Observations

by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

New reporting system on the Council of Europe

European Social Charter

– Reporting Cycle 2026 "1st Group of ESC provisions" –

to the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR)

PART II: ETUC (affiliates) material

(10.07.2026)

Overview

General observations

First, following Part I of its Observations[1] for the current supervision cycle for the European Social Charter (ESC)[2] the ETUC would like to provide the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) – as previously indicated – with additional information coming from the ETUC and its affiliates (Part II). Second, in order to avoid repetition, the ETUC would also like to refer explicitly to all Observations which were contained in Part I.

In the Chapter I on "ETUC material" below, the ETUC would thereby in particular like to highlight some of the most important actions and messages (in the form of dedicated websites, briefing "watches", resolutions/positions, studies, …) it has developed during the period 2022-2026. The information provided below is thus non-exhaustive and more information on the very vast range of actions, activities and messages of/by the ETUC, in cooperation with its affiliates, can be consulted on the ETUC website: https://www.etuc.org/en.

In the following Chapter II on "National material", the ETUC provides an overview of material it received from its affiliates during the reference period end 2021 until July 2024 in the framework of e.g. its ETUC Austerity Watch and/or meetings of its statutory bodies like the ETUC Executive Committee (hereafter 'ETUC EXCO'). Where appropriate, these contributions have to be read in conjunction (but complementary) with the targeted contributions some ETUC affiliates have provided to the ECSR/Social Charter Department as submission to the respective national ad hoc reports provided by the governments.

Chapter I: ETUC Material

ETUC websites/campaigns

"End the Cost of Living Crisis: Increase Wages, Tax Profits!"

A specific campaign "End the Cost of Living Crisis: Increase Wages, Tax Profits!" and page on the ETUC website on the cost-of-living crisis was created (please find it at this link).

The campaign centred around an ETUC call for a six-point plan (available in 8 languages) to tackle the cost-of-living crisis:

> **This crisis is being driven by excess profits – not wages.**
>
> Wages are not the cause of inflation. Workers are the victims of this crisis, with the value of their wages falling while prices for everyday goods are rising. This is increasing existing inequalities, with low paid workers and vulnerable people hit the hardest.
>
> Employers, governments and the EU all have a responsibility to take urgent measures to tackle the cost-of-living crisis by ensuring pay rises, emergency support for struggling families, a cap on prices, taxation and redistribution of excess profits and wealth.

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[1] Observations by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) - New reporting system on the Council of Europe - European Social Charter – Reporting Cycle 2026 "1st Group of ESC provisions" – to the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) - PART I: International/European case law, 30.06.2026.

[2] Any reference to 'ESC' relates to its revised version of 1996 unless it is specified otherwise for the original version ('ESC 1961').

That's why workers and their trade unions throughout Europe are calling for a six-point plan to tackle the cost-of-living crisis and to build an economy that delivers for workers.

We demand:

1. Pay rises to meet the increase in the cost of living and ensure workers receive a fair share of productivity gains, as well as measures to promote collective bargaining as the best way to achieve fair pay and a sustainable economy.

2. Payments targeted for people struggling to afford their energy bills, put food on the table and pay the rent; the right to food and a warm home are human rights and must be protected. People in poverty cannot be expected to pay unaffordable bills. There needs to be a ban on disconnections.

3. Price caps especially on the cost of energy bills and a watertight tax on excessive profits of energy and other companies to ensure they are not allowed to speculate on this crisis, along with other measures to stop profiteering, such as curbing dividends, and to prevent speculation on food prices.

4. National and European anti-crisis support measures to protect incomes and jobs in industry, services and the public sector, including SURE-type measures to protect jobs, incomes, and to finance social measures to cope with this crisis and just transition processes.

5. Reform the functioning of the EU energy market. Recognise that energy is a public good and invest to tackle the root causes of the crisis, such as the under-investment in green energy and the consequences of privatisation.

6. A seat at the table for trade unions to design and implement anti-crisis measures through social dialogue. This is the proven method to successfully manage crisis.

Governments and the EU cannot sit this crisis out. The price of inaction or adopting the wrong response, such as interest rate increases, pay freezes or return to the failed austerity agenda, will be catastrophic.

The six-point plan formed also the centre of a huge mobilisation by ETUC of its affiliates in particular in the months October 2022-February 2023. Over 150 trade union actions in 25 countries were reported to and published by the ETUC who in turn spread the word about many of the actions across our national borders via social media. The ETUC held a symbolic demonstration outside the European Parliament in Strasbourg with over 400 union activists from France, Belgium, Switzerland, Romania and Spain as well as from European Trade Unions Federations. (Adopted Resolution/The Cost of Living Crisis - ETUC escalation of the campaign and actions | ETUC (October 2022), followed up by a similar mobilisation resolution in December 2022). One can also find a **calendar (and photos) of trade union actions taken and planned** on the cost-of-living crisis can be found here on the ETUC website. This calendar is updated continuously.

Linked to the campaign, an **ETUC Petition** *"End the Cost of Living Crisis: Increase Wages, Tax Profits!"* was also developed. You can find the petition here (EN, FR, IT, DE).

"Delivering a fair deal for workers" - EP elections 2024 campaign:

It was crystal clear for the ETUC that the **June 2024 European Parliament elections were going to be a turning point for Europe**. Following the Covid-19 crisis, workers and their trade unions face(d) a cost-of-living crisis with 'greedflation' caused by excessive corporate profits and benefits for CEOs and other high-paid executives. This fuelling a social justice emergency in Europe. Over the past years, working people have suffered record real-term pay cuts while unscrupulous employers continue to register record profits. And this is now followed by an energy crisis. Meanwhile, the EU institutions threaten to return to austerity and open the door to further deregulation, further punishing workers.

Hence, the ETUC developed a **fully-fledged campaign** called "[Delivering a fair deal for workers]" around the following 12 TWELVE COMMITMENTS FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS, several of which are also key in relation to the first ad hoc report:

1. **Better jobs and incomes:** Take effective EU action to protect jobs and incomes, including pensions, with decisive measures to address the social dimension of the cost-of-living crisis. Europe needs a pay rise! Promote wage increases and support upwards convergence in incomes and working conditions, including through the introduction of a European framework to promote upward convergence on wages, and stronger action at EU level to eliminate the gender pay gap.

2. **End precarious work and improve working conditions:** End precarious work by guaranteeing legal rights to permanent contracts and full-time work, and a **ban on unpaid internships**. Increase workers' control over working time flexibility and reduce working time. Protect teleworkers' rights, including the right to disconnect, and ban invasive and disrespectful surveillance.

3. **Support for trade unions, collective bargaining and social dialogue**: Defend and strengthen trade union and workers' rights, including the universal right to organise, union access to workplaces, the right to bargain collectively, and the right to strike. Increase collective bargaining coverage, including through **an ambitious transposition of the Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages, targeting 80% coverage, and the Directive on Gender Pay Transparency.** Reinforce democracy at work in the first place by strengthening collective bargaining, introducing a comprehensive EU framework on information, consultation and participation and fully safeguarding well-functioning collective bargaining systems.

4. **Safe work:** Improve and expand the EU occupational health and safety legislation and other European initiatives to achieve zero deaths at work or caused by work, including domestic workers. Address psychosocial risks and online harassment and shaming at work through a European Directive. Introduce EU legislation that establishes temperature limits for work. Develop initiatives to ensure the full enforcement of workers and trade union rights and reinforce labour and social law inspection services and complaint mechanisms. Ensure an end to all forms of gender-based violence in the world of work, including online.

5. **Reject austerity - an economy for the people and the planet: Reject a return to austerity policies and promote a new economic model centred on the real economy, job creation, decent work, and redistribution through fair and progressive taxation. Ensure a revision of economic governance rules that includes the termination of the EU Fiscal Compact and the reform of the Stability and Growth Pact to align it with the achievement of the rights included in the European Pillar of Social Rights. Provide Member States with the necessary room for manoeuvre to finance the investments for a fair twin transition. Implement a new fiscal capacity for investment, an EU sovereignty fund for just socio-economic transition and common goods, leaving no one and no region behind. Regulate financial, energy and food commodities markets and tackle speculation. Combat tax evasion and avoidance and ensure that excessive profits are taxed.**

6. **Strong industrial policy and public services**: Implement a strong European industrial policy with significant and effective public and private investment that underpins quality jobs and social progress. Guarantee universal rights-based access to high-quality public services, including

childcare and transport. Ensure the full respect for the right to **adequate, decent and affordable housing**. Guarantee quality services and a right for service workers to provide quality services.

7. **Public money for social progress:** Apply strong conditionalities, covering social, tax and environmental criteria, linked to all forms of public funding and support to business. **Revise EU public procurement rules to ensure that public money goes to organisations that respect workers' and trade union rights,** that negotiate with trade unions and whose workers are covered by collective agreements.

8. **Ensure just transitions**: Guarantee a just digital transformation based on human-centred digitalisation and the effective regulation of AI with the 'human in control' principle incorporated into EU law. Achieve climate targets through a just transition, including a directive for just transition in the world of work through anticipation and management of change, based on the principles of trade union involvement and collective bargaining. Ensure the right for all to lifelong training without cost to the worker and during working time.

9. **Fight against social dumping and fraud**: Regulate the role of labour intermediaries and introduce an EU general legal framework limiting subcontracting and ensuring joint and several liability through the subcontracting chain. Improve the enforcement of labour mobility rules by a more effective European Labour Authority (ELA).

10. **A fair, rights-based approach to migration and asylum**: Strengthen safe, legal and regular migration pathways, enhance protections, rights and support for migrants and asylum-seekers within the EU. Save lives in the Mediterranean and at the external borders, also by re-introducing an EU search and rescue mechanism. Refuse borders externalisation policies and oppose multi- and bi-lateral agreements with States that do not comply with the rule of law and do not respect human rights.

11. **A progressive role for Europe in the world**: Ensure that the EU acts globally and through its trade policy, in line with our social model, to promote peace, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and global economic justice, including to end Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

12. **A fairer and more democratic Europe**: Establish a Social Progress Protocol, to be included in the Treaties, to guarantee that workers' and social rights take precedence over economic freedoms. Promote a reform of the European institutions to ensure a more social and democratic EU. Support EU enlargement based on the full respect of workers' and social rights, social dialogue, and the EU social acquis.

This campaign was underpinned by several mobilisation actions and activities as defined in two Resolutions of September 2023: Delivering a fair deal for workers: ETUC campaign for the 2024 European Parliament Elections | ETUC (September 2023) and Trade union mobilisation – On the Road for a Fair Deal for Workers | ETUC (September 2023)

"Wage up" – ETUC Project

WAGE-UP is the ETUC Monitoring Tool presenting information on Minimum Wage setting procedures and Collective Bargaining systems in all EU countries, as well as the progress in EU countries toward the transposition (by November 15, 2024) and the implementation of all the provisions of the Directive on adequate minimum wages in the EU (2022/2041).

The adoption of the EU Directive on adequate minimum wages marked a pivotal moment for social justice across the European Union, aiming to ensure adequate minimum wages, improving the collective bargaining coverage, and improving living and working conditions of millions of workers. However, its true impact depends entirely on the effective transposition into national laws.

ETUC has identified 30 indicators that we are tracking, which contain data and figures about, e.g. wage levels, adequacy indexes (minimum wage as % of median and average wage), collective bargaining coverage, but also gender pay gap, in-work poverty and many other information concerning national industrial relations.

Moreover, thanks to the **comparison tool**, it is possible to compare the different values for the different countries selected.

More recently this project and website has also been expanded with information, tools and resources to support ETUC affiliates in the implementation of Gender Pay transparency Directive. (see also: Gender equality | ETUC) ('GPTD').

ETUC Briefing Watches - ETUC Austerity Watch

In relation to the Covid-19, the Cost-of-Living and energy crises, the ETUC launched a series of related briefing notes. All briefing notes benefitted from the very valuable input of the ETUC affiliated organisations.

The set of briefing notes concern the ETUC Austerity Watch as indeed in the framework of the cost-of-living crisis attempts to return Europe to a regime of austerity cuts are gaining ground. The European trade union movement stands united in rejecting a return to cuts that punish working communities. A key battlefield at EU level is the upcoming reform of the Stability and Growth Pact, which could set binding rules that would plunge Europe into austerity.

In an effort to expose decision-makers who are endorsing this approach, the ETUC has launched Austerity Watch. This series of updates focus on threats in the budgetary, fiscal, economic, social, and environmental fields.

Austerity Watch is again fed by contributions from our respective affiliated organisations as well as ETUC itself and is regularly updated; all issues are made available here. Most of the national features on the countries at stake in this supervisory cycle can also be consulted in the Chapter II on "National material" (see below).

Already available are:

Austerity Watch #1 (22 September 2023)

FINLAND: The Government is seeking significant changes in labour law, and in the right to strike.

Austerity Watch #3 (2 November 2023)

ITALY
Reform of the tax system in Italy with the ultimate goal of imposing a flat tax.
Reform of the Code on Public Procurement (DL 36/2023).
Minimum income reform: from universalism to a categorical measure
No just transition for Italian workers?

GREECE
A biased transposition of Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions strongly penalises workers.
Deterioration of working time arrangements

Austerity Watch #4 (18 March 2024)

CZECH REPUBLIC: fiscal measures are harming workers' wellbeing
FRANCE: The CFDT and UNSA denounce 10 billion Euro in arbitrary, dangerous and non-solidaristic savings.
FINLAND: STTK denounces fiscal measures with a bitter austerity taste for Finnish workers.

Austerity Watch #5 (4 November 2025)

Including features on **CZECH REPUBLIC, FINLAND, FRANCE, GREECE, ITALY and NORWAY**

ETUC Positions

During the reference period, the ETUC Executive Committee (EXCO) adopted several Resolutions and Positions around different themes and which relate directly or indirectly to the ESC provisions/rights at stake in this 2026 supervisory cycle.; ETUC also further elaborated on these Resolutions and Positions in ETUC press releases, statements, policy updates and have to be read in conjunction with them. Below, an (again non-exhaustive) overview is proved of this ETUC material.

