



# TOGETHER FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS

## Trade Union Summit for Ukraine

### Declaration

The European trade movement, under the auspices of the European Trade Union Confederation representing 93 national trade union confederations in 41 countries and 10 European sectoral trade union federations, met with the Ukrainian trade union movement represented by FPU and KPU on 23 April 2024 in Lublin, Poland in the framework of the Trade Union Summit for Ukraine.

#### Whereas

We continue to condemn the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, which is causing mass casualties as well as the destruction of social and energy infrastructure, leading to a significant drop in employment and economic hardship in the country. Millions of Ukrainians are internally displaced or refugees abroad, creating labour shortages in key sectors..

Consistent and systematic integration of workers from Ukraine into the labour market of both the EU and the world should be based on the principle of preventing discrimination and exploitation and be built on solidarity between workers.

Despite the very difficult circumstances, Ukraine has been recognised as a candidate country to join the EU, a milestone we welcome. We commit to supporting the country's path to the EU and to partaking in the process so that accession benefits all workers in Ukraine and the rest of the EU.

**We strongly condemn** the actions by Ukrainian authorities and employers that systematically violate workers' and trade union rights. These actions can make the path to EU accession more complicated and time-consuming and, if not corrected, might lead to the country not meeting key criteria (the so-called Fundamentals).

**We recall** that respect for social dialogue, and the role of independent social partners, including the full respect for trade union rights, freedom of association, the right to organise, collective bargaining, the right to strike, and full protection of trade union representatives, is a cornerstone of democracy and a pillar of the European Social Model.

**We firmly emphasise** that it is of utmost importance for countries and institutions in Europe to deliver on the respect and reinforcement of social dialogue and the full respect of trade union rights. In this framework, it is necessary to ensure support for social dialogue and adequate funding for capacity building of social partners. In this respect, we also welcome the swift adoption of a package of financial assistance to Ukraine, a dedicated facility that requires the involvement of trade unions in the determination of a national plan and projects that benefit the whole of Ukrainian society and create decent work.

**We call** on the EU institutions to include trade unions in all processes and discussion and to convene a social partners summit to be held before the EU-Ukraine summits. The trade unions have to be part of the recovery process and must also be involved in the next [Ukraine Recovery Conference](#) in Berlin in June.

**We strongly insist** that to ensure Ukraine's success in the accession process and to lay the foundations for a sustainable and prosperous country post-war, the following challenges must be addressed.



## **The trade unions' role in restoring Ukraine through social dialogue and collective bargaining**

Ukraine will need unity and the fiscal space for national reconstruction built on respect for labour rights and social dialogue as the basis for a new industrial, transport, employment and social policy. The National Tripartite Social and Economic Council is a crucial platform for social dialogue, which has been inactive for several years. This structure needs to be fully functioning with a clear mandate and must be used effectively to address key issues in the social and labour sphere in line with the European social model. Quality of life, the economic and social stability of the country largely depends on its effective work. This will require:

- stronger enforcement of labour rights during martial law and after, with greater accountability for multinationals and foreign investors;
- a relaunch of industrial relations of the country that is conducive to both tripartite and bipartite negotiations, not to be confused with civil society dialogue;
- a comprehensive revision of labour legislation, build on properly restored once social dialogue, that recognises and respects right to strike, collective agreements, trade unions and their legitimate role in the workplace and society at large;
- the deployment of the Ukraine facility to support trade unions' capacity building
- to prevent at all levels the substitution of participation of trade unions and social partners with non-governmental/civil-society organisations in tripartite formats (state, employer, trade unions).

## **Social conditionalities in reconstruction process**

Reconstruction of the country will require significant investment and the funds pledged by the international community are welcome. The EU is in a key position to help: with billions of euros in support of Ukraine, the EU must lead by example and ensure that working people employed with this money have decent conditions and collective bargaining protection. The implementation of the social *acquis communautaire* must become a prerequisite.

In order to attract and bring the Ukrainian workers back to Ukraine, quality jobs, good working conditions, social rights and access to public services must be guaranteed.

