the EU Member States to achieve a fair distribution
- 45: Improve integration policies in all Member States
- 45(1): EU ensures, also with the involvement of local and regional authorities and the contribution of civil society organisations, that every asylum seeker and refugee, during the process of the residence procedure, attends language, integration courses, professional training, and activities
- 45(2): Asylum seekers with relevant qualifications should be given access to the labour market, when possible with the aim to strengthen their self-reliance, all over the EU

Lifelong learning and the right to training

- See above.
- 13(9): Promoting employment and social mobility and, therefore, to have a full chance of self-realisation and self-determination. There could be a long-term strategy to ensure everyone in our societies has the right skills to find a job and bring their talents to fruition, in particular the young generation. It is important to invest in people's skills adapted to the changing labour market needs and promoting life-long learning through among others exchange programme at all stages of life and ensure the right to lifelong learning and the right to training. To this end, there is a need to strengthen the cooperation between businesses, trade unions and vocational, education and training providers.
- 46: The EU and its Member states should seek to establish by 2025 an inclusive European Education Area within which all citizens have equal access to quality education and life-long learning, including those in rural and remote areas.
- 46(2): Develop future-proof education and life-long learning in Europe -in accordance with the right to free training in the workplace for all

Youth. EU cannot fund precarity!

- See above.
- 47(5): Ensure that young people's internships and jobs adhere to quality standards, including on remuneration, putting an end to youth minimum wages and any other discriminatory labour law provisions specific to young people, as well as banning through a legal instrument unpaid internships on the labour market and outside formal education.

- 47(6): Ensure reasonable living standards for young people including access to social protection and housing. Young people should have access to social protection, equal to other age groups. Access to affordable housing for young people, including through EU funding, should also be facilitated.

ETUC calls for a reform of EU trade and investment policy and for a relaunch of global multilateralism.

- 11(9): Including ambitious social, labour and health standards, including occupational health and safety, in new EU trade agreements
- 19: We propose that the EU strengthen the ethical dimension of its trade and investment relations
- 19(2): Effective and proportionate EU legislation to ensure that decent work standards are fully applied along the global value chains, including EU production and supply processes and that goods which are imported comply with qualitative ethical standards, sustainable development, and human rights standards including workers' and trade union rights, offering certification for products abiding by this EU legislation and engage in an EU wide dialogue process that seeks to inform and educate on the environmental and ethical effects of policy changes in international trade.
- 19(3): restrictions on the import and sale of products from countries that allow forced and child labour, a periodically updated blacklist of companies, and promoting consumer awareness on child labour through information made by official EU channels.
- 19(4): following up and enforcing Trade Sustainable Development chapters (TSD) in EU Free Trade Agreements (FTA) including the possibility of a sanctions-based mechanism as a last resort.
- 19(5): reforming the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) to include strong conditionality provisions and effective and appropriate monitoring, reporting and dialogue processes in order to improve the impact GSP can have on trade, human rights and development in partner countries with trade preferences to be withdrawn in case of non-compliance.
- 23: We propose that the EU continue to act to promote dialogue and guarantee peace and a rules-based international order, strengthening multilateralism and building on long standing EU peace initiatives which contributed to its award of the Nobel Prize in 2012, while strengthening its common security
- 24(3): promote sustainable and rules-based trade while opening new trade and investment opportunities for European companies. While bilateral trade and investment agreements are key to promote European competitiveness, standards and rules are needed to ensure a level playing field. The EU needs to remain an active and reliable partner by negotiating, concluding and implementing trade agreements that also set high sustainability standards
- 24(5): Reform EU trade and investment policy to relaunch global multilateralism with as objectives the creation of decent jobs and the protection of fundamental human rights, including workers' and trade union rights; the preservation of the environment and biodiversity and the conformity with the Paris Agreement on climate change; the safeguarding of high-quality public services; and the strengthening of Europe's industrial basis. The EU should contribute to a relaunch of global multilateralism, through a profound reform based on democracy and peace, solidarity and respect for human, social and environmental rights and a reinforced role for the ILO.

- 24(6): include in cooperation and investment agreement with third countries the fight against human trafficking and illegal immigration and cooperation with reference to any appropriate repatriations.

Social Progress Protocol

- See above.
- 13(5): Taking steps to ensure that social rights are fully protected and safeguarded in case of conflict with economic freedoms including via the introduction of a social progress protocol in the Treaties.

Better decision-making for a fairer Europe

- See above.
- 16(1): Harmonizing and coordinating tax policies within the Member States of the EU in order to prevent tax evasion and avoidance, avoiding tax havens within the EU and targeting offshoring within Europe, including by ensuring that decisions on tax matters can be taken by qualified majority in the Council of the EU. On the other hand, there are recommendations from citizens' panels that state that taxation is a matter for individual countries, which have their own objectives and circumstances.
- 16(2): Promoting cooperation between EU Member States to ensure that all companies in the EU pay their fair share of taxes; Introducing a common corporate tax base or a minimum effective rate
- 16(3): Ensuring that companies pay taxes where profits are made;
- 16(4): Ensuring that tax policy support European industry and prevents job losses in Europe
- 29(3): Encouraging taxing large corporations, fighting access to tax havens and eliminating their existence in the EU with a view to increasing public investment in priority areas such as education (scholarships, Erasmus) and research. EU-wide fight against tax evasion should be also a way to raise funds for publically financed initiatives
- 39: Improve the EU's decision-making process in order to ensure the EU's capability to act, while taking into account the interests of all Member States and guaranteeing a transparent and understandable process for the citizens
- 39(1): Reassessing decision-making and voting rules in the EU institutions, focusing on the issue of unanimous voting, which makes it very difficult to reach agreement, while ensuring a fair calculation of voting 'weights' so that small countries' interests are protected;
 - All issues decided by way of unanimity should be decided by way of a qualified majority. The only exceptions should be the admission of new membership to the EU and changes to the fundamental principles of the EU as stated in Art. 2 TEU and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
- 6(7): extending the use of qualified majority decision-making on topics identified as being of 'European interest', such as environment.
- 21(1): in particular in the area of the CFSP, issues that are currently decided by way of unanimity to be changed, normally to be decided by way of a qualified majority.
- 38: Strengthen European democracy by bolstering its foundations, boosting participation in European Parliament elections, fostering transnational debate on European issues and ensuring a strong link between citizens and their elected representatives

- 38(4)(2): The European Parliament should have the right of legislative initiative, in order to propose the topics to be discussed and, subsequently, adopt the necessary texts to follow up on the recommendations that emerge from deliberations;
- 38(4)(3): European Parliament should decide on the budget of the EU as it is the right of parliaments at the national level;
- 39(2): Ensuring transparency of decision-making by allowing independent citizens' observers to closely follow the decision-making process, guaranteeing broader right of access to documents, and develop on this basis stronger links and an enhanced dialogue between citizens and the EU institutions;
 - The EU needs to improve the transparency of its decision-making process and institutions. For instance, the meetings of the Council and the European Parliament, including its votes, should be broadcasted online in the same way. This would allow interested citizens to follow EU policy-making, and hold politicians and policy-makers accountable; the European Parliament's right of inquiry should be strengthened;
- 39(5): Ensure proper civil and social dialogue mechanisms and processes at every step of the EU decision-making process, from impact assessment to policy design and implementation.
- 39(6): Reform the way the European Union works by better involving social partners and organised civil society. Strengthening the existing structures in order to better reflect the needs and expectations of EU citizens in the decision-making process, given their importance in the European democratic life. Within this framework, enhance the institutional role of the EESC and empower it as facilitator and guarantor of participatory democracy activities like structured dialogue with civil society organisations and Citizens' panels. A lively civil society is crucial for the democratic life of the European Union.
- 40(5): Social partners and organised civil society should be better included in the decision-making process, given their importance in the European democratic life. A lively society is crucial for the democratic life of the European Union.

Economic democracy

- See above.
- 38(5): Democracy is embodied in the institutions and in society at large, including in the workplace through the role of social partners

Other elements:

- 12(6): Giving special attention in all new initiatives to SMEs, the backbone of our economy. The "Think Small First" principle must be respected in all EU's legislative proposals and a SME test should be reinforced in the Commission's impact assessment in accordance with clear principles while fully respecting social and environmental standards and consumer rights;
- 12(21): New EU policy initiatives should undergo a "competitiveness check" to analyse their impact on companies and their business environment (cost of doing business, capacity to innovate, international competitiveness, level playing field, etc). Such check shall be in accordance with, the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals, including gender equality, and shall not undermine the protection of human, social and workers' rights nor environmental and consumer protection standards. To this effect, we also propose the establishment of a European Advisory Competitiveness Body which should monitor how the competitiveness check is performed and in particular assess the cumulative impact

of legislation, as well as put forward proposals to improve the right framework conditions for competitiveness of EU companies. Such body should include organised civil society and the social partners in its governance;

