



TOGETHER FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS

Tripartite Social Summit for Growth and Employment – 22 October 2025

Intervention of Esther Lynch, ETUC General Secretary

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President von der Leyen, President Costa, Vice-President, Ministers, colleagues,

As we meet for this Tripartite Social Summit, Brand Europe is facing unprecedented challenges and transformations: technological, climate and demographic transitions, changes in employment patterns and in sectoral distribution of employment, exacerbated by geopolitical and trade tensions and by energy price shocks.

The ETUC has three key messages: the need for investment, actions for quality jobs and measures for affordable housing.

First, the need for a new wave of investments.

It is essential to kickstart growth and stop the bleeding of jobs in manufacturing and other sectors through a new wave of investments with strong social conditionalities and wage increases. This will also stimulate internal demand.

Investments are also necessary to boost productivity in Europe: increases in productivity depend on investments in innovation, technology and workers, grounded in a strong industrial policy. Increased productivity will not be delivered through wage compression, undermining employment protection measures, or making work more insecure.

The evidence points to a simple truth: in Europe, the countries in which productivity is highest have strong worker protections and collective bargaining systems.



Trade unions are ready to play our part, and we call for

- A joint foresight by European institutions and social partners with focus on jobs, economic sectors and regions to anticipate changes and guide policy;
- A European pact for investments in innovation, technology, workers and just transitions as the way to increase productivity.

It is also essential to safeguard the ESF+ and ringfence social spending in the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

Second, the EU must take action to ensure quality jobs in every sector and in every region.

Policy choices over the last twenty years have driven down collective bargaining coverage across the EU, fuelling insecurity and inequality. Almost one in ten workers are at risk of poverty. Nearly 50% of minimum-wage earners under 35 cannot afford to live independently.

We call for legislation to ensure quality jobs as a matter of urgency as part of the Quality Jobs Act. This must include directives to:

- Ensure just transition and anticipation and management of change;
- Regulate AI in the workplace on the basis of the “human-in-control” principle;
- Prevent psychosocial risks and tackle the epidemic of stress at work;
- Ensure the respect of the right to disconnect and protect the rights of workers teleworking;
- Tackle abuses in subcontracting and labour intermediation
- Create secure jobs workers can rely on.

The revision of the public procurement Directives must guarantee that public money goes to organisations that respect workers’ and trade union rights, companies that negotiate with trade unions and whose workers are covered by collective agreements should not be at a disadvantage.



And, President, it is essential that the EU does not return to failed models of deregulation and compression of wages and workers' rights.

For this reason, we call on the institutions to confirm that labour law will be excluded from the 28th Company Regime and that employment and labour standards will not be undermined in the simplification drive, and we ask our social partner employers to work with us to implement the gender pay transparency directive not lobby to remove it.

Third, the EU must contribute to solve the housing emergency.

Rent and house prices have increased at a faster pace than wages and incomes, affecting disproportionately the budget of working people, pensioners and their families. Housing cost for tenants are today more than 50% of a full-time monthly minimum wage in 16 Member States.

We welcome the announcement of the upcoming European Affordable Housing Plan. The ETUC calls on the Commission to fully involve social partners in the development of the plan, which must include measures to improve working conditions in the construction sector, to tackle speculation and regulate more strictly short-term rentals, to increase investments, to build but with social conditionalities, to revise state aid rules to provide stronger support for public / social affordable and adequate housing.

Colleagues,

We must not talk Europe and the European way down.

It is the moment to double-down on our strengths.

Not to dismantle our social model, but to reinforce it.

Not to give priority to arbitrary deficit ceilings, but to invest in innovation and technology, in working people and just transitions, in high-quality public services, in affordable and adequate housing.



Not to undermine our employment standards, but to deliver quality jobs in every sector and in every region.

This is the way to our social and economic success.