



DGB

Deutscher
Gewerkschaftsbund

European Elections 2024

**The demands of the
German Confederation of
Trade Unions (DGB)
and its member unions
vis-a-vis political parties**

June 2023

Introduction

The citizens of the European Union will elect their representatives in the European Parliament for the tenth time in June 2024. A new European Commission will be appointed after the elections. The elections provide political parties and the German trade unions the opportunity to give European policy new momentum.

The European Parliament will leave behind a term that has been marked by multiple crises. The Brexit referendum, the Covid 19 pandemic and the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine have led Europe not only into a security, health and economic crisis, but also into an energy crisis. At the same time, and not least because of these problems, the issues of socio-ecological transition, climate change and tougher global competition between political systems are gaining substantial relevance and posing immense challenges for Europe. The European Union can only meet these challenges with the necessary unity and speed.

The multiple crises have strengthened cooperation in Europe. In the fight against Covid-19, Europe demonstrated the will and competence to find joint solutions through the Recovery and Resilience Facility (NEXT-GenerationEU), which aims to alleviate the economic consequences of the pandemic. On the other hand, the macroeconomic distortions caused by the crises have scarred Europe and are increasingly affecting democracy and the European system of values. Democratic deficits in Member States, social divisions and right-wing extremism threaten to destroy the fundamental values of

the European Union, strengthening nationalist tendencies and making joint action increasingly difficult. We trade unions therefore say: The EU must become more united and more capable of action in order to respond adequately to internal and external challenges.

For the DGB and its member unions, the protection of workers and their interests is crucial for the European Union to succeed. Workers are the foundation of the European economy and their skills are the greatest advantage in global economic competition. That is why we demand an active transition policy that secures the capacity for strategic action by way of resilient value chains and secures decent jobs and sustainable prosperity. We call for a European economic policy that ensures sustainable growth and enables important investments in the future. The European Union must become crisis-proof so that it better protects its citizens from unemployment and poverty and offers them prospects for the future. Work must be fairly paid and working conditions must be safe and conducive to proper livelihood.

This can only be achieved if workers across Europe have a say in decisions about their working conditions in companies and workplaces, and if the imbalance that exists in Europe in favour of economic freedoms and to the detriment of workers' rights is redressed.

The DGB and its member unions have therefore set out nine key demands for the 2024-2029 term:

Our demands regarding the European Elections 2024

1. Ensure decent jobs and sustainable prosperity by way of proactively designing the **just transition**
2. Ensure resilient production through sustainable **value chains**
3. Ensure qualitative growth through a sustainable **economic policy**
4. Enable necessary investments in the future through sound **regional structural policies**
5. Protect workers via robust **social systems**, high **collective bargaining coverage** and good **working conditions**
6. Attract skilled workers through appropriate **education and training opportunities**
7. Protect **cross-border workers** through fair working conditions
8. Involve workers across Europe through strong **co-determination rights**
9. Strengthen workers' rights through a social **European regulatory framework**

1. Just transition

The pressure to act is enormous - the EU has committed to climate neutrality by 2050. At the same time, high energy costs and gaps in private and public investments are endangering locations and employment in Europe. The role of the market and the state must be redefined against this background. Only active policy-making and strong international cooperation can address the various problems, take account of distributional conflicts and ensure decent and sustainable jobs in Europe. A European transition policy is needed that guides the transition by way of strategic investments, provides decent jobs, ensures a fair distribution of costs and sets a clear framework for sustainable modernisation.

A better dovetailing of the European Green Deal projects with employment, structural, industrial, service and labour market policy measures is indispensable. The EU Council Recommendation “Ensuring a Just Transition to Climate Neutrality” from 2022 already emphasises stronger employment-oriented flanking measures. This recommendation must be followed by actions and measures. The impacts of the transition on employment, distribution and regional economic structures must be given greater attention. Not least to protect against unfair competition from outside Europe, the European Commission’s plans for a Green Deal Industrial Plan must be further developed in a much more comprehensive manner. The lessons and opportunities of the US Inflation Reduction Act for the European economy should be carefully examined in this regard. The aim must be to strengthen the Europeanisation of value chains and reduce dependencies.

What the DGB demands in detail:

- **Create more coherence in EU funds for the transition:** At the European level, various instruments with different focuses provide funding for transition - the Structural and Investment Funds, the Innovation and Modernisation Fund, the IPCEIs (“Important Project of Common European Interest”) or NEXTGenerationEU. However, these neither follow a coordinated strategy nor ensure sufficient funds for core areas of transition. This must be changed by presenting a convincing EU transition strategy in whose strategic and political planning trade unions must be involved, in analogy to the EU structural funds. The wild proliferation of funds and instruments is neither transparent nor effective. Instead, existing structures should be used, consolidated and deployed in a targeted manner. To this end, the IPCEIs must also be opened up to small and medium-sized enterprises and a joint European funding facility must be created.
- It is imperative that **national and European public funding** be linked to **criteria of collective bargaining, location development, job security, qualification strategies and decent jobs**. In addition, the partnership principle of the Structural Funds should become the standard in the administration of EU funds. Public funds must promote gender equity, contribute to gender equality and ensure the development of new sustainable value chains. If industrial capacity building or innovative products are supported by public funds, the general public must get something back in return.
- In recent years, **state aid law** and its interpretation by the EU Commission increasingly oriented towards the goals of the Green Deal. This is positive in principle, but a sustainable and just transition policy requires a reform of competition law in order to align EU state aid law with the goals of climate-neutral and resilient value creation, decent jobs, job security and development. There is a need for further development of state aid law to enable Member States to pursue a proactive economic policy against the background of the transition goals. European state aid law must not become an obstacle in the just transition and in global competition with other large economic areas.

- › Due to the different financial margins of the Member States, a relaxation of the state aid law would bring particular advantages for financially strong Member States. Solidarity-based solutions are needed here. Particularly in the case of **strategically important technologies** and infrastructures of the future, **European joint financing** of investments, investment aid and subsidies are a way forward.
- › So far, European **public procurement law** only provides for the optional binding of the award of public contracts and concessions to social and environmental aspects. The binding nature of social and environmental aspects must be strengthened. To this end, the concessions and public procurement directives must be amended by including a mandatory tariff compliance clause.
- › In the area of public procurement of EU and Member States, European minimum production shares should also be introduced along the value chain, starting with the basic materials industry (so-called **local content requirements**), against the backdrop of security of supply, in order to strengthen the Europeanisation of value chains and significantly reduce the EU's CO2 footprint.
- › Social aspects are not adequately taken into account in the current debate on **sustainable finance**. The environmental taxonomy needs to be expanded to include a sophisticated social dimension in which collective bargaining and co-determination play a central role. In addition, it is important to develop a taxonomy for green transition (transitory) and enabling activities to ensure that companies adequately present their contribution to climate protection and have reliable financing.
- › The purposeful **expansion of renewable energies** is the key to the transition of the energy sector. The **cross-border interconnection of the European energy supply** must be further advanced. The comprehensive expansion of cross-border energy grids and renewable energy generation is just as crucial as the creation of regional and pan-European futures markets in order to realise the European Energy Union. For the coordination and supervision of cross-border energy supply, in addition to the creation of coherent regulatory and funding framework conditions, the creation of a European Energy Agency as a supervisory body is necessary in the medium term in order to guarantee consumer protection.
- › There is no alternative to a far-reaching, structural **reform of the EU electricity market design**. The reform approaches of the EU Commission presented in 2022 are insufficient. The electricity market should be put in a position to support the transition of the European economy and society towards climate neutrality. Such a reform must pursue the goal of strengthening solidarity between Member States, guaranteeing a secure and affordable electricity supply in the long term and supporting the preservation and creation of top-end added value and employment in Europe. In concrete terms, the aim must be to ensure a far-reaching decoupling of gas and electricity prices and to limit price and feed-in volatilities. In addition, unjustified profits must be effectively avoided in order to pass on the cost advantages of renewable energies to all energy consumer groups. Overall, the strategic importance of electricity supply as a fundamental part of public services and industrial development must take precedence over liberalisation considerations.
- › Affordable and competitive electricity prices are the prerequisite for a dynamic economy. In order to keep the electricity costs of energy-intensive industry competitive in the transition process and to favour sector coupling, an **industrial electricity price** should be guaranteed during transition.
- › In other areas, too, where fossil energy sources are replaced by electricity, the transition must not be hampered by excessively high electricity prices. This applies in particular to **transport** and **building heating**.

- The **development of a European hydrogen economy** is the basis for industrial production and jobs of the future. The production of green hydrogen in Europe must be promoted, the prerequisites for grid expansion must be established quickly and a green growth strategy for European industry developed. The focus must be on sufficient availability and a competitive price. Unbundling gas and hydrogen grids would be an obstacle to transition and must not stand in the way of the hydrogen ramp-up.
- In order to achieve climate neutrality for European industry in line with the goals of the Green Deal, a European strategy is needed to address unavoidable emissions through technologies such as carbon capture and storage. Captured CO₂ can also contribute to replacing previously fossil-derived carbon in production processes. As part of this strategy, **CO₂ capture and storage infrastructure** needs to be built quickly and atmospheric CO₂ removal needs to be progressively integrated into the EU ETS. These bundled measures should be implemented in a comprehensive **EU carbon management strategy**. However, these technologies must not be used as a justification for continuing to use fossil fuels.
- The goal of **EU transport policy** must be climate-neutral, affordable mobility for all, based on high social and labour standards, with a rapid shift away from fossil fuels. Therefore, the EU and its Member States must now take measures to double the share of public transport across Europe by 2030 - in particular via the comprehensive expansion of the rail network and cross-border mobility supply in local and long-distance transport. The share of rail freight transport must be increased to at least 25% across Europe by 2030. Increasing the dimensions and weights of lorries is detrimental to this target and therefore is rejected. In addition, answers must be found to the phasing out of internal combustion engines and the rapid expansion of a Europe-wide charging infrastructure must be promoted. To this end, the European value chains for battery cell production and European semiconductor production must also be strengthened.

2. Value chains

The multiple global crises, from the Corona pandemic to the energy crisis, have highlighted Germany's and Europe's dependencies - and thus also their weak points. Disrupted global supply chains led to a lack of primary products and resulted in a decline in production in Europe, which in turn affected jobs. This is why globalisation must be oriented towards other criteria and priorities must be set anew - not only at the national level, but also in Europe. The European Commission has given an important impulse with its proposal for a European Due Diligence Directive. Nevertheless, further efforts are needed to ensure sustainable value chains.

What the DGB demands in detail:

- The EU must work to ensure that the **reform of the WTO** is done on the basis of international agreements in the area of labour and environmental standards as well as human rights. Moreover, these standards should be the basis for decisions in WTO trade disputes, so that trade preferences are more strongly linked to compliance with these fundamental standards.
- **Trade agreements** must include clear, enforceable and sanctionable rules to protect workers and the environment. The ratification and implementation of international standards, such as the ILO's core labour standards and governance conventions, must go hand in hand with the conclusion and ratification of trade and investment agreements. Public services must be explicitly excluded from the scope of trade agreements to ensure universal access to quality public services. Multinational corporations must not be allowed to sue for lost profits due to higher environmental or labour standards. Investment protection and other special rights must not go beyond equal treatment with domestic companies. The rights of states to social and environmental regulation and taxation must not be restricted by trade agreements.
- The supply of natural raw materials is becoming increasingly important, and international partnerships are central to this. The EU must diversify its sources of raw materials in order to reduce dependencies on individual supplier countries. The criteria, enforcement options and due diligence obligations regarding the respect of human rights as well as social and environmental standards must also be applied within the framework of **raw material partnerships**. In addition, the circular economy must be promoted to limit dependencies on imported primary raw materials.
- The European energy supply must become crisis-proof. This requires the presentation of a **strategy to diversify** the European Union's **global energy relations**.
- The planned **CO₂ border adjustment system (CBAM)** must be critically monitored so that jobs in the affected economic sectors are preserved. The revenues must be used for transition to create incentives to use European products and strengthen European value creation. Investments and increased operational costs must be supported from these revenues.

3. Economic policy

European economic policy is facing major upheavals. A reform of the European economic policy framework is on the agenda, as are the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework from 2028. It is important to influence the debates in the sense of progressive reforms for more solidarity, democracy and sustainability in European economic policy. In the context of the COVID 19 crisis and the energy crisis, debt levels have risen significantly in many Member States. The pressure on Member State to consolidate budgets will therefore increase significantly in the coming years if the existing regulatory framework is maintained. At the same time, the socio-ecological transition will increase the need for investment. For the DGB, it is therefore central that an economic policy framework is created in which a socially harmful austerity policy is effectively prevented, more scope for financing public and environmentally friendly investments is created and decision-making processes are democratised.

What the DGB demands in detail:

- The NEXTGenerationEU recovery programme and the EU short-time workers programme “SURE”, both of which were financed through joint borrowing, have strengthened the EU’s fiscal capacity to act and, in the view of the DGB, were a strong sign of European solidarity. Sooner or later, more public funds are necessary to master the challenges of the socio-ecological transition. This requires on the one hand a continuation of Community borrowing through **Eurobonds** and, on the other hand, the development of **new EU own resources** to finance a EU fiscal capacity. Therefore, the topic must be put on the political agenda.
- The economic policy framework must be reformed in such a way that **public investments** are channelled more strongly into services of general interest and into the renewal of the public capital stock. To this end, the DGB and its affiliates have been calling for years for preferential treatment of public investment. A suitable instrument would be the introduction of a **Golden Rule**. To this end, EU rules should be reformed in such a way that net public investment may be financed by public borrowing. Overall, the reform of EU economic governance should aim to promote short-term macroeconomic stabilisation and long-term modernisation of the public capital stock.
- This also includes granting the Member States more **flexibility in debt reduction**. In doing so, country-specific challenges should be better considered and a rigid austerity policy prevented, without losing sight of the sustainability of public debt.
- The **democratic principle** must be strengthened in the area of economic policy coordination. To this end, the **role of the European Parliament in the European Semester** must be enhanced. Processes must be put in place to ensure that the European Commission’s reform recommendations do not violate fundamental EU policy goals (such as the Green Deal or the European Pillar of Social Rights). The democratic rights of the parliaments of the Member States must be strengthened, especially in EU fiscal policy. Finally, effective involvement of the social partners must be guaranteed.
- To strengthen the revenue side, there is a need for **European coordination and regulations in corporate taxation** that effectively prevent tax avoidance and evasion by companies that operate internationally. The DGB also advocates a minimum tax rate of 25 per cent on corporate profits based on the agreements in the OECD and calls for a comprehensive financial transaction tax on all securities and foreign exchange transactions.

4. Regional structural policy

The EU's structural policy must be oriented more towards the challenges of transition. A proactive structural policy must shape transition where it takes place, namely in the regions, and begin before structural change leads to structural disruptions. Structurally weak regions must catch up with the general economic development. Economic and social upward convergence is the common goal of the EU. In border areas, structural change must be shaped on a cross-border basis to ensure a balanced development of living, working, educational and social areas. The development of high-quality services of general interest is of central importance - not only for the attractiveness and accessibility of rural areas, but also as a location factor for the settlement of economic actors. Strong employee and trade union rights are indispensable, because numerous scientific studies by the European Commission show that European funds are used more sustainably where participation functions well. Co-determination guarantees efficiency and effectiveness. It is also important that EU structural funds are not cut in favour of EU recovery funds.

What the DGB demands in detail:

- › In the coming term, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU must agree on the budget for the 2028-2035 funding period. Even though in the German context reforming the European state aid framework is key in guiding the transition, it is important to increase the budget **for the EU structural funds**, as the structural funds also play a pivotal role in accompanying the transition process. This requires a coherent funding approach. European structural policy must be accompanied by strong workers' and trade union rights and co-determination in the use of funds.
- › In the coming funding period, special attention must also be paid to the **regions affected by structural change**. This is not only about the coal regions. The challenges of transition require an increase in funding for businesses and infrastructure support.
- › **Decent job criteria** must play a greater role in the structural funds as well as in regional aid. Collective agreement coverage, occupational health and safety as well as opportunities for training and further education must be taken into account in these criteria. The German joint task "Improvement of regional economic development" already provides numerous examples. This path must be pursued further in view of the shortage of skilled workers.
- › The **ESF+** must serve as the main instrument to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights. It is Europe's most important financial instrument for promoting employment and social inclusion, makes an important contribution to combating youth unemployment and helps to secure skilled labour. Therefore, it must be better funded in the next funding period.
- › In order to promote the mobility of older people, especially in border areas, cross-border concepts of **age-appropriate local public transport** must be developed, as well as corresponding price offers for senior citizens with low income in European long-distance public transport.

