



TOGETHER FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS

EL/LR/gv
Brussels, 21 October 2025

TO:
Antonio Costa, President of the European Council
Presidents and Prime Ministers

ETUC message in view of the European Council meeting

Dear President of the European Council Mr Costa,
Dear Presidents and Prime Ministers,

I am contacting you in view of the European Council meeting on 23 October and on foot of the leaked European Council Conclusions.

For working people, **quality jobs, good working conditions along with social dialogue and collective bargaining must be put at the heart of the Council deliberations on competitiveness**. Getting serious about competitiveness means being serious about delivering quality jobs in every sector and in every region, improving working conditions, reinforcing social dialogue and collective bargaining, and democracy at work. Social cohesion is also a key element for competitiveness. **The ETUC calls on the EU institutions to deliver strong legislative initiatives and investments to deliver quality jobs in every sector and in every region.**

The EU must not return to failed models of deregulation and compression of wages and workers' rights.

We have noted with concern that the leaked conclusions included the reference to the proposal for a **28th company law regime**. Trade unions reiterate their opposition on this proposal. We call for confirmation that the 28th Company Regime will not touch employment standards and labour law. Any attempt to sidestep national protections or collective agreements is unacceptable and would lead to social dumping and undermine workers' protection, the EU social acquis Communautaire, national labour law and collective agreements.

We ask the European Council to:

- Call for labour law to be excluded from the 28th company regime;
- Reaffirm the full respect for the autonomy of social partners, the right to collective bargaining and national labour systems.

We call on the European Council also to clarify that simplification measures must not undermine nor put under pressure employment rights and standards, nor introduce obstacles to the necessary initiatives to deliver quality jobs.

We also stress once more the importance for Member States to fully transpose and implement the Gender Pay Transparency Directive. **The calls from employers for backsliding on equality legislation and on pay equality between men and women must be rejected.**

We welcome the Commission announcement of the upcoming European Affordable Housing Plan, confirmed in the State of the Union Address.

We call on the European Council to adopt ambitious conclusions to tackle the existing housing emergency in Europe.

The ETUC calls for the involvement of social partners in the development of the European initiatives on housing and for action on the following areas - amongst others:

- Promoting necessary wage increases through support for collective bargaining and higher statutory minimum wages, that take into consideration all housing-related costs for working people;



- Ensuring higher wages and better working conditions in the construction sector, including through the regulation and limitation of subcontracting;
- Actions to tackle speculation, increasing taxes on profits and wealth, ensuring fair and more progressive taxation for real estate, and strengthening EU regulation on short-term rentals;
- Increasing investments in non-for-profit / limited profit / public / social affordable and adequate housing, including through EU investment tools, flexibility in the application of the economic governance rules;
- Public funding, including state aid, for housing projects (including support by the EIB) should be linked with social conditionalities;
- Tackling the injustice of “shantytowns” in Europe and ensuring that people residing in those informal settlements have access to decent accommodation with minimum quality standards;
- Guaranteeing that the revision of the state aid rules provide stronger support and investments in non-for-profit / limited profit / public / social affordable and adequate housing.

Increasing global trade tensions have put a strain on Europe’s industries and economy. Europe has lost almost four million jobs in the manufacturing sector since 2000, and there have been recent announcements of major job-shedding measures in strategic industries.

The decisions recently taken by the European Commission’s to introduce permanent safeguard measures for steel imports represent a step forward in ensuring fairer trade conditions and defending quality industrial jobs in the steel sector. This must be part of a broader, ambitious industrial strategy.

In view of the discussions on the twin transitions, we stress that **the transition to a green and digital economy must not leave workers behind**. Too often, change is imposed from above, without participation or protection.

We urge the European institutions to take action to deliver:

- A strong industrial policy to protect and create quality jobs in every sector and in every region and to deliver genuinely just transformations;
- Permanent crisis response measures to protect jobs and production in Europe from shocks;
- Suspension of the EU fiscal rules to enable national investment in industrial, social and economic resilience;
- A permanent EU investment instrument with strong social conditionalities to protect vulnerable sectors, to deliver innovation objectives and to support the creation of quality jobs;
- A Just Transition Directive, guaranteeing training rights, early anticipation of change managed through collective bargaining and social dialogue;
- A Directive on AI at Work to enforce the human-in-control principle and protect against algorithmic surveillance, deskilling, and exploitation. AI should empower workers - not replace, monitor, or undermine them. Europe must lead by example and put guardrails in place before it’s too late.
- A joint foresight with social partners with focus on jobs, economic sectors and regions to anticipate changes and guide policy.

We call on you to include the elements above in your discussions and deliberations during the European Council meeting.

Best regards,

Esther Lynch,
General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation