



TOGETHER FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS

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TO:
Maria do Rosário Palma Ramalho, Portuguese Minister of Labour,
Solidarity and Social Security

Open Letter - Delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights – ETUC Call ahead of the Porto Social Forum 2025

Dear Minister Maria do Rosário Palma Ramalho,

Ahead of the upcoming Porto Social Forum, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) is calling on the Portuguese Government to use the Forum to adopt a Declaration in support of a decisive step forward for the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and its implementation.

More than eight years after the EPSR was proclaimed, many of its core rights remain unfulfilled. The time has come for the Porto Forum to commit to deliver concrete legislation, policy initiatives, and sustained investment to realise social rights for all, across every region and sector of Europe.

We urge you to ensure the joint declaration commits to concrete actions to make the EPSR a lived reality. In particular, we stress the following priorities:

1. Ensure the Right to Fair Wages

The EPSR affirms that “workers have the right to fair wages that provide for a decent standard of living.” Yet 8.3% of workers in the EU remain at risk of poverty, rising to over 12% among those in temporary or part-time employment. In the context of a continuing cost-of-living crisis, this is unacceptable.

We call for:

- Full implementation of the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive, including ambitious increases in statutory minimum wages;
- Promoting collective bargaining coverage to reach the 80% target, including by finalising ambitious national plans with the social partners;
- Linking public procurement reform to social conditions, ensuring that public funds support companies that respect workers’ rights, collective bargaining and whose workers are covered by collective agreements.

2. Deliver Quality Jobs and End Precarious Work

The EPSR calls for the transition towards open-ended forms of employment and prevention of precarious working conditions. This must be more than a principle it must become practice.

We urge the upcoming Quality Jobs Roadmap to:

- Include binding measures and investment to ensure secure, well-paid employment;
- Address abusive subcontracting, unregulated labour intermediaries, stress at work, unregulated use of AI, and violations of the right to disconnect;
- Introduce indicators to monitor job quality across sectors and regions, including collective bargaining coverage.

3. Guarantee the Right to Training and a Just Transition

While digital and green transitions reshape the labour market, only 11.9% of adults participate in recent training, with minimal progress over the last decade. The EPSR states that everyone has the right to “lifelong learning... to maintain and acquire skills.”



We therefore call for:

- Legislation guaranteeing the right to training during working time and free of charge;
- A binding framework for anticipation and management of change, ensuring just transition for workers and communities, with strong involvement of trade unions.

4. Achieve Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value

The EPSR enshrines the right to equal treatment and opportunities between women and men, including in pay. Yet the EU gender pay gap remains at 12%, with undervaluation of women's work persisting across sectors.

We urge:

- Full and ambitious transposition of the Pay Transparency Directive;
- More support for measures to reinforce collective bargaining as a tool to close gender pay gaps and challenge structural inequalities.

5. Tackle Poverty and Guarantee Social Protection

The EPSR affirms everyone's right to adequate social protection and access to essential services. Yet over 93 million EU citizens, 21% of the population, remain at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including 5.6 million facing severe material hardship.

We call for:

- An ambitious EU Anti-Poverty Strategy with a strong rights-based approach;
- Adequate minimum income schemes in all Member States;
- The forthcoming European Affordable Housing Plan to guarantee the right to decent and affordable housing and to address the exploitative conditions of housing for agriculture and other vulnerable workers and tackle exploitation by gangmasters;
- Investment in high-quality public services, including health, education, transport, childcare.

The EPSR must not remain a set of aspirational principles constantly declared but never realised. It must become a binding social contract fully backed by laws, investments, and accountability mechanisms. The Porto Social Forum offers a vital moment to recommit to this vision and to establish a framework to deliver real progress for working people

Importantly, we underline that competitiveness must not be used as a pretext to undermine social rights. On the contrary, strong social protections and fair working conditions are a key pillar of sustainable competitiveness.

The ETUC looks forward to working with you to build a fairer, more resilient Europe that puts social rights at the heart of its strategy and future.

Yours sincerely,

Esther Lynch,
General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation