

Europe is at a turning point.

In 2023, many employers made enormous profits driving inflation while squeezing workers' real-terms wages. Now, the EU's austerity rules are back threatening cuts to jobs, wages and services. With 73 per cent of EU citizens believing that their living standard will fall this year, these attacks on workers' livelihoods are fuelling the rise of the far right as the 2024 European elections near.

UNI Europa and the European trade union movement, the democratic voice of millions of workers and voters, is raising the alarm. United in the ETUC and under its manifesto *Delivering a Fair Deal for Workers*, we rally across the continent for the European elections to:

Grow workers' power. Strengthen collective bargaining. Fight austerity. Build Social Europe. Stop the Far Right.

UNI Europa's 7 million services workers, employed in sectors that form the backbone of economic and social life in Europe, fight for a European Parliament and Commission that prioritise the well-being of all workers, their families and communities. Together, we campaign for three fundamental reforms:

■ **"NO PUBLIC CONTRACT WITHOUT COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT" – CHANGING EU LAW TO PRIORITISE SOCIAL PUBLIC PROCUREMENT**

Every year EU governments and other public authorities spend one in every seven euros in our economies – two trillion or 14 per cent of GDP – on purchasing services, works and goods. As the European Commission maintains flawed public procurement rules, too many public contracts are going to companies violating labour rights, undercutting competitors and delivering low-quality services. Instead, the EU and member states should make use of their spending power to support workers, to reward companies respecting labour rights and to advance social goals.

UNI Europa calls for changes to EU public procurement law that allow, and indeed, demand that all levels of government – from municipalities to the European institutions – prioritise contracts with companies engaging in collective bargaining.

■ **"80 PER CENT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING COVERAGE EVERYWHERE" – STRENGTHENING SECTORAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

During the last European Parliament mandate, the European trade union movement won a major victory. The EU set an 80 per cent target for collective bargaining coverage in the Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages. This is a powerful tool to reverse the trend of falling coverage across the EU – and bring back a more equal, fair and stable society. This year, many EU member states are obliged to present solutions in national actions plans. As three out of four working-age Europeans are employed in services sectors, member states will not be able to achieve the 80 per cent target without them and sector-wide collective agreements.

UNI Europa calls for a legislative and political framework that increases collective bargaining coverage and union density in the services sectors, and that promotes multi-employer/sectoral collective bargaining.

■ **"MAKE WAGE THEFT AND UNION-BUSTING CRIMINAL OFFENCES WITH STIFF PRISON SENTENCES" – CREATING REAL DETERRENCE FOR BAD CORPORATE BEHAVIOUR**

Collective agreements must cover more workers in the services sectors and beyond. However, too often unscrupulous employers illegally prevent workers from organising. And too often these employers disregard the agreements workers won through their organising. Union-busting and wage theft are serious offences with dire consequences for workers, not petty crimes. To show that they respect and protect working people, state authorities should treat them as such. By discouraging corporate criminal behaviour, they can counter the appeal and empty promises of the far right.

UNI Europa calls for an EU-wide coordinated approach to proper enforcement and prosecution of managers for wage theft and union-busting. While changing criminal law is a matter for member states, European-level coordination will maximise deterrence of such criminal behaviour.

We ask democratic parties and candidates to endorse our three demands – and commit to making them a reality after the 2024 European parliamentary elections. The EU Treaty states the EU's goal to deliver "improved living and working conditions".

Let's move towards a European Union that puts workers first.