5. Social systems, collective bargaining and working conditions

Especially where public instruments did not take effect, the Corona crisis caused multiple social distortions. Employees lost their jobs, women in particular had to accomplish more and more unpaid care work, and young people were threatened with becoming a “generation lockdown”. One thing is clear: strong social security systems, good training and working conditions as well as higher wages and inclusive labour markets for all workers within the framework of collective agreements and company agreements in the EU are elementary in order to protect people against individual life risks and to secure urgently needed skilled workers in a changing world of labour. Fewer and fewer workers are protected by collective agreements that guarantee adequate collective wages and fair working conditions. Therefore, a determined and consistent implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (ESSR) is needed.

European minimum standards for employment and social systems promote cohesion in a European labour market without restricting Member States in shaping their national policies. Important milestones have already been reached with the recently proposed or adopted EU directives on adequate minimum wages, better working conditions of platform workers and for more wage transparency. Following this example, the implementation of the guiding principles of the EPSR must be further advanced in the coming legislative period.

What the DGB demands in detail:

- › The collective bargaining coverage in Germany is below the 80% threshold set in the Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages. Therefore, an **action plan** needs to be drawn up at national level to **promote collective bargaining** with the involvement of the social partners in order to gradually increase collective bargaining coverage.
- › In order to ensure that the objectives are achieved, the European Commission must carry out effective monitoring within the meaning of Article 10 of the **Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages in the European Union (2022/2041/EU)**. Only regular, effective monitoring can ensure that the objectives set out in the Directive with regard to collective bargaining coverage and minimum wages are achieved in the best possible way. The social partners' responsibility and scope for action must be further strengthened. Moreover, following the Minimum Wage Directive, there is now also a need for sector-specific minimum standards or basic fees for self-employed.
- › The extremely varying levels of protection in national unemployment insurance schemes call for a **framework directive to set minimum standards for all workers in national unemployment insurance schemes**. This should include minimum levels of eligibility, entitlement levels and duration, as well as coverage rates.
- › In order to effectively combat poverty and social exclusion, a **framework directive setting minimum standards for national basic income support systems** must be presented, building on the current Council Recommendation.
- › Stress, work intensification and time pressure in the world of work have been increasing for years. This poses a massive threat to the health of workers. It is therefore urgently necessary to present a **EU directive to protect workers from mental stress**. Even in an increasingly digital world of work, many workers are still exposed to considerable physical strain. A **directive on the protection against musculoskeletal disorders** is therefore necessary.

- › The European Parliament's position on the proposal for a directive on improving the working conditions of platform workers (2021/0414 (COD)) provides for important transparency and consultation rights for workers and their representatives. Due to the enormous importance and impact of **algorithmic systems** on the world of work, an initiative of the European Parliament and the European Commission is needed to at least extend these workers' rights to the whole world of work.
- › The **European Gender Equality Strategy** must be implemented effectively, especially in the form of qualitative and quantitative measures to strengthen women's participation in the labour market. After the expiry of the strategy in 2025, a renewal must be presented.
- › With the European Care Strategy published in 2022, the European Commission has focused on care and nursing with a view to harmonizing the two aspects. The strategy must be implemented consistently, especially through more state investment in the care sector and the introduction of binding European rules in the form of a **directive to transition informal work into formal work**, i.e. to regular, good working conditions and to combat precarious working conditions, especially for women in private households.
- › The European **LGBTIQ Equality Strategy**, which is in effect until 2025, must be implemented and further developed.
- › In order to better address the living situation of older people in Europe among other things, the DGB is calling for a **European anti-discrimination directive** that also includes protection against discrimination in old age.