- 36(5): Include organised civil society and regional and local authorities and existing structures such as the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in the citizens' participation process
- 36(7): Holding Citizens' assemblies periodically, on the basis of legally binding EU law. Participants must be selected randomly, with representativeness criteria, and participation should be incentivized. If needed, there will be support of experts so that assembly members have enough information for deliberation. If the outcomes are not taken on board by the institutions, this should be duly justified; Participation and prior involvement of citizens and civil society is an important basis for political decisions to be taken by elected representatives. The EU is founded on representative democracy: with European elections, citizens give a clear mandate to their representatives and indirectly express themselves on EU policies;
- 38(2): Conceiving a EU wide referendum, to be triggered by the European Parliament, in exceptional cases on matters particularly important to all European citizens;
- 38(3): Amending EU electoral law to harmonise electoral conditions (voting age, election date, requirements for electoral districts, candidates, political parties and their financing) for the European Parliament elections, as well as moving towards voting for Union-wide lists, or 'transnational lists', with candidates from multiple Member States, having taken into account the views expressed among citizens across the EU Member States on this issue.
 - Some of the Members of the European Parliament should be elected through a European Union-wide list, the rest being elected within the Members' States;
 - This reform should also aim at facilitating digital voting possibilities and guaranteeing effective voting rights for persons with disabilities,
- 38(4): Strengthening links between citizens and their elected representatives, taking into account national specificities and citizens' desire to be closer to them and have a feeling that their concerns lead to specific action by elected representatives in the European Parliament and national parliaments. This is a universal issue and people of all ages should be engaged;
 - European citizens should have a greater say on who is elected as President of the Commission. This could be achieved either by the direct election of the Commission President or a lead candidate system;
- 39(7): Reopening the discussion about the constitution, where applicable, to help us align better on our values. A constitution may help to be more precise as well as involve citizens and agree on the rules of the decision-making process;
- 40(7): We call on European Union institutions to make the conclusions of this working group a reality and effectively implement them. This could be realised through the possibilities the Lisbon Treaty already provides and, when necessary, by triggering the request of launching a European Convention

Annex II

Proposals of the ETUC in the online platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe

The Conference should be an opportunity for a real and in-depth discussion, with the full involvement of the European and national institutions, social partners, and civil society organisations, on the future of Europe and the need for the recovery from Covid-19 to pave the way for a fairer society. Social Europe should be at the centre of the Conference. The Conference should not be a bureaucratic exercise nor focus only on institutional matters, it should constitute a key moment in the process of construction of the European Union of the future and be based on an ambitious agenda. Greater transparency in the functioning of the EU (in particular the Council); institutional reforms at EU level aimed at reinforcing institutional, social and economic democracy and participation; reinforcing and promoting the communitarian and integration-led approach, which was at the basis of the European project, to counter the renationalisation of the EU decision-making process based on the inter-governmental approach.

By topics of the online platform

- **Climate change and the environment**

Just transition. The EU should provide for a strong and inclusive governance approach where workers and trade unions are involved in the design and implementation of adaptation policies at all levels. The EU strategy to deal with climate change should include concrete policy measures that maintain jobs and protect workers' health and safety as well as active labour market policies and reskilling and trainings to prevent job losses. Emergency workers and social protection mechanisms will be key to deal with future crises and increase the resilience of our societies. Reforms must also allow the EU to build an effective "open strategic autonomy" to strengthen its industrial value chains.

- **Health**

Equal access to affordable and high-quality public services, including health. EU actions should ensure that all in the EU, regardless of their economic situation and place of residence, have access to high-quality public services, including quality health and social care, education, public transport, energy, water and sanitation, internet, good administration... All should enjoy the right to good health and have equal access to affordable and high-quality health and social care services, delivered by resilient, well-staffed and well-equipped public systems with universal coverage.

- **A stronger economy, social justice and jobs**

A renewed Social Contract for Europe for a fair recovery. The Conference on the Future of Europe should focus on the necessity of a Renewed Social Contract for Europe, to pave the way to a fairer, more inclusive and sustainable society. The improvement of living and working conditions in Europe and equality between men and women should be at the forefront. The recovery should be based on redistribution and upward convergence, quality job creation in all sectors and reinforced investments in public services and social protection, including ensuring the right to decent pensions. The respect of workers' and trade union rights, social dialogue, stronger collective bargaining and democracy at work constitute the necessary basis for a fair recovery. The specific situation of mobile, cross-border and frontier workers must be taken fully into account. Europe must promote and defend free movement of persons as one of the four main freedoms enshrined in the TFEU.

New EU economic model and governance, to be based on going 'beyond GDP' and building an inclusive and fair 'European well-being'. A reform of the EU economic

governance, the European Semester, the mandate of the ECB, EU own-resources and to strengthen the EMU is urgent in order to ensure that social justice goes hand-in-hand with economic competitiveness and that people's well-being is the objective of economic policies.

