

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

The ETUC calls the EU institutions to:

- establish rules providing a common legal framework for self-employed workers;
- remove the barriers to collective bargaining for the self-employed; and
- take action to improve the situation of the self-employed.

Trade unions in Europe call their national government to:

- ensure equal rights between employees and the self-employed, particularly on access to social protection;
- combat bogus self-employment; and
- promote collective bargaining for the self-employed.

National unions are committed to:

- organise the self-employed; and
- work to extend collective bargaining to them.



About the ETUC report

The ETUC report examines some of the key challenges unions face in responding to self-employment, and it includes the results of a survey with responses from 23 European states.

The report is available at

<https://www.etuc.org/en/publications>

About the ETUC

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) speaks with a single voice on behalf of European workers and to give them a stronger say in EU decision-making.

The ETUC defends fundamental social values such as solidarity, equality, democracy, social justice and cohesion.

It fights for:

- pay rises and wage convergence in Europe for workers;
- full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights;
- high quality jobs for all;
- a high level of social protection;
- gender equality and fair pay;
- good health and safety at work;
- fair mobility for European workers, and an end to social dumping;
- high quality public services accessible to all;
- a European framework to raise the standard of national social legislation;
- action to combat climate change while promoting a Just Transition for workers;
- promotion of these European social values in other parts of the world.

The ETUC is committed to boosting the capacity of unions to better organise, defend, protect and empower self-employed workers and atypical workers in Europe.

www.etuc.org



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TRADE UNIONS PROTECTING SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS

Why self-employed workers
need better rights?
What unions are doing?
Which priorities for the future?



A project of the European trade union confederation (ETUC) to defend the rights of self-employed workers across Europe.



With the financial support
of the European Commission

UNIONS ARE ACTING FOR SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS!

Unions are already supporting their self-employed members:

- first of all, where they can, they negotiate to improve their wages and working conditions through collective agreements (unions have negotiated collective agreements or similar arrangements for the self-employed in at least 12 countries across the EU).

But whether collective bargaining is possible or not, unions are also providing:

- guidance on fees to charge or rates to apply;
- advice on the wording of contract and model contracts;
- legal advice specifically tailored to the concerns of the individual;
- reimbursement of legal costs incurred as a result of self-employment;
- help with payments and debt collection;
- advice on taxation;
- education and courses;
- information about industry developments;
- cheaper rates for products and services;
- opportunities to share experiences with other self-employed workers;
- specific services to the occupations involved, like directories of professionals.

Unions have also challenged competition laws limiting collective bargaining rights and they have successfully taken legal action against bogus self-employment.

The ETUC report sets out what unions have done, as well as examining the obstacles they have faced.

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS

- 22 million workers in the EU (10% of the total) are self-employed and have no employees.
- Almost half (44%) work in agriculture, construction and retail, but one in eight (13%) work in professional and technical activities and almost one in 10 (9%) in education and health.
- One third of them are women.
- There are big differences between European countries: more than one in five (22%) of all workers in Greece are self-employed, but only one in 20 (5%) in Denmark.
- Over the last five years, the number of self-employed has fallen in agriculture and retail, but it has grown in professional services, health, arts and entertainment. Excluding agriculture, the number of self-employed has increased by 5% across the EU 28, and by much more in France, the Netherlands and the UK.



WHY SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS NEED MORE RIGHTS?

Across Europe, self-employed workers often have fewer rights than employees:

- in some countries they have no right to join a trade union and to benefit from union protection and support;
- in many countries unions cannot sign collective agreements on behalf of the self-employed, and even when they can, competition law is used, or misused, to limit the extent of bargaining;
- in almost all countries, self-employed workers lack adequate social protection. Rights to protections like sick leave, unemployment benefits or parental/maternity leave often depend on the self-employed making additional contributions and are sometimes not possible at all; and
- in industries and services across Europe, there are examples where workers are forced into bogus self-employment, losing their rights in the process.

HOW UNIONS ORGANISE SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS?

Unions recruit and organise self-employed workers in a variety of different ways.

- **Occupational unions**, which cover groups such as journalists, actors, musicians, technicians, translators and interpreters, architects and some medical professions;
- **Unions for precarious workers**, which recruit and organise the self-employed along with others on non-standard contracts, such as agency workers and temporary workers;
- **Self-employed unions**, which only cover the self-employed; and
- **Mainstream unions**, which have responded to changes in the labour market by extending their coverage to self-employed.

The ETUC report looks at the main unions involved, and indicates how the picture varies between countries.