Working conditions (incl. working time, OHS, AI at work place, dismissal)

General

01.10.2025 For an EU Directive on subcontracting and labour intermediation

19.06.2025 European Parliament must lead on quality traineeships for young workers

18.06.2025 ETUC demands for the Quality Jobs Roadmap

26.06.2024 Traineeship Package

Working time (incl. telework and right to disconnect; Article 2§1 ESC)

24.06.2026 e-Declarations: Parliament and Council side with labour inspectorates against deregulation drive

01.04.2026 Commission's 'work from home' call makes telework law urgent

23.06.2025 Collective bargaining cuts working hours, boosts wellbeing (new ETUC Study on collective bargaining and working time reduction)

25.07.2025 Right to disconnect directive one step closer

01.10.2025 ETUC response to the Commission's second-phase consultation of the social partners in the area of workers' right to disconnect and telework

25.06.2024 ETUC response to the Commission's first-phase consultation of the European social partners on possible action in the area of telework and workers' right to disconnect

Occupational Health and Safety (Article 3 ESC)

25.06.2026 Extend World Cup cooling breaks to all workers

27.04.2026 Unions call for EU heat law on workers' memorial day

25.03.2026 Firefighter numbers must meet rising climate risk, Commission tells countries

04.02.2026 [47% too hot at work – but bosses failing to take action]

04.02.2026 [Cancer: 'Reckless' chemical deregulation risks workers' lives]

05.12.2025 [Workers need strong protections from dangerous chemicals – Parliament must deliver]

28.11.2025 [A European directive on workplace stress is overdue]

17.09.2025 [60% more workers affected by heatwaves, new data shows]

26.08.2025 [UN report backs union call for mandatory heat risk assessments]

08.07.2025 [Workers put at higher cancer risk by chemical deregulation]

01.07.2025 [New heat tragedies call for maximum working temperatures]

28.04.2025 [Workplace stress epidemic killing 10,000 people a year]

04.03.2025 [The content of a Directive on the prevention of occupational heat risks]

15.10.2024 [ETUC resolution on specific demands for a European Directive on the prevention of psychosocial risks at work]

Artificial Intelligence (Article 1§2 ESC)

08.05.2026 [AI Omnibus deal weakens worker safety protections]

15.04.2026 [Artificial Intelligence already out of control in workplaces, MEPs warned]

17.12.2025 [AI at work: Commission must now deliver binding rules]

30.09.2025 [Clock ticking for national governments on platform directive]

23.09.2025 [Unions break open 'black box' of algorithmic management in new guide]

Dismissals (Article 24 ESC)

19.01.2026 [Facing industrial layoffs, Commission must now bring forward just transition measures]

11.12.2024 [ETUC Statement: Call for a Moratorium on Forced Redundancies]

Information and consultation (Articles 21, 22, 25, 28 and 29 ESC)

27.10.2025 [Trade unions win stronger voice in multinational companies as Council adopts revised EWC Directivehttps://www.etuc.org/en/document/adopted-resolution-taxing-wealth-tackling-social-inequalities-and-climate-change]

Wages/collective bargaining

(Minimum) Wages (Article 4§1)

11.11.2025 [ETUC: Minimum Wage Directive Put Beyond All Doubt – But Adequacy of Wages Needs Stronger Rules]

12.06.2025 [Low pay keeping young people in poverty, figures show]

15.11.2023 [Real wages falling despite inflation-busting profits]

23.05.2023 [Wages 9% lower in sectors with labour shortages]

22.11.2022 EU sends right message on wage rises

In **September 2022**, an ETUC analysis of Eurostat data has found that Europe's lowest paid workers have seen the value of their wages fall by up to 19 per cent this year, representing the biggest fall in real minimum wages this century. Statutory minimum wages have risen by an average of 7,6% over the last year in the 21 EU countries which (have one. But, in the same countries, the rate of inflation has increased by an average of 12,4%. It means the real value of statutory minimum wages has fallen by an average of 4,8%, leaving millions of workers struggling to afford the most basic costs of living like food, rent and energy. It is only the second time since 2000 that growth in real minimum wages has fallen below zero and this cut is considerably higher - at the height of austerity in 2012, real minimum wages growth was - 0,7%. Real statutory minimum wages have fallen most dramatically since last summer in Latvia (-19%), Czechia and Estonia (-10%), and Slovakia (-8%). (Record fall in value of statutory minimum wages | ETUC, 13.09.2022)

The 18 EU member states where real statutory minimum wages have fallen between Q2 2021 and Q2 2022

(Countries having ratified the Collective Complaints Procedure Protocol are highlighted in grey)

Country	Nominal statutory minimum wage growth %	Rate of inflation %	Change to real statutory minimum wage %
Latvia	0	19,2	-19,2
Czechia	6,5	16,6	-10
Estonia	11,9	22	-10
Slovakia	3,6	12,6	-8,9
Lithuania	13,7	20,5	-6,7
Poland	7,5	14,2	-6,7
Ireland	2,9	9,6	-6,6
Netherlands	3,2	9,9	-6,6
Slovenia	4,9	10,8	-5,8
Bulgaria	9,2	14,8	-5,5
Luxembourg	5,0	10,3	-5,2
Malta	0,9	6,1	-5,1
Spain	5,2	10	-4,7
Portugal	6,0	9	-2,9
Romania	10,8	13	-2,1
Greece	9,6	11,6	-1,9
Croatia	10,2	12,1	-1,8
France	5,8	6,5	-0,6

And most recently in **June 2024**, a major new trade union report on the state of the European economy has found that the living standards of European workers have still not recovered from the cost-of-living crisis. The real compensation of workers in the EU, which represents pay after inflation is taken into account, fell by 0.7% in 2023, according to Benchmarking Working Europe 2024, the European Trade Union Institute's flagship annual report. Workers in Hungary (-3.8%), Czechia (-3.8%), and Italy (-2.6%) faced the biggest falls in purchasing power last year. Germany (-0.9%) and France (-0.6%) were also among the 10 member states where wages failed to catch up with prices. It represents a double dip in living standards following the historic collapse (-4.3%) in real compensation in 2022. (Report: Pay still not keeping up with prices | ETUC, 21.03.2024)

Collective bargaining (Article 6 ESC)

01.06.2026 Quality Jobs Act urgent after 'worst' year for workers' rights (on ITUC Global Rights Index)

02.05.2026 A Landmark Victory for Workers in Europe and Worldwide (on ICJ Advisory Opinion Right to Strike)

05.03.2026 EU court rules public contracts can promote collective bargaining | ETUC

19.11.2025 Promoting collective bargaining and adequacy of minimum wages in the EU after the CJEU judgment on AMWD

23.06.2025 Collective bargaining cuts working hours, boosts wellbeing (new ETUC Study on collective bargaining and working time reduction)

27.06.2024 Report: Action on collective bargaining needed in most member states

22.12.2023 Highly unionised enjoy a month more free time | ETUC

Equality (incl. equal pay/pay transparency)

Equal pay/pay transparency (Article 4§3 ESC)

For the most recent ETUC transposition overview report (06/07/2026) see:

Pay Transparency_Update

10.07.2025 Women lose billions during pay transparency delay

05.06.2026 Just three countries meet pay transparency deadline

19.11.2025 Enforcing rights, advancing equality: From the Pay Transparency Directive to the new Gender Equality Strategy

15.11.2022 Unequal pay means women hit hardest by energy prices

03.12.2021 Pay inequality up in majority of EU countries

Equality (Article 20 ESC)

25.06.2024 On the offensive to combat gender-based violence in the world of work

Chapter II: National Material

In this Chapter II, the ETUC provides as mentioned an overview of material it received from its affiliates during the reference period end 2021 until June 2026 in the framework of e.g. its ETUC Austerity Watch and/or meetings of its statutory bodies like the ETUC Executive Committee (hereafter 'ETUC EXCO'). Where appropriate, these contributions have to be read in conjunction (but complementary) with the targeted contributions some ETUC affiliates have provided to the ECSR/Social Charter Department as submission to the respective national ad hoc or normal reports provided by the governments.

Belgium

Joint Contribution from FGTB – CSC- CGSLB (Belgium) to the ETUC EXCO of March 2022

"- *We demand a legal initiative that restores the right to free collective bargaining on gross wages at all levels (interprofessional, sectoral, company).*

- *We demand the restoration of a freely negotiated indicative margin instead of a straitjacket imposed by law.*

- *We demand the complete preservation of the automatic indexation of wages and allowances as well as the preservation of wage scale increases.*"[3]

These are the demands of a petition the three Belgian unions recently launched under the system of online petitions organized by the Belgian parliament since 2020. More than 75,000 citizens already signed the petition, after only a few weeks of online availability. This is an unprecedented success for an online petition of the Belgian Parliament in such a short time.

"How the minimum wage law is taking us for a ride"[4] titles one of the articles published in the Wage Gazette, a joint publication of the 3 unions. "The wage standard law, which was updated by the Michel government in 2017, and its consequences now leave hardly any margin for wage increases. In addition, it imposes a framework that is far too strict for negotiators in the sectors and companies".

For the Belgian unions, this law is "a straitjacket that is far too tight", as it imposes a wage rise of no more than 0,4 % for 2021- 2022 based on expected wage evolutions in the neighbouring countries Germany, France and the Netherlands.

This comes at a time when "Belgian companies achieved the highest profit margins ever"[5] according to a recent report by the Belgian National Bank: "The Belgian profit margin experienced a notable increase over the past seven years, from 39.3 percent in 2014 to 42.4 percent in 2020. This is the highest level since at least 1999, when the margin rate was 35.7 percent. Moreover, the marginal rate is significantly higher than in neighbouring countries, where profit margins have remained relatively stable since 2014" and until 2020. In the first 9 months of 2021 the profit margin rose significantly to 45, 3 % in Belgium, with comparable increase rates in neighbouring countries. (See chart hereunder). "The results of listed companies show a dramatic increase of profit margins since the pandemic", according to Jan Eeckhout,

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[3] https://dekamer.mijnopinie.belgium.be/initiatives/i-653

[4] https://www.lacsc.be/docs/default-source/acv-csc-docsitemap/3980-actualiteit-actualite/3985-campagnes--campagnes/ipa/loonkrant_fr.pdf?sfvrsn=80ca48c0_4; https://www.fgtb.be/gazette-des-salaires; https://www.cgslb.be/sites/default/files/aclvb/Documenten/Artikels/2021/gazette-salaire.pdf.

[5] https://www.tijd.be/ondernemen/algemeen/belgische-bedrijven-halen-hoogste-winstmarges-ooit/10364040.html

professor of economics at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, who published "a high-profile paper on the growing profit margins of companies in numerous sectors, from tech to textiles to beer" .

For workers in Belgium as well as all over Europe, the situation is different: "Housing, heating, food, fuel... prices are skyrocketing everywhere, making life more and more expensive!" The Federation of Belgian Food Banks issued a stern warning: "In 2021, 177,238 people stood in line for a food package. Never before have there been so many. Moreover, the Food Banks fear that this figure will only continue to rise, in part because of rising energy prices."

Joint contribution FGTB – CSC- CGSLB (Belgium) to the ETUC EXCO of October 2022

As in other European Member States, the political agenda in Belgium is currently to manage the energy crisis and the accompanying economic crisis. Traditionally, the federal government's budget negotiations take place in late September and early October. These are also entirely dominated by the energy crisis and its economic impact on workers and businesses. The multiplicity of parties (Liberals, Greens, Christian Democrats and Socialists) means that a smooth budget agreement is not a given. But most parties seem to realise the urgency of the current situation. A key issue is the **automatic wage indexation mechanism** in our country. According to the employers, this has become unsustainable for companies in the current context. Of course, we are opposed to this as trade unions and workers' representatives. For us, there can be no question of adjusting the indexation mechanism, which is a necessary tool, especially in times of crisis. The government has listened and said that it will maintain automatic indexation. Employers are getting a commitment that the tightening of the wage standards law, implemented in 2017, will be maintained. Without adjustments to this law, this means that there will be a **ban on wage increases above the index in 2023-2024**. 1 billion is promised to employers on a linear basis: employers' contributions on wages can be reduced by 7.07% in the first half of 2023 for all employers, SMEs and large energy companies alike. And for the other half of the year, there will be a deferral, until 2025, of the payment of part of these contributions. These two measures will have a major impact on the social security treasury. The government has also decided, without consulting the trade unions, to increase labour flexibility in several sectors? The government also reached an agreement on a tax on excess profits for the energy sector, as proposed by the European Union.... A step in the right direction but not enough. Household support measures have been extended to relieve household energy bills until March but the government is referring any idea of capping energy prices to the European level. At the European level, the Belgian government continues to push for decisive action against the energy crisis. **Belgium remains in favour of a European cap on gas prices**. As trade unions, we continue to press for decisive action to protect the purchasing power of workers. That is why, in this context, we organised a demonstration with the common trade union front in Brussels on 21 September. On 20 October, the unions carried out decentralised actions in relation to the energy sector.

Joint Contribution CSC-FGTB-CGSLB (Belgium) to the ETUC EXCO of December 2022

General strike in Belgium Belgian trade union confederations are leading strikes and other actions a few weeks ago to challenge the **impact of inflation on workers' purchasing power** and to **recover the full freedom of collective bargaining**. Many Belgian workers can no longer make ends meet: bills are too high, wages too low. That is why Belgian trade unions are shifting gear, with a strike action a few weeks ago to put pressure on employers and the government. The day of strike and actions demands also for the ending of the 1996's wage law which restrain the freedom of collective bargaining, as the ILO has just recognised.

Energy prices - Gas prices have gone up by 130 per cent in just one year, electricity by 85 per cent and fuel by 57 per cent. And now food prices are going up too. Under pressure from trade unions, the government has taken steps to ease energy bills. Value added tax on energy products was reduced, one-off grants were introduced and a lower, 'social' tariff was extended to more vulnerable groups. These steps were welcome but the Belgian government should do more to cap prices for everyone. If it is not possible at a European level, Belgium must take steps at the national level: France, Spain and the Netherlands have already done so.

Wage indexation - Wage indexation is the best system to protect purchasing power in times of inflation. But indexation in Belgium does not offer 100 per cent protection. Some 850,000 workers have to wait a year for their next indexation, until January 1st 2023. They have meantime had to pay their higher bills, but received no compensation. Wage indexation does not take into account higher fuel prices specifically, so there is always a loss in purchasing power. Employers and the political right are pushing for an 'index jump' or even an alteration to the index mechanism. This is unacceptable to the trade unions. It would be suicide from a social but also from an economic perspective, because it would destroy consumer confidence and plunge Belgium into recession. There is no evidence that a wage-price spiral exists. Inflation in Germany and the Netherlands is higher than in Belgium, although they have no wage-indexation clauses in their collective agreements.

Profits not shared - Many companies have used the easing of the pandemic to increase their prices and profits, contributing to higher inflation, as a member of the executive board of the European Central Bank has conceded. This has also happened in Belgium. In the second quarter of 2022 profit margins were at an all-time high of 46 per cent. Only the Netherlands came close at 40 per cent. Companies thus have sufficient financial buffers not only to cope with wage indexation but also to increase wages in a more structured manner. Yet since the 2009 financial crisis real wage increases (over and above indexation) have been non-existent in Belgium. Contrast the Netherlands and France, where real wages have risen by 3 and almost 6 per cent respectively since 2009, and Germany where they have increased by 19 per cent. It is not that the productivity of Belgian companies has not increased since the financial crisis—it is that the additional profits have not been shared with workers.

Wage increases on top of indexation are limited in Belgium through a very restrictive law, the infamous 'law on competitiveness'. Although Belgian trade unions contest this law (at national and international levels), the government is applying it strictly. Employers are pushing for a wage freeze in 2023-24, based on the law. (…)

Wage moderation - The Belgian wage moderation law prevents since 2017 trade unions to freely negotiate wage increases (above the indexation). Since then, Belgian trade unions have been fighting back against this legislation which is contrary to the right to collective bargaining, asking for its revision. A complaint to the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA) of the ILO has been filed a year ago against this legislation. On the 9th of November, as workers were striking and taking actions across the country, the governing body of the ILO adopted the conclusions of the CFA regarding the complaint of the Belgian trade unions. These conclusions recognize "the existence of a significative restriction of the ability of the social partners to autonomously negotiate wage levels in the private sector". This is a great victory of the Belgian trade unions against the wage moderation law as the CFA requested the Belgian government "*to take, in full consultation with the social partners the necessary steps to ensure that the social partners are able to freely determine the criteria on which to base their negotiations on wage increases at the intersectoral level, and the results of those negotiations. The Committee requests the Government to keep it informed of any developments*".

Joint Contribution from CSC-FGTB-CGSLB (Belgium) to the ETUC EXCO of March 2023

The strict **law on wage norms** has once again made it impossible to reach a central agreement for the 2023-2024 period. This time, the law even prohibits any increase in gross wages. Through a temporary amendment to the law, the government would only allow sectors and companies to negotiate a single net bonus, up to a maximum of €750 net, but under strict conditions. This bonus could not even be paid in cash, but in the form of consumer vouchers.

However, in order to start negotiations in sectors and companies, it was necessary to clarify the extension of a series of temporary agreements centrally, including efforts by sectors and companies in favour of at-risk groups in the labour market, the future of temporary end-of-career schemes and the extension of more flexible overtime schemes.

A draft agreement was finally concluded between the social partners on 15 March. It has now been submitted to the bodies of the organisations. Some parts also need to be implemented by the government, which has yet to give its consent. The 2021-2022 agreement provided that the minimum wage would once again increase by €35 gross per month on 1 April 2024. However, the government has been asked to make its own effort via a tax increase so that workers receiving the minimum wage can have an extra €50 net per month. This measure has not yet been approved. (…)

Joint Contribution FGTB-CSC-CGSLB (Belgium) to the ETUC EXCO October 2025

On 21 July 2025 the Belgian Arizona government concluded a 'Summer Deal'. With this deal the government continues to tear down of our social security, our social rights, our purchasing power and our future prospects. In other words, the greatest social decline in Belgium in the last 80 years.

What is presented as a modernisation of the labour market and a stimulus for employment often turns out to be a shift of risks to the employee – with serious consequences for social cohesion and the future of our welfare state.

In six months' time, the government has shattered our social model by:

- Deterioration of pensions, both in terms of accessibility and pension amounts.
- **Deterioration of working conditions: greater flexibility with the possibility of requiring every employee to work 8 hours of overtime per week, but also with night work no longer considered exceptional.**
- Deterioration in terms of purchasing power, with **shift work and night work being much less well paid.**
- **Deterioration in terms of employee protection, with the possibility of concluding contracts for ... 1 hour per week! Added to this is a reduction in the notice periods for dismissal and a reduction in the mandatory guarantees for the protection of employees in the employment regulations.**
- Due to the reform of the unemployment benefits scheme 200.000 jobseekers will be excluded from social protection
- **Working at night is becoming easier to implement, despite the known health risks and creating new social dumping.**

In short, all steps backwards...originated by abusing the EU austerity politics and nationalist and conservative ideologies to attack workers rights, our social welfare system, the trade unions and trade union rights.

Joint Contribution FGTB-CSC-CGSLB (Belgium) to the ETUC EXCO of November 2025

(…) During the summer, the government also provisionally approved a series of policy measures. These include significant changes to the labour market and pensions, which have been submitted for consultation with the social partners throughout September.

Despite unions unanimously expressing their dissent and pointing out that these reforms are detrimental to workers' rights, the government persists with its plans. At the same time, ongoing government negotiations are taking place to amend the multi-year budget, once again seeking billions in savings, partially to compensate for the billions in defence funding needed to reach NATO-standards. As the budget is based on fictional returns of the planned measures, further budget holes are expected to appear.

But the Prime Minister's refuses to balance the governments approach as his initial proposals once more target workers, including a wage freeze through an index jump, increased value-added tax, reduced funding for healthcare, and stricter policies for those on sick leave.

On 14 October, the trade unions organized another demonstration. This historic protest saw 140,000 participants, but so far the government offered no response.

The Belgian unions remain committed to demand changes in the proposed measures.

Therefore a ‘November Call’ has been launched, with three days of strikes, starting November 24th with the trains, 25th joined by the public sector and 26th joined by the private sector, putting pressure on the government and employers to change tack and address workers concerns seriously.

Joint Contribution CGSLB-FGTB-CSC (Belgium) to the ETUC EXCO of March 2026

(…)

The Prime Minister has meanwhile announced a new round of austerity measures for 2026, even though there has only been one large-scale round so far, which blatantly attacked the rights and purchasing power of workers, including an index jump in wages.

For a year now, the Arizona government has been standing in our way, because they fooling workers, taking antisocial measures, and disregarding social dialogue. (…)

Dissatisfaction with the Arizona government's socio-economic dismantling policy remains high, and the first quarter of 2026 also promises to be one of social protest. Against pension cuts, Against the persecution of job seekers and the sick and against the index jump light, a direct attack on your purchasing power.

We will continue to advocate for workable work, purchasing power, and social dialogue, fair pensions for everyone and a fair tax contribution from the strongest shoulders After the demonstration, a (joint) press conference will be held with the three Belgian trade unions, at which we will present concrete and feasible alternatives to the government for the savings. We advocate protected purchasing power, workable work, fair pensions and a fair tax contribution from those who can afford it most.

Annual Report 2025 l’Institut fédéral des droits humains (IFDH)

The ETUC would also like to draw the attention of the ECSR to the 2025 annual report of the Federal Institute for Human Rights (FIHR) which focuses on the protection of social rights and the "standstill" principle.

Against the backdrop of sweeping socio-economic reforms—including limits on unemployment benefits, and reforms to incapacity-for-work and pension systems—the FIHR warns that certain measures risk infringing upon the fundamental rights of hundreds of thousands of people in Belgium.

Based on concrete findings, the FIHR reiterates the framework binding the authorities: the "standstill" principle prohibits any significant regression in social rights without sufficient justification. Any regressive measure must pursue a legitimate objective and be proportionate to its actual impact on the individuals concerned, particularly those in vulnerable situations. FIHR analyses the conditions under which this principle applies and formulate concrete recommendations to ensure compliance.

As a national human rights institution, FIHR highlights the importance of in-depth impact assessments that incorporate a human rights perspective, both before and after the adoption of any reform affecting social protection. It also calls upon the federal government and the House of Representatives to avoid using the urgent procedure for reforms of this magnitude that affect fundamental rights, as this leaves little room for stakeholder consultation or thorough parliamentary debate.

The FIHR Annual Report 2025 is available in Dutch and French

Czech Republic

ETUC Austerity Watch #4 (18 March 2024)

Fiscal measures are harming workers' wellbeing.

In the area of budgetary or fiscal measures, the Czech Government's change to the tax system means that the amount of the membership contribution paid will no longer be a deductible item in the tax base.

A reduction in the statutory allocation to the social fund may affect the well-being of employees and their social and working conditions.

Social dialogue was conducted only formally. (…)

ETUC Austerity Watch #5 (4 November 2025)

Contribution by the trade union for Health care and social service

BUDGETARY/FISCAL measure: Planned/announced

The government has currently prepared a draft state budget for 2026t /SR, which has not been discussed with the trade unions.

The government is cutting public spending, reducing expenditure on the running of central government bodies, social services, and public health authorities indirectly, through public health insurance, it is cutting expenditure by healthcare providers.

The government has not yet decided on adjustments to the pay scales of employees in public services and administration; the draft proposes a certain increase, but it is not known whether the funds will be provided from the state budget

Trade unions are demanding an increase in funding to raise the salaries of public service and administration employees; trade unions disagree with cuts to public funding.

In the Czech Republic, the Economic and Social Agreement Council meets and "negotiates," but the demands of the trade unions are not being met.

ECONOMIC measure: Planned/announced

The government is investing in transport infrastructure/transport is congested, slow, making it difficult for employees and companies to get around

- reforms in education/lack of places in schools, problems placing students in secondary schools
- labor market flexibility/part-time jobs, job sharing, working from home
- Digitization in public services/slow

(…)

Is there or is there not a dialogue with the government about the announced austerity measure? Formal dialogue yes, measures proposed by trade unions are not being implemented. (…)

Finland

Joint Contribution from SAK, AKAVA and STTK (Finland) to the ETUC EXCO of September 2023

In June 2023 following lengthy negotiations Finland got a new government comprising of the National Coalition Party, the Finns party, the Swedish People's Party and the Christian Democrats. The new government program is problematic for Finnish workers as regards **decreases in worker's rights and social benefits,** and the fact that no real room is left for negotiation with the social partners. The measures include a **long list of restrictions on the negotiation system and the right to strike, measures to weaken the terms and conditions of employment, as well as erosions in social benefits and allowances.**

Complete lists of the measures can be found here: https://www.sak.fi/en/whats-new/news/catalogue-orpo-purra-government-cuts or https://www.sttk.fi/en/2023/09/12/we-compiled-the-effects-of-the-governmentprogramme-on-employees-rights-and-livelihoods/ . (See also table below)

The first tripartite working groups are already working on the government's proposals. First off are the group overseeing the right to strike and the group preparing the reform of the earnings-related unemployment benefit. All reforms are being prepared at a very hasty pace and the first changes are planned to enter into force at the beginning of next year. SAK, Akava and STTK have representatives in the groups, but they have had no influence on their progress. SAK, STTK and Akava have opposed the government measures that weaken workers' rights and erode social benefits. The confederations work actively to raise awareness of the effects of the suggested 'reforms' for workers. There have also been joint meetings between unions in the three confederations to discuss possible joint responses and possible actions.

ETUC Austerity Watch #1 (22 September 2023) Government is seeking significant changes in labour law, and in the right to strike

Announced austerity measures mainly interfere with social standards and labour-related protections.

In Finland, as a solution to the countries weakened economic situation and increased government debt, the Government is seeking significant changes in labour law, and in the right to strike. The programme of the Finnish government includes a wide range of social welfare reductions, including drastic cuts in earnings-related unemployment benefit and housing allowance. Many of these cuts and legal changes are scheduled to take effect next year, with the first already introduced at the start of 2024.

Collective bargaining	The maximum level of wage adjustments will be tied to pay increases in export sectors in conciliation.	This change will affect trade unions' free right to negotiate and cement the pay gap between male- and female-dominated sectors.
Right to strike	The provision of protection in conflict situations will be defined by law.	the change may result in significant restrictions on the right to strike in the social welfare and healthcare sector.
Right to strike	The political right to industrial action will be limited to demonstrations of one day,	The goal is to limit people's right to demonstrations regarding amendments to labour and social services legislation. Political strikes have been quite rare in Finland, the right to strike has been used moderately, and there is no need for restrictions.
Right to strike	Solidarity actions will be within the scope of the notification obligation, assessing the proportionality of solidarity strikes and	The right to strike will be limited significantly. Various limitations related to the procedure and content when

	limiting their impact to parties to labour disputes will be defined by law.	exercising the right to strike may mean that the right to strike decreases significantly in practice.
Right to strike	The level of the financial sanctions imposed on illegal industrial actions will be increased. The lower limit will be EUR 10,000 and the upper limit EUR 150,000.	This means a significant increase in financial sanctions. Illegal strikes often involve situations where employees react to large-scale employee discharge plans of companies or weaker terms of employment.
Right to strike	A personal sanction of EUR 200 will be imposed on employees for continuing a strike deemed illegal by the Labour Court.	A strike is an industrial action, which is usually decided on by a union or member association. Consequences should not be targeted at individuals.
Right to strike	Opportunities to derogate from labour law through a company-specific collective agreement will be expanded, and employee protection based on legislation on local agreements and collective agreements will be reduced.	In the future, a union-trained shop steward does not need to be a contractual party in a local agreement. The risk is that an agreement does not reach the minimum level of employment terms safeguarded by legislation and collective agreements, resulting in unhealthy competition in labour markets based on drastically limited terms of employment. It remains unclear how the abilities and skills of employee representatives negotiating on behalf of the employees will be ensured, how contractual disputes will be settled, and who will cover the costs arising from dispute resolutions.
Decreases in terms of employment	Specific grounds for fixed-term employment contracts of one year will no longer be required.	The change will probably increase the unfounded chaining of employment contracts and therefore uncertainties in working life, and reduce the use of indefinite employment relationships. The change will especially affect young people and women. Furthermore, the change may increase discrimination based on pregnancy and family leave, considering that a significant part of discrimination is already associated with fixed-term employment relationships.
Decreases in terms of employment	The notice period for lay-offs and the related wage payment obligation will be shortened to seven days irrespective of what is defined in the collective agreement.	Currently, the notice period for lay-offs is 14 days by law. The notice period is also defined in some collective agreements. Employees will have less time to prepare for a lower level of income. At the same time, the change affects the contractual autonomy of parties to collective agreements, as the content of existing agreements is affected through legislation.
Decreases in terms of employment	The first day of sick leave will be unpaid.	The change will cause an unreasonable loss of income for employees and forces more employees to come to work ill.
Decreases in terms of employment	Employees' protection against dismissal on personal grounds will be reduced. In the future, a relevant reason will be sufficient to dismiss employees on personal grounds, whereas a relevant and weighty reason is currently required.	The change will significantly reduce employment protection.
Decreases in terms of employment	The scope of application of the Co-operation Act will be limited to companies employing at least 50 people, and the minimum negotiation periods of legal cooperation negotiations will be halved.	Currently, the Co-operation Act applies to companies employing at least 20 people. The change will leave most jobs outside the scope of the development of working life and cooperation between employers and employees, and reduce the opportunities of employees to have their voice heard in companies. STTK has proposed lowering the scope of application to companies employing at least 10 people. The minimum negotiation periods of cooperation negotiations on dismissals will be halved, which significantly reduces the purpose of negotiations and the opportunity to engage in a genuine dialogue on alternatives for dismissals.
Decreases in terms of employment	The re-employment obligation laid down in the Employment Contracts Act will be removed from companies and organisations employing fewer than 50 people irrespective of what is defined in the collective agreement.	Currently, the re-employment obligation is four or six months depending on the duration of the employment relationship. The change will reduce employment protection. It will also affect the contractual autonomy of parties to collective agreements.
Decreases in benefits and allowances	The level of the earnings-related unemployment benefit will be reduced in steps. The benefit will fall to 80 per cent after eight weeks and to 75 per cent after 34 weeks of unemployment.	The change will especially affect those who consider finding a new job difficult for various reasons. The change may lead to a cycle of social services, as people may also need to apply for other social security to protect their livelihood.
Decreases in benefits and allowances	The employment condition of the unemployment benefit will be extended to 12 months.	The change will reduce the opportunity to obtain the earnings-related unemployment benefit and increase income problems during unemployment. Combined with the easier possibility to use fixed-term employment

		relationships, this may also increase uncertainties in working life and transfer the unemployed to other social security.
Decreases in benefits and allowances	A euro limit will be set for the employment condition of the unemployment benefit.	The change will reduce the level of the unemployment benefit for some and will be particularly problematic for those with low income and who work in unusual working conditions. The change will increase income problems and lead to a cycle of social services, as people may also need to apply for other social security to protect their livelihood.
Decreases in benefits and allowances	Holiday allowances will be divided into periods, the number of deductible days will be increased from five to seven days, the accrual of the employment condition in pay-supported employment will be discontinued, child increases will be removed, and age-tied derogations and protective components will be eliminated.	The changes will reduce the level of the unemployment benefit and will be particularly problematic for those with low income and who work in unusual working conditions. Furthermore, the changes will increase income problems.
Decreases in benefits and allowances	The increment of the first 16 working days in the parental allowance will be discontinued.	The change will reduce the livelihood of families. In addition, it may make it more difficult to agree upon the paid parental leave period in collective agreement negotiations.
Decreases in benefits and allowances	The adult education allowance will be discontinued from 1 August 2024.	Because the adult education allowance supports access to income during studies, the change will particularly reduce the opportunities of the working-age population with low and medium income to update their skills during their career.
Decreases in benefits and allowances	Alternation leave will be discontinued.	The change will remove a significant benefit that has supported employees' coping at work and the diversification of careers, which has especially been used by women with extended careers.

All these changes will damage the interests of employees by increasing insecurity in the working world.

Cuts in social welfare are bad news not only for the unemployed, but also for those in low-paid jobs. The envisaged cuts are in no way marginal. The Government is planning many major changes in labour law, the right to strike and social welfare. The changes in labour law and the right to strike will exclusively benefit employers, and not their employees. The particular victims of social welfare cuts will be people on low incomes, part-time and casual employees, and the unemployed.

The Government has tried to justify the cuts on economic grounds, but undermining the status of employees will have no significant impact on the Finnish economy but will reduce opportunities on the labour market and will predictably increase poverty. Instead these measures are motivated by certain general attitudes and values. The impact on employees will at least partly conflict with international treaties.

Trade Unions have accordingly begun preparing organisational action. This may be take the form of various collective anti-government protests by employees. The SAK #SeriousGrounds and STTK #kohtuuskaikessa (loosely translated 'be reasonable') campaigns aim to inform people on the content of the government plans.

ETUC Austerity Watch #4 (18 March 2024)

STTK denounces fiscal measures with a bitter austerity taste for Finnish workers.

In the budgetary or fiscal domain, STTK raises attention to the fact that the fiscal stance for this year is projected to be slightly expansionary, as the scale of tax reductions is expected to surpass that of drastic spending cuts. The total tax rate is anticipated to decrease by almost three percentage points relative to GDP by 2027.

New austerity measures will be decided in April. The austerity measures are planned to be approximately 1 % of GDP. Considering these new austerity measures, the fiscal stance can become slightly contractionary. Finland's current problem is not the fiscal stance but rather drastic tax reductions accompanied by huge spending cuts, namely in social security.

Another area of concern is the significant deterioration in several labour rights, including the right to strike and employment protection. Bargaining at the local level is expanded, while the shop steward can be bypassed in some instances. The exported model is forced on workers since it ties the National Conciliator's hands by capping the maximum wage offer to the export and domestic sectors. It is important to note that these changes do not have any budgetary impact but are simply shifting the balance towards employers. In addition, the export-led model would risk gender equality as it would become hard for female-dominated industries to catch up with the wage gap.

ETUC Austerity Watch #5 (4 November 2025)

Contribution by SAK

BUDGETARY/FISCAL measure: Adopted/under implementation.

In the spring 2025, the right-wing government decided to decrease the corporate tax and the income tax. Due to other changes in the tax system, the income tax cut does not benefit low- and middle-income classes, but only the wealthiest individuals. These measures undermine the tax revenue annually by approximately two billion euros (0,8 % of GDP) with only marginal positive effects on growth.

In the fall of 2025, the right-wing government decided to consolidate public finances by additional 1 billion euros, likely due to underestimation of the adverse effects of tax cuts. Majority of the consolidation to the year 2027 to make it look like the government achieved at balancing the public finance before the next elections.

To mitigate the deficit of the tax cuts, the government decided in the spring to cut e.g. from public governance and public services, NGOs and education. Additionally, the government intends to use the wealth of pension funds to finance the growing public deficits.

To further consolidate the public deficit by 1 billion euros, the government decided to take more money from pension funds and to cut from e.g. social housing, migration, public governance and R&D.

Most trade unions along with non-partisan researchers and experts have been appalled by these unjust and ideological policies. These decisions undermine public finances and further increase inequality and poverty in Finland.

The government has not been willing to engage in meaningful dialogue over these policies, nor have they listened to the scholars and experts who have been vocal in the criticism.

ECONOMIC measure: Adopted/under implementation.

(…) In addition to previous limitations to the rights to strike, **in spring 2025 the government undermined further the bargaining power of trade unions by removing the tax deductibility of trade union membership fees. (…)**

The **exclusion of the tax deductibility of trade union membership fees** is likely to have an adverse effect on the collective bargaining coverage.

Trade unions have been opposing the government's policies and provided policy options – that have been disregarded, unfortunately. **The government has not been willing to engage in meaningful dialogue with the trade unions.** (...)

France

Contribution from CGT (France) to the ETUC EXCO of October 2022

On 29 September 2022, an inter-professional day of action was held, called for by the CGT, FSU and Solidaires trade unions and several youth organisations, for **an increase in wages, pensions and income supports** but also against the government's **planned raising of the retirement age to 65**. Nearly 200 scheduled events brought more than 250,000 people together across France. Around one million workers went on strike, mainly in the national education sector, with 30% striking, and agri-food, with 400 calls for strike action recorded and the numbers out on strike ranging from 30% to 100% of employees in companies in this sector.

In France, the Labour Code provides for an **indexation of the national minimum wage** (SMIC) based on inflation, but does not provide for an indexation of wages based on an increase in the SMIC. Since the latest increase in the minimum wage on 1 August last, the minimum wage under collective agreements for 152 professional sectors (out of 171) is below the national minimum wage. The CGT is calling for an increase in these collective agreement minimum wages in the branches in the same proportion as the national minimum wage.

Called for by the CGT, the main union in this sector, workers at the TOTAL and EXXONMOBIL refineries are striking to demand an increase in their wages that takes into account inflation and allows for a better sharing of the added value created by their work. Workers at TOTAL refineries are therefore demanding a pay increase of 10%, 7% for inflation and 3% as a share of profits, given that their employer earned €10.9 billion in profit in the first half of this year, and the remuneration of the CEO of TOTAL increased by more than 52%! At the time of writing, around one third of France's petrol stations are empty, TOTAL is purposely allowing the dispute to worsen and the government is opting for confrontation by ordering the workers back to work, even though the Sarkozy government was previously condemned by the ILO in 2010 for similar actions that violate the exercise of the right to strike.

(...)

Contribution from CGT (France) to the ETUC EXCO of September 2023

(...) Before the summer, the CGT submitted 100 proposals to the Prime Minister for immediate measures to protect and improve the lives of employees, measures built around 5 priority areas: wages, pensions, social democracy, unemployment and gender equality.

The many ongoing struggles in France, closely rooted in the experiences of workers and the specific features of professional sectors, in particular for a general increase in wages and the protection of jobs, remain an important reference point for influencing the future inter-professional negotiations relating to supplementary pensions (AGIRC/ARRCO) that commenced on 5 September, or the discussions around the draft Finance Law and the draft Social Security Finance Law or the draft Finance Laws on Unemployment Insurance and on the Employment of Seniors, the terms of which have not yet been determined. The French trade union organisations have adopted a joint declaration on this initiative. The demands contained in the joint declaration highlight issues of pay, gender equality, pensions, public services, the environment and the conditionality of aid for businesses. On that day, the trade unions want to put pressure on employers during the AGIRC/ARRCO negotiations and the negotiations in the branches and in companies regarding early retirement in case of arduousness, but also on the government regarding the discussions on the draft Finance Law and the draft Social Security Finance Law. We want to make the need to fight against the austerity that is rife throughout Europe at the centre of this day of action, in line with the call made by the ETUC to all its affiliates.

Following the mass strikes and demonstrations against pension "reform", we are faced with a crackdown not seen since the 1950s when the CGT mobilised against the war in Indochina. The CGT has recorded more than **1,000 comrades threatened with dismissal, disciplinary sanctions, summons or legal proceedings**, including Sébastien Menesplier, General Secretary of the Federation of Mines and Energy, and member of the Confederal Executive Committee, the national leadership of the CGT. Sébastien is thus accused of the offence of “corporate endangerment of another person (immediate risk of death or disability) by means of manifestly deliberate breach of a regulatory duty of safety or care”, punishable by a fine of €75,000. This is a clear ratcheting up of the government’s crackdown on the trade union movement. The CGT thanks the ITUC and ETUC, its General Secretary and its affiliates for their support.

Joint Contribution from CFDT-CGT-FO-UNSA (France) to the ETUC EXCO of December 2023

Wages Due to the partial **automatic indexation of the French interprofessional minimum wage** on inflation, the latter was revalorized on 1 January 2023 by 1.83% and again by 2.22% on 1 May 2023 to currently amount to €1,747.20 gross monthly or €1,389.09 net. Faced with the decline in real wages and low wage dynamics or the large number of sectoral minima below the interprofessional minimum wage, and under pressure from trade unions, the government invited the social partners to attend a social conference on 16 October 2023 to discuss, in particular, wages. At the end of the social conference, the government made several proposals, mainly anticipating or supplementing the transposition of several EU directives, namely those on adequate minimum wages in Europe, or on pay transparency. The trade unions note mainly the establishment of a High Council on Remuneration and the revision of the Equality Index.

Under pressure from the unions, the government has announced possible sanctions for professional branches that do not respect their obligation to negotiate and have sectoral minima below the interprofessional minimum wage with exemptions from employer contributions in the crosshairs. The unions expressed disappointment after the conference. Although initial responses have been made, they are still far from workers' concerns about the cost of living crisis and do not resolve the situation in the short term. (…)

Employment The law for “full employment” was definitively adopted on 14 November 2023. Among the main measures of this reform is the reorganization of the French public employment service through a new operator called France Travail. The beneficiaries of the minimum income will now have to conclude a contract of “commitment” with an obligation of at least 15 hours of activity per week under penalty ranging from the suspension to the partial or total abolition of the benefit. Criticisms have also emerged about conditioning access to minimum income, in contrast to the recent EU recommendation on minimum income. In parallel to this reform, the majority of French social partners signed a protocol on unemployment insurance on 20 November 2023. This agreement contrasts with the previous unemployment insurance reform in 2019, unanimously decried by the French unions, where the State sat on the agreement negotiated by the social partners. A clarification of the respective responsibilities of the social partners and the government remains essential, when the latter always threatens to regain control. On November 27, 2023, it announced the postponement of its decision on the approval of the agreement to the first half of 2024, pending the upcoming negotiations on the employment of seniors, extending the current rules.

Migrations - Initially tabled on February 1, 2023 and postponed until September 2023, the **bill «to control immigration and improve integration»** is again in the process of first reading in the French Parliament. These debates take place in a national context marked by an outburst of racist and anti-Semitic words and acts and confusion and reconciliation based on the rejection of the Other, on racism, on anti-Semitism, on the stigmatization of Muslims or on xenophobia, which are fundamentally opposed by all French trade unions. The initial version of the bill was significantly tightened during discussions in the Senate, including the elimination of state medical aid, a public health scheme for foreigners in an irregular situation. Other provisions also aim to abolish the right to jus soli, limit family reunification, introduce quotas, abolish social assistance for foreigners who have been present for less than 5 years or drastically limit the remedies related to the right of asylum... One of the main provisions related to work, Article 3 dedicated to the creation of a one-year residence card «work in professions in tension» can lead to the regularization of a large number of undocumented workers in France, is now under intense pressure. More generally, and unless the situation turns around in Parliament, this bill will result in a deterioration of the rights of foreigners in France. This reform is part of the continuity of discussions at European level on legal labour migration in favor of a utilitarian vision of migration policy in France deeply rejected by all French unions, recalling the ILO's Philadelphia declaration that work is not a commodity.

ETUC Austerity Watch #4 (18 March 2024)

The CFDT and UNSA denounce 10 billion Euro in arbitrary, dangerous and non-solidaristic savings.

Sunday, February 18, Bruno Le Maire, Minister of the Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty, announced a ten billion savings plan, justified by initially overly optimistic growth forecasts.

Four days later, the Official Journal confirmed and detailed the budget cuts. Barely two months after the vote on the finance law for 2024, this decision was taken by decree, without a debate on the method or the substance!

The CFDT denounces the absence of a democratic debate, the brutality of the amounts demanded, and the lack of social justice. What an insolent contradiction between the incantations displayed and the crippling of specific public policies, particularly employment and training!

According to CFDT, such a decision would harm full employment, education, higher education and research, ecological transition or housing priorities, and massively force the shutdown of all support and transformation policies.

The efforts requested, for example, from the Ministry of Labor (1.1 billion out of 15 billion budget) are untenable at the time of the launch of the programme France Travail unless all investments in skills and employment are cut down for a long time.

The CFDT has always been concerned about public spending, budget deficits, and debt and their consequences for future generations. However, the expected impact on the most affected public policies is so serious that it will compromise the future and essential changes.

Decision after decision, the motives are always the same: by stubbornly persisting in its dogmatic choice of cutting expenses without being interested in revenues, by refusing to open the tax project, the Government always concentrates the effort on the most modest. It persists in not touching the significant funding allocated to businesses even though their effectiveness is more than contested. It refuses to change the taxation of higher incomes. It rejects any sharing of efforts.

For the CFDT, the question of a united effort of these revenues to invest in the long term, particularly in ecological transformation, must finally be asked.

The measures to reduce the payroll for the Civil Service during inflation are a new blow to civil service agents, which we applauded yesterday. Public policies of a sensitive nature, such as those targeted, cannot be the adjustment variables of a dogma of tax reduction, just like the agents of the ministries responsible for implementing them.

The CFDT calls on the Government to urgently reconsider the method used to finance the priority policies of an actual future project for France in line with the needs and to finance them through a socially just and progressive tax policy.

UNSA denounces that the Government chose not to go through Parliament. In particular, the "sustainable ecology, development and mobility" budgetary item has been cut by 2.13 billion euros, the "labour and employment" item by 1.1 billion euros, and the "school education" and research and higher education" item by a total of 1.6 billion euros. These savings will adversely impact ecological ambitions, employment and vocational training policies, and health and education policies. While only some of the savings measures have been outlined, fears are high that the Government will make a series of announcements that run counter to the interests of workers, whether employed or job seekers.

According to UNSA, the Government has announced the introduction of an additional charge for working people wishing to use their personal training account (in French: CPF). This would generate 200 million euros in budget savings. Planned in the 2023 Finance Act, the Government postponed its application, which has now been all but enacted as part of the recent 10 billion euro emergency budget savings plan. Given the increase in the financial cost of training, this measure risks discouraging and/or preventing many employees, particularly the most vulnerable and least qualified, from taking up training. UNSA considers this measure unfair, set against a backdrop of budget savings of the same kind. UNSA will continue to try, through dialogue with the Government - which supposedly puts training at the heart of its policy - to put this project back on the drawing board. (…)

Contribution from FO (France) to ETUC EXCO June 2024

Following the European elections on 9 June 2024, French President E. MACRON announced the dissolution of the National Assembly, one of the chambers of the French Parliament, resulting in early parliamentary elections on 30 June and 7 July 2024. These latest electoral developments disrupt the reforms planned by the French executive and in particular the implementation of a fifth unemployment insurance reform in the short term, still announced for the 1st of July 2024, and Act II of the reform of French labour law announced for the fall 2024. (…)

Work on the **transposition of Directive (EU) 2022/2041 on adequate minimum wages** in the EU also started in France with a first informal information meeting on 29 May 2024. The government considers that French legislation already complies with the EU directive and wishes only to introduce indicative reference values to guide the assessment of the adequacy of the French legal minimum wage, which would now be provided for every 4 years.

According to an order applying to all ministries, and with the support of French employers, the government refuses to review other points of its national legislation to avoid any gold-plating of the EU directive. FO denounced the narrative on gold-plating and presented several ways of improving French legislation to effectively comply with the EU directive, particularly in terms of variations, the trade unions' role in setting the legal minimum wage.

The process must continue at the technical level until the autumn of 2024 and lead to a regulatory provision and not a legislative one, the French government refusing at this stage to begin a discussion on the transposition of the directive in front of the Parliament. Beyond the pressures exerted in the name of simplification, the narrative on the gold-plating was also taken up by the French Ministry of Labour, raising concerns about the lack of margin for trade unions in future transpositions of EU directives at national level, including in the social field.

In parallel, thanks to the union mobilization during and after the national wage conference of October 16, 2023 and unlike recent trends on the rationalization of national bodies of social dialogue, a High Council of Remuneration, Employment and Productivity was launched on March 28, 2024. This new body is composed of representatives of the social partners, qualified personalities and representatives of public administrations. It is chaired by the Minister of Labour while its secretariat remains provided by a service of the Prime Minister. Its mission is to formulate guidelines on the determinants and evolution of remuneration, classifications, equal pay, employee savings and value sharing, the effects of part-time work and the use of short contracts on wages or the links between wages, employment, productivity and competitiveness. The scope of its work remains uncertain, particularly in the face of the risk of encroaching on the fields of other national social dialogue bodies, while union expectations on the implementation of commitments made at the October 2023 wage conference are far from being met at this stage, including in the matter of social conditionalities of total or partial exemptions of social contributions for enterprises, real low-wage traps without controls.

Contribution CFDT (France) to the ETUC EXCO of October 2025

Since the surprise dissolution of the National Assembly following the European elections, France has seen a succession of prime ministers without any possible compromise emerging in a three-party parliament. In the summer, Prime Minister François Bayrou unveiled uncoordinated budgetary measures, presented as inevitable, amounting to €44 billion, targeting workers in particular: the elimination of two public holidays, an increase in medical deductibles, a freeze on solidarity benefits and pensions, the elimination of 3,000 civil service jobs, and reduced access to healthcare for undocumented migrants. He lost the vote of confidence requested by MPs on these measures.

This new political crisis in France illustrates a double failure: the failure of a vision without a plan for the future, which places the burden on the world of work and the most vulnerable, and the failure of a method that pretends to engage in dialogue but decides alone. While the new Prime Minister has announced a break with this method, the CFDT is waiting for action. (…)

In terms of mobilization, the inter-union day of action on September 18, which brought together several hundred thousand people, enabled the voice of the world of work to be heard loud and clear by the future government and employers, with a view to influencing the future budget and reminding them that workers cannot be the eternal adjustment variables. (…)

Contribution FO (France) to the ETUC EXCO of November 2025

France is struck by one of the most important political crises in its modern history. This political instability has an impact not only on public policies (and investments) at national level but also at European and international levels. Despite this instability, growth forecasts have recently been revised upwards for France, to reach 0.8% for the year 2025, still actively supporting growth of the Euro area.

The main consequence of political instability in France is the uncertainty around the national budget 2026, with concrete consequences for millions of workers in France. After the fall of the Bayrou government in September 2025, its main budgetary austerity proposals formulated during the year 2025 are taken up by the Lecornu government in its Finance Act (PLF) for 2026 and its Social Security Finance Act (PLFSS) for 2026. Aiming for a public deficit of 4.7% in application of the EU's economic governance rules, the 2026 PLF is part of the European trend with a reallocation of budgetary resources towards defence and significant cuts in the social field. (…)

Contribution FO (France) to the ETUC EXCO of March 2026

After several months of tension, the public budget 2026 of France was definitively adopted on February 19, 2026, focusing the budgetary effort on reducing public spending to the detriment of public services and in extenso of all workers. Budgetary shifts within ministries also reflect a diversion of social and environmental priorities, with cuts in public employment services and job cuts in education, to the benefit of defence and security. The regulatory authorities, public development aid and climate action will also be undermined by France's 2026 budget, which also pursues a policy of wage moderation leading to the pauperisation of civil servants. Young people are also particularly affected, with a shift towards national preference through the exclusion of non-EU foreign students from housing benefits, approved by the Constitutional Council. In parallel, despite some cosmetic measures, the French government still does not address the cause of the public deficit, namely the decline in tax revenues since 2018 with more than 80 billion in tax relief and more than 211 billion euros in State aid to companies without any social, fiscal or environmental conditionality. (…)

In continuation of the "Work and Pensions" conference of November 2025, a cycle of workshops "Work-Employment-Pensions" began on January 30, 2026, covering the private sector and the public sector in parallel. FO has committed itself to this round with a view to opening genuine negotiations to advance the interests of workers concretely as of today, while respecting the autonomous agenda of the social partners, and not to fuel the debate of the 2027 presidential election. The themes are numerous and monitoring is limited as it stands, the social partners having requested to have a right of validation of the reports to define possible consensus and oppositions.

France has finally deposited the instrument of ratification of ILO C155, the last fundamental ILO convention to be ratified by France, but no discussion has been opened to date to improve the national legislation in the context of this ratification, in parallel with the ongoing consultation on the next Occupational Health Plan (PST 5) for the years 2026-2030. FO supports in this context the re-establishment of employee representative bodies dedicated to health and safety at work, abolished in 2017. Additional work on occupational health and safety is also being carried out as part of the French presidency of the G7 in 2026.

ETUC Statement: Together with French trade unions to defend the 1st of May (adopted by ETUC EXCO March 2026)

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) notes with concern that a proposal presented on 10 April 2026 and currently before the French National Assembly seeks to extend to activities in additional sectors the possibility to work on the 1st of May. French trade unions have warned that this initiative would weaken the long-standing principle of the 1st of May as mandatory paid public holiday in France and as a day traditionally dedicated to workers' rights and collective action.

The ETUC expresses its full solidarity and support for French trade unions in defending the 1st of May as a fundamental day for workers in France and across Europe, and in opposing this harmful proposal.

May Day is an international symbol of workers' struggles, solidarity and the collective achievements that have shaped labour and social rights for more than a century. Any attempt to weaken the 1st of May risks undermining this shared social heritage.

ETUC stands with the French trade unions in calling on Members of the National Assembly to reject proposals that would weaken workers' rights and conditions, and would undermine the unique status of 1st of May as a mandatory day of rest.

Greece

ETUC Austerity Watch #3 (2 November 2023)

A biased transposition of Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions strongly penalises workers

Greece suffered from terrible disaster this summer (fires and floods), and is suffering again with new floods and storms, which made the government to deciding for fiscal measures necessary to react to such emergencies. While no austerity measures are envisaged on the fiscal/economic side, other reforms may result quite harmful to workers, Greek workers still suffer from past austerity measures which today also limit their capacity to afford trade union actions that imply losses of wage, especially in the private sector.

This contribution will in particular refer to the case of transposition of Directive 2019/1152 on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions which is creating huge problems to Greek workers. A new law transposing the EU Directive, that should be meant for the exclusive advantage of workers, includes grey areas and inconsistencies. Furthermore, there is little clarity, which the government commit to fix in the implementation stage.

What is at stake (also based on GSEE detailed proposals submitted to the Labour minister):

The new law presents a mixed set of measures attempting to bring rudimentary order on some aspects of informal and atypical work. In substance such mix of measures is assumed to circumvent the objectives of the EU Directive so that the trade union confederation, GSEE, is calling for an accurate and not flawed transposition of the Directive, demanding for the largest scope possible in order to extend protection to the highest number of workers and services by eliminating the exceptions and shady areas that the transposition law introduces.

Particularly harmful is Article 31 of the law that tend to criminalise the obstruction of an employee's work during a strike to the points that the GSEE is urgently asking to remove article 31 as it is contrary to the core of the constitutional provision on the protection of the right to strike. GSEE also asks that arrangement of work time and conditions remain on sectoral or collective agreements opposing the law that gives this prerogative to individual contracts. More in general, the GSEE is opposing the attempt of the law to set constraints to free exercise of collective bargaining.

Below, 10 GSEE complains about the new Law:

i. GSEE argues that in fact the maximum limit of 12 to 6 months of the probationary period is not reduced from 12 to 6 months as provided by the Directive as Article 19 of the Bill maintains in force the national legislation that stipulates that that an employment contract of indefinite duration can be terminated without notice and without compensation, during the first 12 months.

ii. With regard to the possibility of parallel employment, GSEE proposed an explicit provision which prohibits to work for several employers belonging to the same group as the original employer. GSEE asks for the provision of penalties which would be explicitly mentioned in the Law and the relevant Ministry of Labour regulation protocol.

iii. GSEE calls for intensive controls on working time to guarantee actual respect of workers right concerning working time in particular that maximum working time limits are respected for both daily and weekly hours, which cannot exceed a maximum period of four months or 48 hours on average–Including overtime.

iv. GSEE also wants that flexible working contracts could only be used to cover exceptional needs, so as not to undermine access to permanent jobs. They should not exceed 10% of the employees in a company and set a maximum time reference of 15 days.

v. The working hours within the reference period should be limited to a minimum of 24 hours per week with the parties only being able to specify a greater number of working hours than the minimum hours specified by law or any additional hours specified by the parties. 1/2 of these hours should be paid even if in case the employers does not call for. No derogations to the law provisions should be admitted. Any agreement between the parties that establish a lower number of paid hours than the ½ specified by law should be considered null and void by law.

vi. In case the employee request amending the working contract, according to a GSEE demand, the bill should provide that the employer, in case of refusal, uniformly for all enterprises, should provide a reasoned response in writing within 15.

vii. On the pre-declaration of modification of working hours in enterprises that have joined the electronic work card system, the rule of pre-declaration of work before the start of the modification should be maintained as this is the only way for effective control by labour inspectors.

viii. On the withdrawal of Article 21 which allows the employer to terminate an employment contract unilaterally if it exceeds 50 days, GSEE proposed for the decision to be taken after a court decision in case of justified absence of an employee.

ix. The proposal of the GSEE aims to is to organically bring the Labour Inspectorate back under the control of the Ministry of Labour. The possibility of a sixth day of work, should be determined be done by a decision of the Supreme Labour Council, which will decide if there is an inability to find qualified personnel or an unforeseen workload.

Deterioration of working time arrangements

The new law brings about significant changes to working time, promoting greater and legitimizing deviations from standard working hours. These include:

- Allowing multiple or parallel employment, even under the same employer
- Adding a sixth workday for companies operating on a five-day system, with a prohibition on additional work (overtime) on that day and a 40% increase in pay for the 6th day.
- Extending exceptions to the Sunday work rule and permitting employers to individually arrange an employee's working hours.
- Granting companies using the digital working card system, exemption from declaring changes in staff working hours, provided changes are recorded on the employee's digital card. Failure to identify changes during inspections results in a fine of EUR 10,500 per employee, although the cross-checking method is unspecified.

For GSEE, the reference point for full-time work remains the 40-hour workweek, established by the 1975 Collective Agreement. Meanwhile, the definition of working time should be aligned with Directive 93/104/EC and its subsequent amendments, which serve as the basis for working time regulations. The Revised European Social Charter, ratified in Greece by Law 4359/2016, links the adoption of reasonable working hours to increased productivity and enterprise profit rates.

According to GSEE:

- The new provisions do not align with the Directive at all and are tools for further labor flexibility, individualisation of labour relations and avoiding overtime pay.
- They expand of managerial prerogatives in individual employment contracts, allowing deviation from legal norms, which is a contentious issue.
- Working time and conditions should be determined through sectoral or collective agreements, respecting existing legal provisions, rather than relying on individual contracts.
- The concept of worker "consent" is problematic due to the unequal power dynamics between workers and employers, particularly in precarious work situations.

While strongly opposing the new Bill, GSEE is undertaking all legal supervisory avenues available at the national, European and International levels, including the ILO to settle the dispute.

ETUC Austerity Watch #5 (4 November 2025)

Contribution by GSEE

BUDGETARY/FISCAL measure: Adopted/under implementation

MEASURE: Targeting high primary surpluses & restrictive fiscal stance. The 2025 State Budget is predicated on the permanent achievement of primary surpluses (approx. 2.5% of GDP), together with a strict expenditure path and constraints on new spending initiatives. GSEE assessment: The combination of (a) sustained public primary surpluses supported by increased revenues, (b) stagnant real wages, and (c) a fragile private balance sheet creates a pattern of “private austerity”: reduced liquidity for consumption/investment, greater exposure to borrowing or negative saving, and, consequently, a contraction of domestic demand and of wage margins. This is the channel through which high primary surpluses shift the burden to the private sector. Lack of tripartite dialogue.

MEASURE: Gradual zeroing of horizontal electricity subsidies. The government terminated horizontal electricity tariffs/subsidies as of 12/2023–2024, maintaining only targeted support for vulnerable groups. The impact is that it Increases the net energy expenditure of households and SMEs, compressing the disposable income of wage earners and small professionals. GSEE does not endorse the early withdrawal of horizontal subsidies without sufficient price de-escalation and without strengthening targeted measures and regulatory safeguards—due to the risk for disposable income and for poverty/energy poverty. Lack of tripartite dialogue.

ECONOMIC measure: Planned/announced

MEASURE: Promoted privatisations/asset concessions of ports & infrastructures. Calls for tenders/asset exploitation plans for Greek ports and continuation of privatisation/concession schemes for regional infrastructures. It alters the terms of provision of services of general interest; risk of increases in fees/prices and upending of labour relations in port activities. GSEE advocates maintaining the public character with full and stable employment—supports the mobilisation of workers in response to the relevant policies and highlights risks for service quality and for working conditions.

SOCIAL measure:

MEASURE — Law 5053/2023 (labour): six-day work, "flexibility," — Adopted/in force from 2024.It permits work on a sixth day in sectors operating on a five-day basis; provides for working-time arrangements; allows parallel employment up to 13 hours/day (in 2 employers); simplifies dismissals in the first 12 months, etc.

GSEE position is that these measures diminish protections on working time/rest and strengthen individual arrangements over collective ones—aggravation of precariousness. Calls for withdrawal/amendment of key articles and for the restoration of collective bargaining/agreements. Lack of tripartite dialogue.

MEASURE — "Fair Work for All: Simplification of Legislation – Support for the Worker – Protection in Practice" (Ministry of Labour, 2025) — Planned/announced.

A Draft law simplifies declarations in ERGANI II (Greece's national online employment information system, operated by the Ministry of Labour) and promotes zero-hour contracts; regulates overtime; extends employment up to 13 hours/day (in 1 employer).

Impact: expanding daily working time and flexibilising overtime shift regulation from the collective to the individual level, increasing risks of overwork and bargaining asymmetry; reducing bureaucracy without adequate inspection safeguards, may further undermine the de facto protection of working time/rest. Lack of tripartite dialogue.

GSEE denounces the withdrawal of provisions on working time (working-time "arrangements"/13 hours). Calls for a nationwide 24-hour strike (1/10/2025) demanding the withdrawal of the contentious provisions and a reduction of weekly hours (target 37.5 hours) as a basis for job quality, stressing that the promoted policy weakens collective regulation and increases precariousness. GSEE calls for the restoration of collective bargaining/agreements. (…)

Italy

ETUC Austerity Watch # 3 (2 November 2023)

(…)

Reform of the Code on Public Procurement (DL 36/2023)

The Reform affects all relevant legislation in an organic and widespread way, with strong criticalities from the point of view of workers' rights, transparency of tender assignments without ensuring effective speed and control over the quality of public works and services.

The New Code provides an opening for pirate collective bargaining by leaving excessive freedom for companies to enforce unrepresentative collective bargaining agreements that harm workers' protections.

UIL, CGIL and CISL have mobilized to demand legislative changes and have worked with The National Anticorruption Authority to prepare improved guidelines.

The government shows no intention to accept any of the proposals coming from the confederal unions (UIL, CGIL and CISL). (…)

Joint Contribution from CGIL-UIL (Italy) to the ETUC EXCO of December 2023

CGIL and UIL have decided to call for a **mobilisation to change the Budget Law and the economic and social policies of the Italian Government.** The mobilisation included a call of strikes (8 hours or for the entire shift) with demonstrations to be organised on a territorial and regional basis to support the demands included in the joint trade union platforms and to raise public awareness on the serious failures of the Budget Law as presented by the Government. There has been no social dialogue on its contents and all demands of change have been unheard, so the mobilisation is the only way left to make workers' voice heard. CGIL and UIL also demand the Government and local institutions to urgently act on wages, collective agreements, precariousness and industrial policies, workplace safety, taxation, social security and pension revaluation, education and healthcare, necessary to reduce inequalities and relaunch growth. The mobilization has been structured as follows: On Friday 17 November, 8 hours or full shift of strike for all workers in the Central Regions. Furthermore, on the same day, transport and public services workers went on strike for 8 hours (or an entire shift) in the whole country. Sicily went on strike on November 20th, while Sardinia on the 27th. On Friday 24 November, the 8 hours or entire shift of strike affected all workers in the Northern Regions. Finally, on Friday 1 December, all workers from the Southern Regions went on strike for 8 hours or for the entire shift. The demonstrations and rallies were organised at province or regional level.

Contribution CISL (Italy) to the ETUC EXCO of October 2025

(…)

In terms of the national context, the CISL is taking a number of steps to request that the government open negotiations on various key issues, particularly the budget law and pension reform. The aim is to sign a more general tripartite deal as part of a new social pact to address the complex situation. At the same time, we continue to actively support the demands of the Congress, including the implementation of the law on worker participation at company level, obtaining the right to territorial bargaining in the absence of company bargaining, establishing an investment fund to enhance and protect savings, reforming the tax system to be more fair, creating a statute to manage labour market transitions and managing various disputes involving workers in our country. We are also working to renew collective agreements affecting approximately 2.5 million workers in the private and public sectors.

ETUC Austerity Watch #5 (4 November 2025)

Contribution by UIL

BUDGETARY/FISCAL measure: Adopted/under implementation

The 2025 Budget Law imposed stricter deficit targets with cuts in health, local authority budgets, and hiring freezes in public administration. One striking reduction in social spending was in the area of public pensions, where the inflation adjustment mechanism determined cuts for pensioners with pension allowances above certain thresholds (around 2.394,84 euro monthly). In the same matter, early retirement has been deeply penalized (Quota 103, Opzione donna, Ape sociale) by reducing the amount of the allowances up to less 30%. These measures deeply affect workers as they make the ordinary retirement by fulfilling the retirement age condition the only viable solution to avoid losing a great deal of their accumulated pensions, binding them to stay at work longer and preventing a necessary turnover in the public administration. UIL has strongly advocated against those measures requesting a dialogue with the government to amplify flexible options for retirement and guarantee adequate pensions for workers. This dialogue on pensions has froze for over two years and no space for discussion is available at the moment.

ECONOMIC measure: Planned/announced

The government announced in 2024 the intention to sell a further ~29.26% of its shares in Poste Italiane, the Italian post office company which has been already partially privatised, between 2025-2027, reducing state ownership while keeping a minority stake. This measure has been momentarily put on halt. Financial analysis of Poste Italiane shows how the company is solid and generates dividends every year, at the benefit of the stocks held by the State. UIL argues that Poste Italiane is a crucial public service with social functions—ensuring accessibility (especially in rural/remote areas), universal delivery, and service to elderly or low-density communities—that could be undermined by profit-driven models. Uil, through its sectorial representation, has been deeply critical of this measure and has highlighted the lack of a serious dialogue with trade unions, showing concerns relative to the safekeeping of jobs and the risks of leaving such an important company in the hands of private actors.

