



TOGETHER FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS

ETUC Women's Committee statement on the Finnish government's working life reforms on gender equality and on women's position in the labour market

Adopted by the ETUC Women's Committee on 22 March 2024

With this statement, the ETUC Women's Committee wishes to express our strong disappointment and deep concern about the serious deterioration of workers' and women's rights in Finland. Proposed reforms of labour legislation weaken women's position in the labour market and the negotiation power on salary raises in collective agreements.

Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government Program declares ambitious goals towards gender equality. However, the provisions in the Government Program include extensive deterioration of gender equality and are in conflict with these goals. There is a real risk that progress on gender equality will stall or even reverse.

If the working life cuts proposed in the Government Programme are implemented, they can potentially hit especially women workers hard. The Government plans to introduce an export-driven labour market model that lays down provisions so that the general level of pay adjustments cannot be exceeded by a proposal by the National Conciliator's Office. If this change were to be implemented, it would make it very hard for the female dominated low-income sectors to close the gender pay gap. The Finnish gender pay gap – already above EU average - will be cemented at 16%, or rise even further through the proposal.

We are also very concerned about the other changes being made to labour legislation, which will significantly affect the level of job security for Finnish workers. For example, allowing employers to conclude employment contracts for a fixed term of one year without a special reason will inevitably increase pregnancy discrimination. The cuts on social benefits are deeply worrying as well. They will hit young people and women in low-paid sectors the hardest. The polarization and social divide will expand.

The labour market situation in Finland is now extremely difficult. The Finnish government is making women's position in working life more insecure and precarious, disincentivizing their participation in the labour market. The strong tradition of co-operation and tripartite negotiating is in danger of ending.



Trade unions have co-operated a long time with the employers and the government for the decent working life in Finland. Now, the government's reforms are being carried out unilaterally to strengthen the power of employers. The reforms have been justified by problems of the economy. Issues and problems should be solved through genuine cooperation.

The ETUC Women's Committee fully supports our Finnish colleagues in calling on the government to start negotiations that would bring balance to the labour market reforms.

We will not stand by when hard-fought for progress on gender equality is being reversed!