Social and labour clauses should find their place in every public procurement announcement. Registered labour and collective bargaining opportunities are absolute minimum that has to be reflected in the reconstruction law draft being developed in Ukraine.

Thus no blank cheque should be signed to companies investing in the country, including multinational enterprises. These companies are welcome, but must commit to creating decent work and not maximising their profit, nor pay out excessive dividends, from the opportunities that will arise from rebuilding the country and its infrastructure. Reconstruction must not be a pretext to build a smaller state and deregulate the entire economy. This means that:

- trade unions must be actively involved in rebuilding the economy to ensure decent work and fair redistribution of wealth;
- the role of social dialogue and trade unions in reconstruction, not only as regards the use of international funds but also as regards Ukraine's capacity to finance its own reconstruction through raising tax revenue, must be genuinely respected;
- finances must also go towards rebuilding and maintaining public services and not drive privatisation as a condition of financial support. Electricity and water supplies must be



guaranteed as much as possible, together with a publicly-owned functioning public transport network, both urban and within the country;

- access to health coverage, education and culture must be ensured;
- occupational, physical and mental health and safety, and labour protection standards must be enforced. Current positive provisions to guarantee safe and decent working conditions in the reconstruction process must be safeguarded as the country cannot afford more casualties. Demining is a prerequisite to guarantee safe working conditions. Incentives that undermine the possibility of running spot checks and react on cases of labour rights and OSH violation should be excluded from the law;
- companies in receipt of public funds and/or grants/funds from the EU and partners must respect applicable labour standards resulting from national (and EU) labour law and should engage in collective bargaining, negotiate and respect collective agreements with recognised trade unions. Moreover money should only go to those employers investing in quality jobs, promoting upskilling and reskilling, as well as collective bargaining;
- the labour market needs to be inclusive and accommodate the needs of the those returning from the warfront with injuries and other impairments;
- establish a guaranteed institution to protect worker claims in case of employer insolvency.
- create good workplaces with decent working conditions, as referred in ILO recommendation 205, where social dialogue is cited as being essential for peace keeping, to attract workers returning from abroad.

### **Role of trade unions in EU accession process**

The EU must insist on full compliance with its values and with the EU social acquis as objective criteria for EU membership. The enlargement process must foster the values on which the Union is founded, including the European Social Model. Social dialogue and respect for the role of trade unions are an integral part of these values and a feature of the social market economy that candidate countries will have to fully integrate in view of joining the EU and the single market.

Thus EU accession must be an opportunity to bring the country in line, in law and in practice, with international, EU labour and social standards and regulations to guarantee it is a success story for workers in Ukraine and the rest of the EU. This implies a significant and real strengthening of labour governance institutions (courts, inspection services) as a sine qua non condition to accession.

We urge Ukraine to prioritise social dialogue and worker rights as it rebuilds from the war and strives for EU membership. To this end there is a need to:

- raise awareness of accession requirements including around the Fundamentals (respect of human rights and the rule of law) and the EU social acquis;
- increase the capacity of trade unions to input into the process and make meaningful contributions to EU and government consultations: trade unions must have a seat at EU membership negotiating table;
- identify opportunities for advocacy both at national and EU level so that trade unions can effectively influence the accession process;
- seek technical assistance from ILO;



### **Rebuilding trade union power**

The war has destroyed lives and the economy of the country; reconstruction must be an opportunity to overhaul the system so that it benefits working people and not just politicians and CEOs/shareholders of multinationals that will take advantage of an economy that will grow again. For reconstruction to be an opportunity for workers:

- authorities and employers must recognise the right of trade unions to organise workers, restore fully the right to strike, align individual and collective rights to EU and international standards;
- we, as trade unions, commit to strengthen our recruitment activities to represent the voice of workers, recognising the role of women and youth in our structures as cornerstones of the labour movement, and commit to strengthening their involvement in the life of our organisations;
- we, as trade unions, will recognise the importance of resilience and renewal to cope with the challenges under martial law and in the reconstruction phase and we appeal to strengthen the democratic system and freedoms in Ukraine.

Lublin, Poland  
23.4.2024