SOCIAL measure: Adopted/under implementation

Recent social policy changes—such as replacing the Citizenship Income with the Inclusion Allowance (ADI)—have hurt many low-income households, depriving Italy from having an universal minimum income scheme. The new ADI is a sectorial measure, aimed only at households with certain conditions, narrowing eligibility and reducing support for many unemployed and poor households. ISTAT (2025) confirms that ADI, combined with tax reforms, had limited impact on equity, with the Gini index worsening slightly (30.25 → 30.40). Poverty risk reached 23.1% of population. Many who previously received RdC are excluded from ADI (e.g. single adults without children, precarious workers). The measure disproportionately affects southern regions and vulnerable groups, such as immigrant household, worsening material deprivation and access to basic rights. By cutting income support without strengthening active labour policies, ADI leaves precarious and long-term unemployed workers without adequate protection. the government has proceeded largely unilaterally, ignoring union proposals for a broader, more inclusive welfare design. UIL strongly opposes the dismantling of RdC, and it demands the restoration of a universal minimum income scheme ensuring coverage for all in poverty, not just restricted categories, as well as proper integration of ADI with real active labour market policies, training, and personalized support. The government has proceeded largely unilaterally, ignoring union proposals for a broader, more inclusive welfare design

Contribution by CISL

Description of the BUDGETARY/FISCAL measure : Excessively prudent fiscal policies

At the request of the CISL, measures to reduce the tax burden on low and middle incomes have been made structural and adequately financed. According to the Parliamentary Budget Office the reduction of the tax wedge is one of the measures that improve economic well-being and help to reduce net income inequality. The CISL believes that further steps need to be taken to further reduce inequality and increase wages and pensions. There are categories that are structurally more exposed to the risk of poverty among the employed: foreigners (22.6%), single people (12.7%) and couples with three or more children (21.7%)

Adequate investment and increased public spending are needed to address the digital, green and demographic transitions already underway in our societies in a fair manner; this is, in fact, prevented by the current European Stability and Growth Pact, which needs to be radically reformed.

- Disposal of public infrastructure or state assets of social interest: one disposal that raises concerns is the sale by TIM of NetCo (telephone network) to KKR (American investment fund) on

1 July 2024 (transfer of the fixed network and wholesale activities to FiberCop and subsequent acquisition of FiberCop by a KKR company)

- Pursuit of public debt cuts at the expense of investment and growth: the implementation of the rules of the new European Stability and Growth Pact could lead to a contraction in support for investment and growth, also due to the phasing out of the Next Generation EU programme.

Reduction in social spending: according to ISTAT, social spending/GDP has remained high over the last five years, but is expected to decline slightly in 2023 after peaking during the pandemic.

– Introduction of non-progressive tax reforms: the CISL does not agree with the flat tax planned for self-employed workers.

ECONOMIC measure:

Reduction in the quantity or quality of public services. CISL union is concerned about the future of public healthcare. Some data released by ISTAT suggest that we are seeing the first signs of a decline. One cause for concern is the decrease in the number of hospital beds per 1,000 inhabitants in the decade 2010-2020 (from 4.1 to 3.9 per 1,000), which is an indicator of a contraction in hospital provision (albeit with regional differences). The Court of Auditors also points to critical issues in the measures taken to reduce post-Covid waiting lists, indicating that the interventions have not produced decisive and uniform results; at the same time, there has been an increase between 2022 and 2023 in the number of people giving up due to waiting lists and economic reasons. Furthermore, in 2024, approximately 1 in 10 people (9.9%) gave up specialist visits/examinations; the main cause was waiting lists (6.8%), followed by costs (5.3%). This is a deterioration compared to 2023 (7.6%) and 2019 (6.3%).

Local public transport is also a cause for concern: ISTAT reports a certain decline in supply in provincial capitals (seats-km per inhabitant) and even more marked disparities in the South. Many companies in the sector in the South are in deep financial crisis and unable to provide an acceptable level of service.

Finally, there is a pressing need for investment in water infrastructure. Water losses during the supply phase average 41.8% and 17.9 m^3/km/day: although these indicators show a slight improvement on 2016, they point to structural problems in service quality (continuity, losses), with performance once again worse in the South.

– Liberalisation of market sectors or suboptimal regulation of strategic economic sectors: as is well known, Italy lags behind in various areas of liberalisation. Where privatisation has taken place, it has not always had a positive impact on workers and consumers. In this regard, it is worth noting the recent intervention by the Competition Authority, which imposed a maximum fine of over €936 million on six oil companies for restrictive agreements on the “bio component” of fuel prices.

SOCIAL measure:

Wage moderation, including cuts or freezes in civil servants’ salaries. To date, real wages have not yet returned to the levels seen at the beginning of 2021.The 2025–27 negotiation cycle is expected to be completed, which will make additional resources available to civil servants and bring the negotiation cycle back to normal. Both inflation on frequently purchased goods (which is about double the average) and the phenomenon of fiscal drainage, which has eroded part (or more than all, for many) of the benefits of IRPEF reforms and contractual increases, have had a net negative effect on real income, especially for employees and pensioners.

Inhibition of collective bargaining, particularly at sectoral or multi-employer level: there is no inhibition of collective bargaining. Rather, there is a political desire to interfere in the setting of wages both through hard measures (the setting of a legal minimum wage) and through soft measures.

Reduction of public pensions and solidarity in the public pension pillar: thanks in part to the action of the CISL trade union over the last three years, pension equalisation has been "secured" on a technical level and is now more targeted towards low pensions. The 2025 Budget Law also provided for an additional increase for pensions equal to or below the minimum pension: +2.2% in 2025 (and +1.3% in 2026), in addition to the ordinary indexation. This is a "qualitative" improvement because it concentrates resources on the lowest pensions

Reduction in subsidies and income protection for people in need: in 2024, the citizen's income (Rdc) was replaced by two measures introduced by Decree Law 48/2023: the inclusion allowance (ADI) and support for training and work (SFL). The numerical coverage of transfers has been reduced compared to the RdC, a sign of a more selective and categorical system; at the same time, there is a growing emphasis on active policies, which are still weak in Italy. It is also essential that the public-private network of employment services works in close coordination with social and health services given that many long-term unemployed people are highly marginalised and psychologically and socially fragile.

Reforms of labour law, social security and social protection: there have been no structural changes in labour market regulation. Attempts have been made to adequately regulate fixed-term contracts, strengthening the role of collective bargaining in defining the types of employment covered by such contracts. Thanks to the PNRR, large-scale active policies have been trialed in Italy for the first time. However, there is a lack of monitoring of the impact of this major experiment which is being managed by the regions in a patchy manner.

Replacement of stable jobs with precarious forms of employment: In 2023, the incidence of fixed-term employees on the total workforce will fall to 16.0% (–0.8 p.p. vs 2022), while in the second quarter of 2025, fixed-term employees will decrease further (–7.7% year-on-year) compared to the growth in permanent employees (+1.9%). Flow data confirm that there is no increase in precarious employment; on the contrary, conversions to permanent contracts are on the rise and temporary work is also declining. (…)

Contribution CGIL (Italy) to the ETUC EXCO of November 2025

(…) On 25 October, the "Democracy at Work" demonstration was held in Rome, attended by over 200,000 people and featuring an address by Luc Triangle, General Secretary of the ITUC. The event was organised as an initial response to the government's new budget law — described by CGIL as an austerity and rearmament plan — which includes cuts in social spending and a €23 billion increase in military expenditure.

CGIL demands that public resources be directed towards healthcare, education, long-term care, housing, and social policies. It calls for taxation of great wealth and a determined fight against tax evasion. The union rejects the generalised flat tax and fiscal amnesties, and calls for the restoration to workers and pensioners of the income lost through fiscal drag, as well as the renewal of public and private sector contracts, tax relief on wage increases, the introduction of a minimum wage, a law on representation, and fair remuneration for self employed and professional workers.

CGIL also stresses the need to combat precariousness, low pay and exploitation. The new budget law would again raise the retirement age — already among the highest in Europe.

The 2026 budget contains no real industrial policies, no measures to create jobs, and no credible strategy for the energy, environmental and technological transition, nor for sustainable development in the South. The union also demands stronger measures to ensure health and safety at work and to combat bogus contracts and abusive subcontracting.

Equally worrying is the sharp decline in electoral participation — in the latest regional elections, less than half of eligible voters cast their ballots — alongside growing propaganda and open attacks by members of the government and ruling parties against journalists, the judiciary, civil society and the trade unions.

In 2024, Italian industry's turnover fell by €42 billion compared with 2023 — a loss of €115 million per day — with a decline of 2.5% in real terms and 3.6% in nominal terms. The fall was driven mainly by weaker domestic demand (-3%), while exports dropped by 1.7%. Ten out of fifteen industrial sectors were affected. Bankruptcy proceedings in 2024 rose by 17.2% compared with the previous year.

Undeclared and irregular work reached record levels in 2023, with an estimated value of €198 billion (+8.2%, or +€15 billion compared to 2022) and involving 3.13 million workers (+4.9%, or +145,000). Employment growth has been concentrated among those over 50, as the population ages and the retirement age increases, while younger generations remain on the margins: the employment rate for 15–24-year-olds fell from 20.3% in 2022 to 17.6% in 2025, while inactivity rose from 74.2% to 78.2%.

The government's policies are worsening the living and working conditions of the vast majority of people — affecting workers, pensioners, young people and women alike. For this reason, CGIL convened a major assembly in Florence on 7 November, bringing together over 3,000 delegates, and announced a general strike against the government's economic measures for 12 December 2025.

Contribution CGIL (Italy) to the ETUC EXCO of March 2026

The social and economic situation in Italy remains worrying. At the end of 2025, the employment rate showed a decline, despite the mechanism of including holders of very short-term contracts (even of a few days) in the "employed" category. GDP growth is also decidedly modest, more than one point lower than the European average – which is already lower than in other areas of the world. The government continues to fail to provide answers on these issues or to plan measures in consultation with the social partners. Its "priorities" are limited to "security packages" that call into question democratic and trade union freedoms and the promotion of a "reform" of the judicial system that would effectively place the judiciary under the control of the government.

The CGIL is working with a vast network of associations and movements to oppose the government's initiatives. The CGIL is one of the main promoters of the "NO" referendum committee against the judicial reform: the referendum will take place on 22 and 23 March, when Italian citizens will be called upon to approve or reject what is the first real major "political reform" of the Meloni government.

With regard to gender-based violence, the government has refused to introduce the key concept of "consent" into the current legislation to define cases of rape: on 28 February, the CGIL and numerous associations took to the streets in Rome to protest against this shameful and regressive interpretation.

The intensification of ongoing conflicts around the world is increasing social and economic instability; the European Union continues to fail to implement autonomous diplomatic policies or to consider joint investments for development and employment, including the instrument of common debt: on these issues, the CGIL has proposed initiatives, seminars and debates at both national and regional level in recent months. (…)

Contribution CGIL (Italy) to the ETUC EXCO of May 2026

The social and economic situation in Italy is becoming increasingly dire. At the beginning of 2026, GDP growth is projected to be no more than 0.5%, and employers' associations themselves are expressing grave concern. The government's economic measures have caused Italy to once again exceed the 3% deficit/GDP ceiling, thus forcing the country to remain in the excessive deficit infringement procedure. According to ISTAT data, approximately 6 million people (over 2 million families) are living in poverty, equal to approximately 10% of the population. Given the 3% threshold, however, the next economic and fiscal measures are expected to continue to focus on cutting public spending, rather than on development investments or redistribution.

In this context, the government appears politically weakened. The Constitutional referendum on the so-called "justice reform" was rejected by a large majority of over 14 million votes. The reform was promoted with the aim of placing the judiciary under the government's political control. CGIL has been part of the committee to oppose the referendum and invites its members to vote against. After the referendum rejection, there have been a series of resignations by ministers and government officials due to personal interests (including business involvement with criminal organizations). The government is no longer capable of proposing the structural reforms Italy needs and is currently limiting itself to reintroducing "security" measures aimed at restricting the space for demonstrations and democratic dissent.

As it does every year, the government has presented a so-called "jobs package" for May Day, without any formal and substantive consultation with the social partners, but by identifying the stakeholders to be consulted informally without any principle of true representation.

This "package," as usual, contains no benefits for workers, and is once again limited to redistributing money to business. It fails to consider the decline in purchasing power of wages, fails to introduce a minimum hourly wage, and fails to address the issue of workplace safety linked to the subcontracting chain. It makes no attempt to address the excessive tax burden on employees and retirees, nor does it eliminate the illegal contracts often signed by the yellow unions.

Against this inaction by the Government CGIL will start collective signatures to table 2 popular initiative draft bills.

The first concerns the right to health and the defence of public healthcare. With this proposal, we want at least 7.5% of GDP to be allocated to public healthcare, an end to outsourcing and the hiring of precarious workers in the sector, and structural interventions to reduce waiting lists and build a true home care system.

The second addresses the sub-contracting chain. With this proposal, we want everyone doing the same work, along the same subcontracting chain, to have the same salary, the same rights, and the same contract—even eliminating the use of bogus self-employed workers. Regarding workplace safety, we ask that responsibility remain with the client; the same applies to violations and abuses of workers' wages and rights. We ask that there be a limit on the number of possible subcontracts, and that these be undertaken only after genuine discussions with the social partners.

From mid-May, the CGIL will collect signatures for these two popular legislative proposals.

Once completed, they will be placed on the parliamentary agenda, and we will ask political parties to discuss and approve them. (…)

Contribution CISL (Italy) to the ETUC EXCO of May 2026

On 1 May, the 'Labour' Decree came into force in Italy, containing key provisions that address the demands put forward by the CISL in recent weeks. One of the most significant of these is the establishment of a contractual threshold for decent pay. In essence, this establishes that a decent wage is one that is set out in collective agreements.

This threshold is exclusively linked to the pay rates set out in national collective bargaining agreements (CCNL) signed by the most representative trade unions (CGIL, CISL and UIL). This mechanism acts as a safeguard against 'pirate bargaining' and cut-price contracts that result in underpayment and exploitation. It gives concrete form to Article 36 of the Constitution by establishing a clear benchmark for decent work.

This approach eliminates the risks we had previously highlighted regarding an enabling act that designated the 'most widely applied' contracts as the remuneration benchmark. This would have turned the pathological practice of contractual dumping into a legal standard and legitimised 'pirate contracts' simply because they were widespread among firms seeking to cut labour costs.

Furthermore, paragraph 6 of Article 7 of the decree introduces a mandatory requirement for employers to indicate the applicable collective agreement using the alphanumeric code assigned by the CNEL, linking it to remuneration and the contractual level. This provision institutionalises contractual transparency, preventing a discrepancy between the contract formally declared and the one actually applied to the worker, which has been the breeding ground for dumping.

A second element is linking public incentives to employment quality, which gives concrete form to the principle of social conditionality in the use of public funds. The decree allocates around one billion euros to incentivise the recruitment of young people, women, and workers in Special Economic Zones (SEZs), thereby linking public resources exclusively to companies that implement contracts signed by the most representative social partners. Contribution exemptions aimed at converting fixed-term contracts into permanent employment are encouraged, as are measures to strengthen protections for gig economy workers (e.g. delivery riders).

For the CISL, these measures must form part of a comprehensive strategy within a framework of a 'responsibility agreement', in which the government, trade unions and businesses cooperate on reforms and investments to boost wages and productivity; reducing the tax burden on labour and pensions to support purchasing power; and improving workplace safety. This is a non-negotiable priority requiring more inspections, prevention, and a widespread culture of safeguarding life that moves beyond emergency response.

Contribution UIL (Italy) to the ETUC EXCO of June 2026

UIL Note on the recent Labour Decree

The labour decree approved last week in Italy contains important new measures on wages, which also represent the result of the struggles and mobilisations promoted in recent years by the Italian confederal trade unions. UIL has played a central role in this battle, organising three general strikes and numerous sectoral mobilisations to oppose the loss of workers' purchasing power, contractual dumping and the spread of so-called "pirate collective agreements".

For the first time, the principle of a "fair wage" is explicitly regulated. The decree directly refers to Article 36 of the Italian Constitution and states that a fair wage must be determined through national collective bargaining.

The central reference point are the national collective agreements signed by the comparatively most representative trade union organisations at national level, namely CGIL, CISL and UIL, whose minimum economic standards become the benchmark for all other collective agreements, which cannot provide for lower economic conditions than those established by the most representative agreements signed by CGIL, CISL and UIL.

This is a highly significant political and social step, as it introduces a principle aimed at combating contractual dumping and so-called "pirate contracts" signed by non representative organisations, which have contributed to lowering wages and workers' rights.

