

Intervention by Tea Jarc, ETUC Confederal Secretary at meeting on quality jobs with Commission Vice-President Minzatu, on 17 April 2025:

Dear colleagues, social partners, and representatives of European institutions,

Thank you for the opportunity to exchange today on a topic that is at the heart of the trade union movement, but also that is absolutely essential to Europe's future: **quality jobs**.

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) welcomes the process launched by the European Commission. We appreciate the willingness to engage, and we are ready to contribute constructively to shaping a **Quality Jobs Roadmap** that delivers for all workers across Europe.

Europe **needs** quality jobs—because they are the cornerstone of social justice, economic resilience, and democratic legitimacy.

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Let's be clear: in the face of multiple transitions—green, digital, and demographic—, along with labour market shortages, and geopolitical and economic uncertainty, the only way to strengthen Europe's social model is to **invest in people**.

Quality jobs empower workers, fuel productivity, and ensure fair competition in the Single Market. They help fight inequality, discrimination, and the rising tide of populism.

And let me be frank—precariousness, low pay, and weak protections are not only unjust—they are unsustainable.

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So what do we mean by **“quality jobs”**?

For ETUC, quality jobs include—at the very least:

- **Collective bargaining** as a pillar of industrial democracy
- **Full respect for workers' and trade union rights**
- **Fair wages** that reflect the value of work
- **Job security and opportunities for career progression**
- **Strong social protection systems**
- **Free training during working time**
- **Decent working conditions** and safe workplaces

- **Work-life balance**
- **Equality and non-discrimination**

This must not be an abstract concept. It must be a **concrete agenda**—with real outcomes for workers, especially those most vulnerable: **young people, women, migrants**, and those in non-standard forms of employment.

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We cannot build a house on shaky foundations. That’s why the first step must be to **enforce existing legislation** more effectively.

This includes **investing in labour inspectorates** and enhancing their capacity, which include also reviewing the mandate of **European Labour Authority**, and **extension of ELA’s scope**, so it plays a stronger role in enforcing, monitoring and coordination.

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But enforcement alone is not enough. We need the European Commission to be bold and deliver a **Quality Jobs Package** with **new legislative initiatives and real investment**.

Let me highlight some of our **core demands**:

- A **Directive on Just Transition** to manage change through trade union involvement and anticipate the need for reskilling. With jobs already being lost, we also need to reestablish the **SURE 2.0** mechanism.
- **EU-level regulation of labour intermediaries** and a **legal framework to limit subcontracting** and ensure **joint liability** in supply chains.
- A **Directive on psychosocial risks**, tackling also online harassment and mental health at work.
- To correspond to digital transformation, we need a Directive on **AI in the workplace**, embedding the “**human in control**” principle.
- We are also still waiting for a Directive on **Telework and the Right to Disconnect**, responding to the realities of modern work.
- We also need a new framework to **strengthen democracy at work**—including information, consultation, and participation rights.
- Along with enforcement of Minimum wage directive, we need investments for reinforcing **collective bargaining**.
- A revision of **public procurement rules** so that taxpayer money supports employers who respect workers’ rights and negotiate with trade unions.

- **Ending precarious work**—by banning zero-hour contracts, unpaid internships, and guaranteeing access to permanent, full-time employment.

Let me stress an important **note of caution** here:

The roadmap to the package must not delay already existing proposals and process on the table. We expect various dossiers to develop in parallel to the process of establishing the Package.

The proposals in the Quality Jobs Package must be **new** initiatives—not changes to existing directives or regulations that could risk lowering existing protections.

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Quality must also be measurable. That’s why we need the development of **robust indicators** to track progress on job quality at both EU and national levels.

These should go beyond headline employment figures and reflect the **real conditions** of work—employment stability, collective agreement coverage, training access, wage fairness, and more.

Without indicators, we cannot measure. Without measurement, we cannot improve. And without improvement, we lose people’s trust.

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Colleagues,

We believe in dialogue. As **social partners**, ETUC is ready to **engage, contribute, and participate** in good faith.

But we are also clear: **The European Commission must lead.**

This process cannot be just a listening exercise. It must result in **concrete proposals**, legislative action, and targeted investment.

Quality jobs don’t happen by chance—they require political will.

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Let’s make no mistake: investing in quality jobs is not just a social imperative—it’s an economic necessity and a democratic safeguard.

Europe has the tools, the resources, and the knowledge. What we need now is **action**.

ETUC is at the table, ready to work together—for a Europe where every job is a quality job for every worker in every sector in every region.

Thank you.