6. Education and training

Across Europe, there is an increasing shortage of skilled labour in certain sectors. Skilled workers and manpower are particularly difficult to attract in areas with low wages and poor working conditions. Better training and working conditions as well as higher wages can improve the situation. Good collective and company agreements would provide the requisite basis. At the same time, also on account of a lack of education and training opportunities in Member States, the skilled labour needed for the transition cannot be recruited, qualified and retained in the long term. Women are particularly affected by both deficits.

To promote lifelong learning, Member States have endorsed the EU's social policy objectives for 2030, according to which at least 60% of adults should participate in continuing education measures each year. For its part, the European Commission has declared 2023 the European Year of Skills, focusing on education and training. Through European initiatives and funding to promote education and training in the Member States, the European Commission is seeking to optimise the quality and reputation of vocational education and training across Europe. However, without a debate on the introduction of a Europe-wide legal right to education and training and the definition of appropriate education and training standards, we will fall short of the defined goals. This debate must be held in the coming term of the European Parliament.

What the DGB demands in detail:

- › The vocational education and training system must be strengthened across Europe. This requires binding **Europe-wide legislation and a guarantee of high-quality and inclusive apprenticeships** for learners of all ages by way of an EU legal act in line with the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, taking into account collective agreements on apprentices' pay and working conditions.
- › Binding **minimum standards for training** must be defined at European level. Mandatory minimum standards include the existence of a training contract, the definition of learning objectives, qualified trainers in the company, the payment of trainees in both company-based and school-based training, the right to social protection, the right to vocational guidance and the participation of the social partners in the design, implementation and regulation of the training system.
- › In order to provide equal access to further and continuing education for all Europeans, a **European Qualifications Guarantee** is needed: the right to and guarantee of access to quality further and continuing education for all, including the development of key competences, basic knowledge and professional skills for people of all qualification levels and ages, as well as the legal right to time off for participation in further education.
- › EU-wide **recognition of formal qualifications and validation of work experience and non-formal and informal learning** must be reliable, valid and quality assured to ensure easier transition between systems and better mobility in Europe. The implementation of the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning must be enforced by a Council Decision.

- The **European Youth Guarantee** must constitute a genuine guarantee. Secure prospects for the future must urgently be offered to young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Programmes for this target group must be financed in such a way that they enable guaranteed participation for all interested parties.
- **Sustainable funding** for qualified and sufficient training opportunities, gender-sensitive participation of adults in lifelong learning and further training of workers as priorities in the framework of the **European Semester** and **NEXTGenerationEU** are needed, as well as stronger support for measures for professional upgrading and retraining through EU funding, especially from the European **Structural and Investment Funds**.
- Amendment of the **VAT Directive** (2006/112/EC) to unequivocally ensure that the provision of general education for the common good and socio-political education are exempt from VAT even if it is not related to the provision of vocational skills. The offers of general, political and cultural CET must not be disadvantaged compared to continuing vocational education.

7. Cross-border employment

The fundamental freedoms of the free movement of workers and the freedom to provide services in the EU have led to the formation of a European labour market. As social imbalances and high income disparities between Member States are too often not addressed in European legislation, this labour market has shortcomings and falls behind trade union demands for decent jobs and fair pay.

The Corona pandemic has particularly exposed the problems of the European labour market: Cross-border mobile workers - as well as migrant workers from third countries - are often the least protected against abuse and exploitation. The problems are even further exacerbated by inadequate labour controls and lack of law enforcement. The strike of Uzbek and Georgian lorry drivers at the Gräfenhausen service station has once again made it particularly clear that even criminal activity in the European internal market remains without consequences. Stricter and a much higher density of controls are indispensable to enforce workers' rights across national borders. Competition for the cheapest labour also puts pressure on the workforces in companies abiding to applicable labour and collective bargaining law.

In addition, there are still obstacles to the transfer and cross-border recognition of social benefits and pension entitlements. The rights of mobile workers, cross-border commuters and migrant workers must be further strengthened and their implementation guaranteed so that the principle of "equal pay for equal work in the same place", including comprehensive social security protection, is finally enforced.