This principle also directly affects particularly negative experiences, such as the agreement signed by UGL food delivery sector, which reintroduced piecework mechanisms and highly penalising organisational models for workers, effectively legitimising practices close to exploitation.

The decree also introduces specific conditionalities for access to public incentives for companies, establishing that such benefits are linked to the application of collective agreements signed by the most representative trade union organisations.

For UIL, the principle of a fair wage and the conditionality linked to access to public incentives represent a first step in the right direction. In recent weeks, the most representative trade union and employers' organisations in Italy have been negotiating an agreement on representation criteria, aimed at building a transparent and shared system capable of measuring the real representativeness of trade union and employers' organisations. UIL is calling on the Government to implement this agreement through supporting legislation, in order to establish an effective representation measurement system capable of definitively putting an end to the risk of organisations without genuine representativeness signing dumping collective agreements at the expense of workers.

UIL is also calling for the development of trade union democracy mechanisms that would allow all workers, in all companies and regardless of company size, to freely vote in the workplace to elect their trade union representatives. At present, a fully structured system of direct representation elections exists only in the public sector, while in the private sector this right is still not generally guaranteed.

UIL also criticises the measures identified by the Government to encourage the renewal of expired collective agreements, considering them insufficient and ineffective. In our view, more binding and incisive mechanisms were needed, capable of penalising companies that continue to apply expired agreements without renewing them and of guaranteeing workers the recovery of at least part of the purchasing power lost due to inflation. Without genuinely effective measures, there is a risk that the costs of delayed contract renewals and rising living costs will continue to be borne by workers.

UIL will therefore continue to support, also at European level, the central role of collective bargaining, the fight against wage and contractual dumping, the protection of decent work and the need to strengthen trade union democracy through clear and effective representation rules.

Norway

Contribution from LO-NO (Norway) to the ETUC EXCO of March 2022

In October 2020 the Norwegian government proposed a **new law that would make wage theft punishable.** The original proposal intended that wage theft should be punishable ETUC/EC/251/EN/04 17 according to the labour act.

After pressure from LO in Norway this was changed, and it's now punishable by criminal law instead. The parliament proposed to strengthen the law further. One proposal was in relation to workers who are tricked or pressured into contracts as self-employed. This is a common way of circumventing wages in areas where minimum wages are applicable. These practices needed to be punishable as wage theft as well. Furthermore, LO proposed that gross negligence that contributes to wage theft also should be punishable by the wage theft law.

In the consultation process, LO pointed out that when it comes to economic forms of criminality, negligence should be considered a punishable offence, such as negligent fencing/pandering, negligent money laundering and gross negligent fraud. The public prosecutor also pointed out that including negligence as an offence would make it easier to target employers who uses such tactics. The government also proposed giving the Labor Inspection Authority the opportunity to instruct an employer to pay what he owes his employees. The Labor Inspection Authority was, before the new law, only allowed to instruct the employer to correct the error so that it would be the correct salary in the future. The parliament also proposed to introduce such an instruction and to make it applicable to suppliers and subcontractors who are covered by joint and several liability, according to the law on general application of collective agreements. The law came into effect the 1st of January 2022.

Joint Contribution LO-N, Unio and YS (Norway) to the ETUC EXCO of November 2025

2025 parliament elections in Norway

Norway held its parliamentary elections September 8th this year. The center-left retained its majority in the parliament with 88 seats of 169 seats. The Labour Party became the largest party with 28 percent of the votes (53 seats). An increase of 1.8 percent compared to the previous parliament elections. The right-wing populist party, The Progress Party, became the second largest party in the elections after their best election result in the party's 52 years of existence. The Progress Party received 23.8 percent of the votes (47 seats). An increase of 12.2 percent compared to the last parliament elections. The Conservative Party was one of the biggest losers in the election losing 5.7 percent compared to the last election and ending up with 14.6 percent (24 seats).

The Labour Party will continue as a sole party in a minority government. This means that the Labour Party will in most cases depend on the four other parties on the center-left to reach majority. These are the Socialist Left Party (5.6 percent – 9 seats), the Center Party (5.6 percent – 9 seats), the Red Party (5.3 percent – 9 seats) and the Green Party (4.7 percent – 8 seats). The biggest loser in the center-left majority was the Center Party (the old Farmers Party) who lost 7.9 percent of its votes and went from 13.5 to 5.6 percent.

The fact that the Labour Party will need to negotiate with four other parties in the parliament will create new challenges for the minority government. This could prove to be particularly difficult on issues concerning the EU and EEA-agreement. The Center Party and the Red Party are firmly against both EU membership and the EEA agreement. The Socialist Left Party is against EU membership but have more recently taken a more conciliatory approach to the EEA agreement as long as important policies at national level can be advanced. The Green Party is the only party on the center-left who is outspoken in favor of Norwegian EU membership. The Labour Party congress earlier this year voted on a proposal to explore the possibility for EU membership but decided that the timing for this wasn't right. In August this year an opinion poll showed that 55 percent was against EU membership, 33 percent in favor and 12 percent doesn't know. The support for the EEA agreement is consistently above 60 percent.

The increased support for the Progress Party is partly explained by its support among young men. As many as 35 percent of all men under the age of 35 said they would vote for the party. Most political parties on the center-left are more popular among women except for the Center Party. Another important explanation for the Progress Party's increase is that 56 percent of the voters support the Party's specific policy choices and only 16 percent support their ideology. Of the specific policy choices, 60 percent support stronger measures against immigration, 47 percent lower taxes, 34 percent stricter criminal and justice policies, 26 percent better conditions for the industries and 25 percent support a smaller public sector.

The Labour Party government have so far signaled some of their main priorities for the next four years. Among many priorities the following can by highlighted:

- Strengthen tripartite-cooperation and contribute to increasing the trade union density (both nationally and in their foreign policy)
- Safeguard the sick-pay law in Norway
- Strengthen the right to full time work, especially in the health care sector in Norway
- Strengthen workers' rights and wages in Norwegian seas and in aviation
- Include the ILO core conventions into the national human rights law
- Maintain strong support for Ukraine, including support to military and civilian goals, and better integration of Ukrainian refugees into the Norwegian labour market
- Support for trade union leaders and human rights defenders in need of protection • Increase the support for building of new houses in Norway with the aim of at least 130 000 new houses within 2030.

Portugal

Contribution UGT-P (Portugal) to the ETUC EXCO of October 2022

A TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT THAT HAS A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON THE 2023 AND 2026 STATE BUDGETS A SIGN OF CONFIDENCE FOR WORKERS –

UGT signed, on October 9th, the tripartite Medium Term Agreement for the Improvement of Income, Salaries and Competitiveness. It is a good starting point, as it brings guarantees of fairer distribution of the country's wealth and inspires confidence in the progressive improvement of workers' living conditions.

UGT strove to negotiate an Agreement, aiming mainly at valuing workers' wages, guaranteeing an increase of not less than 20% of the average income per worker in 2026 and the necessary convergence with the goals of the European Union. Thus, with this Agreement, it will be possible:

1. A nominal valuation of remunerations per employee distributed as follows: 2023 +5,1% 2024 +4,8% 2025 +4,7% 2026 +4,6%
2. Continued rise of the national minimum wage (NMW) during the legislature. Appreciation of 6% in 2022, 7.8% in 2023, reaching €900 in 2026. In four years the NMW will have an increase of 27.6%.
3. The annual update of the IRS (personal income tax) scales, based on the valuation criterion of remuneration, in order to ensure the tax neutrality of salary adjustments.
4. The relief of the progressive IRS taxation, in order to guarantee greater tax justice and relief on labour income.
5. The value increase of the tax-exempt meal allowance, whether paid in cash or on card, with limits of €5.20 and €8.32 respectively.
6. Boosting collective bargaining by establishing a 50% increase in the corporate income tax costs with wage appreciation for companies raising wages in line with, or above, the amounts set in this Agreement. These companies will have to guarantee a dynamic collective bargaining, that is, updated for less than 3 years.
7. Increasing the payment of overtime work: from 100 hours onwards this type of work will be paid at pre-Troika amounts. These amounts have a halved personal income tax deduction at source.
8. Increasing the compensation for collective dismissal or dissolution of the job, from 12 to 14 days.

9. The youth income tax increase with a 50% annual benefit increase in the first year, 40% in the second, 30% in the third and fourth years and 20% in the fifth.
10. Supporting the hiring of qualified young people with a salary equal to or higher than €1,320. UGT and its affiliated union organisations welcome the valorisation of Social Dialogue, since it is through Social Dialogue that effective results are achieved for workers.

In the current context of uncertainty, UGT will always be committed to complementing the results obtained from this Agreement by monitoring the implementation of the Agreement, by participating actively in the negotiation rounds, ensuring their correct implementation, but also through the continuous valorization of collective bargaining!

Slovenia

ETUC Statement in Solidarity with Slovenian Trade Unions and Workers (adopted by ETUC EXCO 20 May 2026)

The ETUC strongly condemns the first measures adopted by the incoming Slovenian government, which threaten workers' rights, social protection, public services and social dialogue. Laws affecting working people have been pushed through without proper consultation, public debate or respect for social dialogue and social partners, undermining democratic standards and the European social model.

The proposed reforms would make it easier to dismiss older workers, expand precarious employment, weaken social protection and open the door to healthcare privatisation, while tax changes favour the wealthy over workers, pensioners and low- and middle-income households. These measures risk deepening inequality and reviving austerity policies.

In a country located at the heart of important European cross-border regions, any weakening of labour rights and social protection risks also affecting cross-border and mobile workers, undermining the principle of free movement based on equal treatment, effective rights, fair social security protection and full respect for social dialogue.

The ETUC fully supports Slovenian trade unions in their democratic campaign for a referendum against these harmful reforms. We are also deeply alarmed by retaliatory proposals targeting trade unions, including attempts to abolish the check-off system for union membership fees, clearly aimed at weakening organised labour.

The check-off system is a practical instrument that enables workers to effectively exercise their freedom of association and allows trade unions to remain financially independent and capable of representing workers. The ETUC joins with Slovenian trade unions and stresses that undermining this system would seriously weaken trade union rights and the Slovenian industrial relation system, create unnecessary obstacles to union membership, and undermine social dialogue and collective bargaining.

The ETUC stands in full solidarity with Slovenian workers and trade unions in defending labour rights, democracy and social justice. We call on the Slovenian authorities to withdraw these harmful measures, stop attacks on trade unions and engage immediately in genuine social dialogue.

Spain

Joint contribution from UGT and CCOO (Spain) to the ETUC EXCO of March 2022

In December 2021, following more than nine months of negotiations, the Spanish social partners, i. e. the majority trade unions, CCOO and UGT, and the employers' organisation CEOE, together with the government, reached an **agreement on a labour reform** that involves the repeal of key aspects of the reform carried out unilaterally by the Partido Popular (People's Party) in 2012. The reform also affects issues introduced by other reforms that had profoundly devalued labour and wage rights in Spain. This agreement is an indisputable milestone in the history of our country, as it is the result of tripartite social dialogue, it is also ambitious and represents a clear recovery and a significant improvement in workers' labour rights. The reform is based on three fundamental elements: restoring the balance and value of collective bargaining; limiting temporary contracts; and addressing internal flexibility measures as an alternative to dismissals (ERTE). Although it is not perfect, in our opinion this is the first reform that has improved labour relations in Spain in 30 years and is therefore a trade union achievement. Unfortunately, other trade union organisations that have not participated in the negotiation - because their level of representation does not allow them to be at the negotiating tables - have refused to recognise it. Both unions are of the opinion that this is a very important step but that there are still things to be done. After a “bumpy” vote, the reform was validated by Parliament on 3 February by just one vote in favour. The Popular Party and the ultra-right voted against, despite calls from employers for their support. Some of the government's investiture partners, the nationalists of Catalonia and the Basque Country (ERC and PNV), also voted against. With different arguments, at the heart of their rejection are party political motives and a clear disregard for the interests of the workers.

Another important development is the agreement reached on 9 February by the majority trade unions, UGT and CCOO, with the Spanish government to set the minimum wage (SMI) at 1,000 Euros for 14 annual payments. This increase is consistent with the **strategy of raising the minimum wage** to 60% of the average wage by the end of the legislature (2023), which would meet the recommendation of the European Social Charter.

As on previous occasions, Spanish employers' organisations opposed this increase. More than 1.8 million workers, mainly young people and women, will benefit from this increase, with the profile of the main beneficiary of the increase being a woman between 16 and 34 years old with a temporary contract working in agriculture or the service sector. In the opinion of the signatory trade unions, the increase in the SMI will help to close the gender pay gap. This agreement is a sign of the determination of CCOO and UGT to focus social dialogue on improving the living conditions of precarious workers and those in the most vulnerable situations. It now remains to finalise the collective bargaining agreement with employers to ensure sufficient wage increases to maintain workers' purchasing power despite the high levels of inflation that the rise in electricity and other energy prices have generated.

Contribution from ELA (Spain) to the ETUC EXCO of March 2022

A critical reading by ELA of the Spanish labour reform (agreed on at the social dialogue roundtable) From ELA’s point of view, the labour reform passed on the 3rd of February in Spain has been a lost opportunity to repeal the labour reforms of the Governments of Zapatero in 2010 and Rajoy in 2012, which have been so harmful for the working class, particularly the latter reform. A lost opportunity because the labour reform that has been passed has consolidated most of the previous reforms in exchange for some improvements. The agreement for the labour reform maintains intact highly detrimental aspects, amongst others:

- Dismissal compensation, decreased by the 2012 reform, is maintained; therefore dismissal continues to be as cheap as before. Consequently, behind the propaganda about the drop in temporary jobs lies the insecurity that remains in the permanent contracts.
- The need for prior administrative authorisation for collective redundancies has not been recovered.

- The salaries while undergoing dismissal procedures have also not been brought back, leaving workers immersed in a court procedure for dismissal without any remuneration.
- The temporary hiring regime has been modified, improving the identification of the causes that justify it and limiting the duration, but no steps have been established to bring an end to the fraudulent use of temporary contracts, which has always been the greatest problem.
- The field of application of the “permanent-discontinuous” contract has been extended, in such a way that in the opinion of labour experts it has become a“0 hours” contract which would allow companies to call workers in terms of their needs, without there being a minimum guaranteed working day.
- The prevalence of the State agreements has been maintained over the autonomous regional ones, meaning they can remove the possibility of improving labour conditions in lower areas. This is particularly important for us, insofar as the contents negotiated in our territory are considerably better than those negotiated on a State level. The 2012 labour reform was imposed by the Partido Popular, without any trade union participation. The two parties that form the current government included the repeal of the aforementioned reform in their electoral manifestos and also in the government agreement. However, when the moment came to repeal it, the government has not met its commitment and has given in to the demands made by the European Commission to accept the limits of the Social Dialogue framework, with this being a condition for receiving the European recovery funds. Consequently, it granted the right of veto to the CEOE employers’ association and it has lost the opportunity to completely repeal the 2012 labour reform and fulfil their promise. For all these reasons, ELA, along with other State trade union organisations, has mobilised against this labour reform and will continue to fight to repeal the reforms made by Zapatero and Rajoy.

Joint contribution from UGT and CCOO (Spain) to the ETUC EXCO of October 2022

Despite the fact that the CPI in September was 9.0%, 1.5% less than in August, inflation in Spain remains at very high levels, in line with what is happening in the rest of the EU countries. In the opinion of the UGT and CCOO, the increase in prices and inflation is largely the result of the employers' desire to maintain high company profits, which, as in fact happens in many cases, continue to increase. In this context, CCOO and UGT, in coordination with the ETUC, have launched a campaign of mobilisations that will culminate on 3 November with a large demonstration in Madrid. The aim of the campaign is, among other things, to demand that employers raise wages and unblock the negotiation of collective agreements.

The continued refusal of employers to **raise wages** and sit down to negotiate is leading to a significant increase in wage inequalities in Spain and a clear loss of purchasing power for workers. Beyond strictly labour issues, the government and the opposition, led by the conservative Popular Party, continue to fight an important battle over the fiscal model. In fact, we could be facing one of the ideological battles that will mark the roadmap of the two major parties in the upcoming elections. (…)

Joint contribution from UGT and CCOO (Spain) to the ETUC EXCO of December 2022

Since October's Exco, the UGT and CCOO have rounded off the rallies for wage **increases** on 3 November with a massive national demonstration in Madrid. Two days before, the government announced that the **minimum wage** would be increased based on the CPI, but the employers have still not sat down at the negotiating table for wage increases. CCOO and UGT will continue with this demand until the employers give way. Inflation is contained in Spain, but wages are still not reaching the equilibrium needed for the lowest incomes to cope. The unions will keep up the rallies until the lowest wages rise. With regard to legislative activity, the State's general budgets were approved with the support of the parliament's political partners. (…)

Joint Contribution from CCOO and UGT (Spain) to the ETUC Executive Committee of March 2023

On 14 February, the Spanish government approved a new **increase in the minimum wage** of 8%, which represents a 47% increase, from 735.9 Euros at the end of 2018, when the coalition government started the legislature, to 1.080 Euros for fourteen payments a year, which it has just reached. However, the amount is slightly below the demand of the trade unions, which are demanding to reach 1.100 Euros. Again, the employers' organisations have not signed the agreement reached between UGT, CCOO and the government. In any case, in 2022 wages in Spain grew by an average of 2.78% and prices by 8.4%. Despite the Iberian exception that is limiting the increase in the price of gas and other energies, the truth is that inflation is having a serious impact on working people in Spain. Increasing wages to maintain purchasing power remains a trade union priority and mobilisation to achieve it remains active.

Contribution from USO (Spain) to the ETUC EXCO of September 2023

In spite of the advances in the labour field, which are reflected in the increase in the number of people in employment, precarious employment has become chronic and the unemployment rate is still the highest in the EU.

USO wishes to emphasise that it is the type of employment available that has become more precarious, and this precariousness has become chronic: low wages have become the norm, resulting in the impoverishment of workers, many of whom, even though they have a job, live below the poverty line. Here are some facts: According to data provided by the EPA (Labour Force Survey), produced by the National Statistics Institute (INE), the unemployment rate at the end of the second quarter of 2023 reached 11.6%, double the EU rate.

Unemployment among men is 10.19%, but among women it is 13.16%. Youth unemployment among the under-25s stands at 24.87%: one in four young Spaniards is unemployed. Unemployment registered by the State Public Employment Service, in year-on-year terms, fell by 221,540. But there is a large increase in the number of job seekers with an employment relationship. These people are not officially unemployed, but inactive, not employed. They are workers in “ERE” furlough schemes or on fixed-term discontinuous contracts, with contracts in force, but no work activity. The employment data, according to the advance figures for the second quarter of this year's National Accounts, show that 20,968,500 people are employed. But in FTE terms the figure is only 19,517,600 due to the increase in part-time employment. As regards indefinite contracts, they accounted for 38.5% of new contracts signed in August.

Thus, more than 60% of contracts are still temporary, and in our opinion there continues to be abuse of contracts of less than one week: 21%, one in five. Also, as in the rest of Europe, workers have continued to lose purchasing power.

Looking at the period from 2019 to August this year, pre- and post-pandemic, workers covered by a collective bargaining agreement have lost 3.4 points of purchasing power. But, in addition, the cost of food and non-alcoholic beverages has increased by 34.3 %, more than double the agreed wage increases. The average gross monthly salary is €2,126, but the most frequent monthly gross salary is around €1,400. With a 9.3% increase in the cost of rent in the last year (which brings the average monthly rent for a flat in Spain to €952) and the increase in Euribor interest rates (which has resulted in the average mortgage payment rising by €227 per month), most workers have seen their quality of life deteriorate, losing their ability to save or even to make ends meet.

Joint Contribution from UGT-E - CCOO (Spain) to the ETUC EXCO of March 2024

Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) and the Unión General de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores (UGTE) have been calling for an overall **reduction in working time with no decrease in wages,** and have taken this issue to collective bargaining, with the result that the working week has been shortened to 38.8 hours per week under agreements reached by the organisations. In this sense, at the beginning of the new term in office, the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy announced in January 2024 a proposal to reduce working time in Spain from the current 40 to 37.5 hours per week. Both, UGT-E and CCOO, have insisted that this reduction must be included in the social dialogue agenda. Therefore, a new agenda has been created about this matter, in which they hope that an agreement will be reached with all parties, which will mean a significant change in the current productive system.

At present, there are some ongoing social dialogue roundtables. The **increase of the Minimum Interprofessional Wage** at the beginning of February by 1,134 euros in 14 payments for 2024 has already been concluded, without the agreement of the employers' organisations, a measure that affects around 2.5 million workers in Spain. The minimum wage in Spain accumulates an increase of 54% since 2018. The wage gap between women and men is still a harsh reality in Spain, standing at 18.36%, 0.36 points less than in 2020, i.e. its reduction is very slow and low despite the rise in the Minimum Interprofessional Wage. For this reason, on 8th March, the International Working Women's Day, CCOO and UGT-E will join forces once again to condemn violence against women, sexual abuse, inequality in terms of care and the persistent wage gap.

Joint Contribution from CCOO and UGT (Spain) to the ETUC EXCO June 2024

(…) The **reduction of working time** is being negotiated at the Round-Table for Social Dialogue, and we at the CCOO and UGT consider it essential to reach a tripartite agreement on this issue. Improving minimum conditions in terms of wages and working hours is fundamental to redistribute income and modify old competitive patterns based on wage devaluation, favouring companies that seek profitability through greater productivity. The data on registered unemployment and social security enrolment in May reflect a positive evolution of the labour market, with a reduction in unemployment by 58,650 people, standing at 2,607,850, the lowest figure since 2008. The number of affiliated workers increased by 220,289, reaching a record 21,321,794 people, with more than 10 million women affiliated, also an all-time high. Temporary employment remains low at 12.8%, compared to 27.1% before the labour reform, and permanent contracts represent 43% of the total, almost four times more than before the reform. This reiterates, once again, that the improvement in the quality of hiring is not a drag on employment and economic growth, as some employers claimed, but quite the opposite.

Joint Contribution CCOO-UGT (Spain) to the ETUC EXCO of October 2025

Joint contribution CCOO and UGT on the political and labour situation in Spain.

May - September 2025

This period has been marked by debate surrounding the reduction of the working week to 37.5 hours without a reduction in salary. The proposal presented in Congress was rejected in Parliament on 10 September with the right wing voting against it. UGT and CCOO trade unions have reacted in unison with rallies throughout the country and have announced that pressure will continue in the autumn if the government does not take immediate action. We welcome the announcement by the Ministry of Labour to strengthen the digital time recording system with real-time access for the Inspectorate, but we reiterate that this step does not replace the fundamental objective of reducing the maximum legal working week.

In terms of wages, following the February agreement that set the minimum wage at €1,184, the priority in collective bargaining is to consolidate increases above the CPI, ensure that they are not absorbed by supplements and extend the guarantee clauses. The evolution of the CPI in August and the rise in housing costs highlight the loss of purchasing power among broad sections of society, which is why we are stepping up our wage offensive.

The government has confirmed that talks on dismissal reform will begin in October, in line with the resolutions of the Council of Europe and the trade unions' demand to guarantee effective redress and a deterrent effect in cases of unfair dismissal. For CCOO and UGT, this is a strategic negotiation that can correct a historical deficit in our labour market.

The summer has once again highlighted the need to strengthen occupational health and safety measures. Heat waves have prompted trade union campaigns demanding breaks, adapted working hours and the recognition of heat stress as a cross-cutting occupational risk. Added to this has been a wave of large-scale forest fires that has highlighted the climate emergency and the urgent need to strengthen public services, particularly those related to civil protection, emergencies, the environment and occupational risk prevention. UGT and CCOO insist that the fight against climate change must include the strengthening of stable, quality public employment, as well as sustained investment in essential services that protect the population and the territory.

In a political context of parliamentary weakness of the Government, the trade unions maintain a firm position: to move forward in reducing working hours, improving salaries and conditions in the civil service, decisively addressing the reform of dismissal and guaranteeing effective prevention and adaptation measures in the face of the climate emergency. Trade union mobilization and technical proposals will continue to be the central tools for achieving this.

Joint contribution UGT and CCOO (Spain) to the ETUC EXCO of November 2025

The IMF has improved its forecast for Spanish GDP growth in 2025 to 2.9%, although it remains cautious regarding unemployment, debt and the deficit. However, national data show a stronger economy: unemployment at 10.3%, reduced debt and a record high of more than 22 million jobs. Spain currently leads growth among advanced economies. Policies such as the increase in the minimum wage and collective bargaining have boosted wages, consumption and employment. Nevertheless, the IMF still fails to fully recognise the progress made by the Spanish economy in recent years, undoubtedly influenced by the international economic slowdown (inflation, rising energy costs, geopolitical tensions), which could slow down job creation.

National data confirm a more robust economy, with more than 22 million people in employment and unemployment at around 10%. However, CCOO and UGT point out that 30% of the population still have wages that do not allow them to live with dignity.

Workplace accidents have risen again in our country. In the first half of 2025, there was an increase in workplace deaths, especially in construction. Both UGT and CCOO are calling for urgent reform in prevention. On 16 October, both trade unions called demonstrations in front of the headquarters of employers' organisations, considering that employers are primarily responsible for accidents at work, and calling for the work of the Social Dialogue Committee to be speeded up to update the Occupational Risk Prevention Act.

On the other hand, CCOO and UGT welcome the failure of BBVA's takeover bid for Banco Sabadell, which is a victory for employment, competition and the stability of the banking system in Spain. Mergers of this nature have not been shown to improve efficiency or competitiveness, but have led to a reduction in credit, higher service costs and greater financial exclusion. On the contrary, if it had been successful, it would have been more than likely to lead to the destruction of direct and indirect jobs, massive branch closures, a contraction in credit to SMEs and the self-employed, and a loss of real competition in the Spanish banking sector. (…)

Meanwhile, the lack of judicial neutrality in Spain continues to be a problem that affects society: the politicisation of justice is not only evident in its governing bodies, but also in the instrumentalization of the courts in partisan struggles. When court cases are selectively leaked to the media or used as weapons in public debate, the legitimacy of the judicial system is undermined. Public mistrust cannot be combated with last-minute agreements, but rather with structural reforms that shield the separation of powers. The fact that only 37% of citizens believe that the courts are "quite" or "very" independent shows that the trust lost due to political interference has not yet been regained.

In this context, the Popular Party clearly leads the right-wing bloc, and it is impossible for the left-wing bloc to overtake it now, although there could be more or less problems within the right-wing bloc if there is an excessive transfer of votes to Vox. We note our concern that Vox continues to have 18% of the vote. The latest poll by the Sociological Research Centre (CIS) places the PSOE (34.8%) as the leading political force and extends its lead to fifteen points over the PP (19.8%), which has recorded its worst result of the legislative term.

This situation is unfolding in an increasingly polarised political climate, with the main conservative party shifting towards far-right positions. The normalisation of Vox's discourse — which maintains around 18% support — affects democratic consensus and jeopardises fundamental advances in equality, social rights and civil liberties.

Contribution ELA (Spain) to the ETUC EXCO of March 2026

ELA, together with the unions LAB, Steilas, Hiru and Etxalde, has called a general strike on March 17 across Hego Euskal Herria (Basque Autonomous Community and Navarre) to demand an own Interprofessional Minimum Wage (IMW) of at least €1,500 per month, established locally. This mobilisation is a direct response to the repeated refusal of political institutions and employers to even debate this issue. Dozens of social movements and collectives (including feminist groups, pensioners' organisations, youth and migrant organisations) have publicly joined and backed the strike and its demands.

For months, Basque trade union majority has tried every avenue to open meaningful discussion on a Basque IMW — from legislative initiatives in the Basque and Navarre Parliaments to efforts to negotiate inter-professional agreements. In every case, the doors have been closed. Parliament in Navarra used legal reports to block discussion, and in the Basque Parliament the votes of the PNV, PSE, PP and Vox rejected debate, dismissing the more than 138,000 signatures supporting our Popular Legislative Initiative (ILP). Meanwhile, employer organisations have refused to negotiate on a local minimum wage.

In this regard, the unions calling the strike are initially proposing a minimum wage of €1,500 (the Spanish minimum wage is €1,221), an amount more in line with the local socio-economic reality, which should be set by the Basque Parliament and the Parliament of Navarre after the necessary amendment to Article 27 of the Workers' Statute in the Spanish Congress of Deputies to empower the autonomous communities to create their own minimum wages.

A local minimum wage of €1,500 per month and the power to establish our own IMW is not only necessary to ensure a decent standard of living — it is essential for social justice, a more equitable distribution of wealth, and the strengthening of democratic rights in Hego Euskal Herria. Establishing this wage would directly impact the most vulnerable groups, including young people, migrants, women and workers in precarious conditions. It would also set a baseline that raises wage standards across collective bargaining.

The general strike on March 17 is a collective exercise in social sovereignty — a response to the refusal of governments and employer associations to recognise our right to decide the conditions of work and life in our own territory.

Joint contribution UGT-CCOO (Spain) to the ETUC EXCO of May 2026

In the field of labour, the activity of UGT and CCOO over the last two months has been marked by the defence of the reduction of the maximum legal working day, the improvement of the control of working time, the revaluation of wages, housing, occupational health and the consolidation of a labour market that maintains a positive evolution despite the uncertain international context. Economic growth and the good evolution of employment must translate into more rights, better wages, shorter working hours and greater capacity for union intervention in the company.

One of the most relevant events of the period has been the approval of the extraordinary regularisation of migrants already residing in Spain. The law opened an exceptional process of administrative regularization whose application period began on April 16 and will run until June 30, 2026. The measure will benefit some 500,000 people, many of them already incorporated into the labour market, although in conditions of informality, administrative vulnerability and greater exposure to labour exploitation. CCOO and UGT have positively valued the measure, understanding that it is only a migration reform of a labor and democratic action of the first order that means taking employment out of the underground economy, recognizing rights, allowing contributions, improving social protection and combating abuses.

UGT and CCOO continue to work for the reduction of the working day to 37.5 hours per week without a salary reduction, maintaining political and social pressure so that the agreement reached with the Government is not blocked in the parliamentary process, insisting that it is a measure of productivity sharing, improvement of occupational health and modernization of the organization of work.

Because the data support these demands. In March 2026, Spain reached a new all-time high in Social Security affiliation, with 21,882,147 people in employment, after a monthly increase of 211,510 jobs and a year-on-year creation of 524,501 jobs. Registered unemployment fell by 22,934 people in March and stood at 2,419,712, the lowest figure for the month of March since 2008. These data show a dynamic labour market, with growth in salaried employment in almost all branches of activity and an improvement in permanent contracts, although significant inequalities persist, especially in terms of gender.

The Spanish government has launched a battery of measures to alleviate the effects of the war and prevent it from having an impact on the pockets of citizens and the most vulnerable people, our two majority unions have participated in the development of these measures through the usual social dialogue. (…)

At the same time, occupational health has occupied a central place in union intervention. UGT and CCOO have denounced the persistence of workplace accidents and have called for more demanding preventive policies, with greater business control, reinforcement of the Labour Inspectorate and real adaptation of jobs to emerging risks. During this period, both organisations have also taken an active stand in defence of public services, equality and the just transition. In April, CCOO and UGT participated in the Global Progressive Mobilisation in Barcelona, an international space for articulation against the advance of the extreme right and anti-social discourses. For UGT and CCOO it was a milestone to be able to host both the ETUC and the ITUC and all the trade union confederations that travelled to Barcelona, which reinforces the role of the European and global trade union movement in building international alliances against precariousness, xenophobia and labour deregulation.

During this period, our two unions have been mobilising against wars and for peace, in this increasingly complicated geopolitical context that affects the lives of workers, in addition to organising mass mobilisations throughout Spain on the occasion of 1 May, where trade union demands took to the streets, this time with a clamorous cry for Peace. The central demonstration took place this year in Malaga.

This accumulation of forces is linked to the preparation of the European trade union event on 18 June in Madrid, convened by the ETUC and organised jointly with the CCOO and UGT conceived as a European trade union response for decent wages, quality jobs, social investment and labour rights. The mobilization is being organized in the surroundings of the Vistalegre pavilion and aspires to bring together more than 11,000 workers, we are waiting for you in Madrid.

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