

EFFAT Executive Committee Statement on 'Erosion of Trade Union Rights'

Trade unions all across Europe and beyond continue to witness systematic and targeted attacks on fundamental workers' rights. Workers are bearing the brunt of the rising tide of populism, the increasing success of right-wing governments, and greedy businesses.

Since trade unions are emblems of democracy and core to our democratic institutions, they too have been put to the test in their task to shield workers and fight for better and safer employment.

Recent events in the political world have led to the dismantling of trade union rights to a degree of genuine concern.

In the **UK**, for example, we have seen serious attacks against the right to strike, gravely affecting the fundamental right to defend one's own rights.

Moreover, **France, Belgium, and Slovenia** have seen hostile governments restricting trade union rights in recent years, and this trend seems to be spreading.

The latest victim of this worrying trend is **Finland**, where the Orpo-Purra government, on a crusade for austerity, has turned its attention towards the working class. From the erosion of working conditions to cuts in social welfare, the government seems to be intent on attacking the rights of workers and the role of trade unions.

Similar to the UK and Belgium, Finland has also experienced increasing restrictions on its right to industrial action, with fines being imposed on individual strikers when said action is declared illegal. This problematic characterisation of a ubiquitous right is done with the sole intention of alienating trade unions and reducing the extent to which they can fight for their members' rights.

The attempt to erode workers' rights and weaken trade unions' power to organise and bargain collectively is embedded in a tragic socio-economic context. Sky-high inflation and a devastating cost-of-living crisis, where we see inequalities exacerbated to an almost paradoxical effect. The last thing workers need is the erosion of their labour rights, a return to austerity, and poverty jobs.

Against this backdrop, EFFAT calls upon its fellow affiliates to stand as one, contrasting this trend and continuing the fight for workers' rights whenever these are in danger.

In particular, EFFAT:

- **Reaffirms its Commitment to ILO Conventions No. 87, 98 and 151:**
Recognising and respecting the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No. 87, which protects the freedom of association and the right to organise, Convention No. 98 concerning the Application of the Principles of the Right to Organise and to Bargain Collectively; Convention No. 154 concerning the Promotion of Collective Bargaining (1981); Articles 5 and 6 of the European Social Charter as well as Article 28 and 31 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights as fundamental to protecting workers' rights and advocate for their comprehensive implementation.
- **Recalls that the Right to Strike is a Fundamental Right:**
Acknowledge the right to strike as a fundamental and indispensable element of democratic societies, essential for protecting the interests and rights of workers.
- **Defends the Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively:**
Oppose any efforts to undermine the right of workers to organise, form unions, and engage in collective bargaining.



- **Emphasizes Respect for Trade Unions and Collective Bargaining Rights:**
Demand the utmost respect for the rights of trade unions and the principles of collective bargaining as cornerstones of a just, equitable and democratic society.
- **Calls for Support of Trade Union Rights in the Elections:**
Urge political parties engaged in elections to support trade union rights to organize and bargain collectively as well as defend the right to strike.
- **Call to Action Toward Governments:**
Urge governments to protect and enhance workers' rights as well as the right to organise and bargain collectively safeguard the right to strike, and promote the well-being of the working class.

Together, we will stand strong, championing collective bargaining as a fundamental bastion of democracy. Our strength lies in unity, and together, we can ensure that workers' rights are not just preserved but advanced for the benefit of all.