



# TOGETHER FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS

## ETUC comments to draft Council Conclusions on Improving access to enabling services and employment services in order to reduce territorial inequalities and promote social inclusion

The draft Council Conclusions address important challenges for European societies and the labour market, as well as the objective of social and economic cohesion among Member States.

The document includes relevant ideas on social policies aimed at promoting the integration of Roma communities within European societies, alongside approaches related to territorial cohesion. However, the document could significantly benefit from better addressing the employment dimension and emphasizing the critical role that quality jobs play in cohesion policies and in the integration of those who are further removed from the labour market.

Below, we present a series of demands and observations from the European trade union movement that should be added to the various points of the recommendation to create a balanced text that adequately considers the employment dimension.

### Point 18: The document should also refer to the following:

A crucial but sometimes overlooked factor driving territorial disparities within the European Union is the variation in working conditions. Poor working conditions not only impact workers directly but also perpetuate regional inequalities by affecting social cohesion and economic stability.

Public Employment Services play a crucial role in fostering effective active labour market policies, particularly in integrating the most vulnerable groups of the society into the labour market. These include refugees, women, migrant and seasonal workers, persons with disabilities, the Roma, and young NEETs. To address these challenges, Member States should undertake specific active labour market policies with the full involvement of social partners. These policies should encompass counselling, mediation, subsidized employment opportunities, and other mechanisms facilitating job transitions.

### Point 20: The document should also refer to the following:

Digital transformation has already had a profound impact on the way we work, and it will continue to reshape the world of work in the coming years, particularly through the use of data-driven technologies, including artificial intelligence.

However, alongside the benefits of digital tools, such as flexibility and improved collaboration between workers and machines, there are also challenges that arise. The increased prevalence of telework and digitalization has led to a blurring of boundaries between work and personal life, with potential negative effects on workers' mental well-being. Additionally, while digitalization has the potential to reduce physical workload through automation, it can also introduce new risks, such as occupational accidents, increased task repetitiveness, cognitive overload, and psychosocial demands resulting from continuous monitoring and algorithmic management.

Furthermore, digitalization can contribute to external labour flexibility and precarious forms of employment, which generate uncertainty and stress for workers. It is important to approach digitalization collectively and constructively, taking into account the social implications and involving trade unions in the digital transformation process at the workplace.

The following points should be added to the section on recommendations:

### To the European Commission:



Without investments in quality jobs, and services, regions face declining populations. Strong social conditions should be tied to EU funds to uphold labour rights and democracy. Inclusive labour markets require equal opportunities, quality jobs, and strong collective bargaining. Addressing labour shortages demands comprehensive strategies, including training rights, gender equality, and support for vulnerable groups. Publicly created employment opportunities with social conditions can bolster social and regional cohesion. These measures can foster inclusive labour markets in the EU and beyond amid evolving global challenges.

#### To Member States:

While labour mobility is a fundamental freedom of workers, it cannot address long-term skills gaps. Instead, regional attractiveness depends on decent living standards, which can be eroded by divergent social standards and low collective bargaining. To overcome territorial inequalities quality jobs should be provided across the European Union and different regions within member states. Member states should put forth enforcement measures to guarantee that employers respect obligations regarding fair pay, good conditions, and access to training of workers. Equal treatment and social protection are crucial to prevent social dumping and exclusion.

The reinforcement of public employment services by Member States is paramount, especially considering the detrimental effect of deregulatory and austerity policies on their budget and capacities in 2009, from which many have yet to fully recover.