European Pillar of Social Rights for a social market economy. Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and link the achievement of the Rights in the Pillar with the Treaty objective of the European Union as a "social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress". The aim is to ensure the consistency of EU policies and initiatives with that objective, including by a potential inclusion of the Pillar in the Treaties. The fleshing out of the concept of the social market economy with a reinforcement of the role of the Pillar would also work to ensure a proper rebalancing of the existing EU economic governance instruments, including the Two Pack, Six Pack and Fiscal Compact.

- **Digital transformation**

Fair digitalisation. To be based on human rights, including labour and trade union rights, improved working conditions, and collective bargaining. Maintain and reinforce workers' protection, prevent disproportionate and undue surveillance at work, prohibit discriminatory treatments on the basis of biased algorithms, and prevent abuse of data protection and privacy. Strengthen collective bargaining on and workers' participation in the design, deployment, use and monitoring of AI technology and data strategy.

- **Values and rights, rule of law, security**

Strengthen the enforceability of Human Rights Instruments. The enforceability of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union should be strengthened and the Conference should be an opportunity to reiterate the need for the EU to respect its 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 and its Protocols, as a means to submit the EU legal order to external scrutiny in terms of human rights compliance, and to press the EU to ratify the relevant international, ILO and European human rights instruments, including the Istanbul Convention.

Gender equality. Equality between men and women should be at the forefront of the discussions of the Conference. A renewed and ambitious strategy at EU level for achieving gender equality in European labour markets is needed, to be framed coherently with the implementation of the Pillar of Social Rights. The European strategy should contribute to reaching the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and in particular Goal 5.

- **Migration**

A common migration and asylum policy, based on respect for rights and equal treatment. Ensure fair redistribution of refugees across Europe and ensure better integration of refugees and applicants for international protection into the workplace. More concrete and fairer European policy on economic migration, to establish legal channels for entry and to foster an integration policy based on respect for rights and equal treatment of both local and migrant workers, as a key tool to address the social impact of migration flows.

- **Education, culture, youth and sport**

The Conference should address the necessity to ensure that lifelong learning and the right to training become a reality for everyone in Europe by implementing the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Youth. EU cannot fund precarity! All workers and unemployed should have access to social protection, including young people. To prevent precarious conditions, we must put in place quality standards, they must be binding for all jobs created under EU and National recovery plans. Better monitoring and trade union involvement are needed to

assess and report youth unemployment and NEET rates. At the moment these numbers hide forced mobility, involuntary part-time employment and work in a grey and informal economy. Urgent measures are needed to fight youth unemployment and precarious working conditions in sectors where young people are overrepresented (tourism; gig economy...).

- **EU in the world**

ETUC calls for a reform of EU trade and investment policy and for a relaunch of global multilateralism. Trade and investment policy reform should have at its core: the creation of decent jobs and the protection of fundamental and human rights, including workers' and trade union rights; the preservation of the environment and biodiversity and the conformity with the Paris Agreement on climate change; the safeguarding of high-quality public services; and the strengthening of Europe's industrial basis. The EU should be able to contribute to a relaunch of global multilateralism, through a profound reform based on democracy and peace, solidarity and respect for human, social and environmental rights and a reinforced role for the ILO.

- **European democracy**

Social Progress Protocol to guarantee that workers', trade union rights and social rights take precedence over economic freedoms in the event of a conflict. If the Conference on the Future of Europe discusses the possibility of Treaty changes, then it should include the proposal for introducing a Social Progress Protocol to the EU Treaties.

Better decision-making for a fairer Europe. Need to ensure improvements to the European Union's decision-making processes with a view to guarantee increased transparency and accountability, reinforce the communitarian approach and strengthen the powers of the European Parliament and the European political dimension. Fully respecting that taxation policy is primarily a national competence, the ETUC in supports the move to Qualified Majority Voting also in the area of corporate, capital and environment taxation and own resources. The EU should proceed with the activation of the 'passerelle clause' in the Social Policy Field but to do so with caution and with full respect for the role of European social partners and their agreements and include in the Council decision implementing the 'passerelle clause' a non-regression clause. Social partners should be involved in the decision to activate the 'passerelle clause' on the case-by-case basis and an incremental approach should be used beginning with the adoption of the 'general passerelle clause in Article 48(7) TEU' in the framework of Article 19 TFEU (non-discrimination).

Economic democracy. It is necessary to strengthen democracy in the economy and society, including by recognising and supporting trade unions, by respecting and reinforcing workers' and trade union rights. Necessary to ensure the full respect of trade union rights, including the right to collective bargaining, and to strengthen workers' information, consultation and participation rights. These constitute fundamental tools for economic, social and workplace democracy.

- **Other ideas**