What the DGB demands in detail:

- › The process of building a strong and effective **European Labour Authority** must continue to be closely monitored by the European Parliament in order to ensure greater commitment from all actors, especially the Member States. In the course of the evaluation of the European Labour Authority, the DGB calls for an extension of the authority's mandate in the area of inspections. Particular attention should be paid to risk sectors such as the logistics and construction industries.
- › Effective digital solutions to combat widespread social security abuse by employers, e.g. by introducing a **European social security passport** and the possibility to check relevant documents such as the A1-certificate in real time are needed.
- › Negotiations on the **reform of the social security coordination regulations** (Regulations 883/2004/987/2009) must be swiftly concluded in order to ensure comprehensive and complete social protection for mobile workers and to combat abusive practices more effectively.
- › Accommodation is often part of the employment relationship and is provided directly or indirectly by the employer. For years, the practice of trade unions and counselling centres has shown that the accommodation provided is often of an inhumane standard. To counteract this, an **EU directive** is needed to **set binding minimum standards for accommodation**.
- › Mobile workers in Europe and migrant workers from third countries are often placed abroad by domestic or foreign private intermediaries (often for high fees, sometimes paid monthly). To prevent abusive practices, recruitment agencies must be strictly regulated. Their activities must be subjected to compliance with minimum quality standards and the obligation to place people in decent jobs. This requires a **European legal act on private placement and recruitment**.

- The European Commission must permanently fund the establishment and expansion of trade union-related **advisory structures** for cross-border mobile workers and the networking of such structures in all Member States.
- Border closures during the Corona pandemic have led to massive restrictions on the right of free movement of workers, especially cross-border workers. Measures by EU Member States that have a negative impact on **border areas** must be consistently rejected and prevented.
- In the case of **European initiatives for the placement of skilled workers from third countries**, such as the Talent Pool and the so-called Talent Partnerships, it must be ensured through binding quality standards that placements are made into decent jobs with appropriate qualifications. European initiatives to recruit skilled workers from third countries with far-reaching consequences for employees and the labour market must always be adopted within the framework of the ordinary legislative procedure.
- Refugees can also be employees and skilled workers. In the context of readjusting the **European asylum policy**, the European institutions should also discuss the aspect of **integrating refugees** into society. Furthermore, European standards should be set regarding the access of recognised refugees to the **labour market in order** to enable them to gradually achieve equal treatment.
- The European Union has enacted far-reaching detailed regulations on immigration. These migration policy instruments only follow a coherent concept to a limited extent. It seems urgently necessary to develop **guidelines and conceptual framework conditions for the design of a European legal immigration**.

8. Co-determination

Workers' participation at company and enterprise level plays a crucial role in actively shaping a socially just transition to a climate-neutral and resource-efficient economy. In Germany and many other EU countries, it is a central element of the social market economy. However, this does not apply to all EU Member States. That is why the DGB is campaigning at European level for the protection and expansion of co-determination rights in European legislation, for example in the framework of European works councils and in European company law. There are currently around 1,200 active European or SE works councils. This makes them the only transnational representation of interests on a legal basis that is unfortunately in great need of reform. Additionally, the regulations on company law show loopholes that encourage the circumvention of board level employee representation rules. Thus, the adoption of further measures is necessary to achieve a reliable legal framework for strong European co-determination.

What the DGB demands in detail:

- › Companies using European directives to change their corporate constitution should be obliged to conduct negotiations to establish a European Works Council. This must be set out in an **EU framework directive on information, consultation and company co-determination**. In order to prevent the avoidance of board level employee representation rules, additional European-wide standards in this regard should be introduced for the above-mentioned companies. The mechanism for securing board level employee representation, especially in the case of a change of legal form to an SE, is to be based on the ETUC's "escalator principle". This was also recently called for by the European Parliament in its resolution on democracy at work (2019/2183(INL)).
- › It must be ruled out that companies can simply move their headquarters to the country with the lowest participation rights for workers or the lowest labour and social standards. Therefore, the **evaluation of the so-called Directive on cross-border conversion, merger and division (2017/1132/EU)**, planned for 1 February 2027 at the latest, must be carried out carefully and in good time, especially with regard to the *"effectiveness of the safeguards regarding negotiations of employee participation rights, taking into consideration the dynamic nature of companies growing cross-border"*.
- › To sustainably strengthen the assertiveness of European Works Councils, a **revision of Directive 2009/38/EC ("EWC Directive")** must be presented, in line with the legislative own-initiative report 2021/2005(INI) adopted by the European Parliament and the list of demands of the European Trade Union Confederation. In particular, a revision must include an injunctive relief and significantly tougher sanctions for non-compliance, strengthen the role of trade unions, facilitate access to justice and establish an appropriate definition of cross-border issues. The path taken by the European Parliament must be continued in a consistent and swift manner.
- › **Mainstreaming** of all European directives and regulations, especially those on corporate governance, for a **democratisation of the economy**. The basic idea is that the possible effects of all directives on people's living conditions and a desired democratisation of the economy must be taken into account.
- › The **participation of young employees and trainees** in corporate co-determination must be anchored at all levels. Especially where guaranteed co-determination rights for this group do not yet exist, effective instruments must be developed for this purpose. This needs to be effective up to the European level.

9. European regulatory framework

We must shape the world of work in the European Union in such a way that workers are not seen as a cost factor, but as people who are promoted and valued. The European reality of workers is often characterised by precarious employment, non-compliance with minimum wages or collective agreements and non-enforcement of their legal rights in cross-border employment. The economic freedoms of the internal market continue to be to the detriment of workers, as national labour and social law and national control measures are defined as bureaucratic obstacles and threatened with repeal. European workers are unsettled by this and partly react by turning away from the European project, as witnessed with the Brexit in the UK. This imbalance in favour of economic freedoms and to the detriment of workers' rights must be redressed in a definitive and legally binding way.

Furthermore, since the introduction of the European Better Regulation Agenda, it has been increasingly observed that social and employment standards have been weakened on grounds of arguments of bureaucratic burden. Furthermore, important results of the European Social Dialogue are called into question under the primacy of reducing bureaucracy. This must be counteracted to regain the trust of workers in the European project.

What the DGB demands in detail:

- › Recognised fundamental social rights, such as the right to strike, collective bargaining autonomy and workers' protection, have been subject to various attacks at European and international level for years and have thus been restricted and weakened. This requires the addition of a **social progress protocol** to the EU treaties in primary law in order to ensure the fundamental primacy of basic social rights, especially the right to strike (regardless of the sector), over economic freedoms.
- › To better take account of workers' rights and social matters in European jurisdiction, there is a need to introduce a **specialised chamber for labour and social law at the Court of Justice of the European Union** and to adopt a scale of fees in order to be able to reliably estimate the costs associated with court proceedings.
- › **The liberalisations** to date, for instance in rail and air transport or in ground handling and postal services, must be thoroughly reviewed by the European Commission, especially regarding their social consequences. In the case of a negative balance, re-regulation must take place. The liberalisation agenda needs a thorough review.
- › **Social partner agreements under Art. 155 TFEU** must be swiftly transformed into binding legislation by the European Commission. Social partner agreements should not be subject to an impact assessment.
- › The strengthening of the **sectoral social dialogue** announced by the European Commission must be accompanied by appropriate funding. The proposals must be reflected in concrete measures involving the social partners. Cuts in the budgets for social dialogue are counterproductive and unacceptable.

- There needs to be a rethink in the better regulation agenda, starting with the repeal of the **“one-in-one-out” principle** at EU level, whereby new directives can only be adopted if old directives are repealed in return. There is a need for a more sustainable and long-term approach to quality regulation, taking into account economic, social and environmental aspects with the same level of detail. The question of what constitutes “good regulation” should not be determined solely by whether rules involve administrative or business costs, are restrictive or complex, but above all by whether regulation effectively fulfils the purpose associated with it, e.g. the protection of employees or consumers.
- The preventive **gender mainstreaming principle** must be consistently implemented in European policy. This concerns in particular the gender budgeting principle and the gender equality check for all projects in the entire EU financial framework and budget planning, in order to prevent unequal treatment of women and men from the outset in all areas and to advance actual equality.

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