

ETUC 14th Congress - Vienna 22 May 2019

Speech by Oliver Roethig on Collective Bargaining Action

Colleagues,

UNI Europa calls for putting collective bargaining at the centre of our activities over the next four years. UNI Europa's key priority is reinforcing the collective bargaining power of our affiliates. All workers are entitled to be covered by sectoral collective agreements.

What we want is to pool the strengths of our unions. We want to enable each affiliate to deal successfully with factors from outside their country that impact collective bargaining.

What we need for this is a proper framework at EU level. The ETUC's role must be to reverse the EU's negative approach to collective bargaining.

We want an EU that throws out its neo-liberal agenda and becomes manifest pro-union and pro-worker. No to decentralising collective bargaining and yes to sectoral collective bargaining

The EU's Pillar of Social Rights has been a step in the right direction, because we pushed for it. However, as I said at the Pillar's first anniversary of the pillar last November: we only have a brightly shining candle but no cake yet. Recent EU legislation has not really changed this.

I call for us in the ETUC to focus on three priorities on collective bargaining:

First, Luca and I have been championing a European partnership for collective bargaining for some time. We want a clear commitment by the EU institutions, governments and employers to support sectoral collective bargaining.

We wanted a deal on the partnership before the European elections. That hasn't happened.

As Luca said yesterday, in June we meet with employers, the EU and member states in Bucharest. We must see real progress on the partnership there.

Our aim is an EU that promotes collective bargaining and sanctions those that try to undermine collective bargaining – whether governments or companies.

Second, the ETUC must push for EU legislation on due diligence.

France shows the way.

We must oblige multinational companies to ensure that workers' rights are respected throughout their value chain and in whatever country. It allows us to push for collective bargaining and the right to organise.

With the Bangladesh Accord, UNI and IndustriAll set a voluntary precedent for a due diligence process that works. This took the death of over 1,000 textile workers.

Never again – we want a European due diligence law now.

Third, public procurement. Simply: No public contract without collective agreement!

Colleagues,

The future of trade unions is not bleak; in particular, if we pursue a strategy that combines organising with aiming at sectoral collective agreements.

Just one highlight: In December, our Romanian union signed the first collective agreement for the finance sector. This success is due to the commitment of our Romanian colleagues, the solidarity of unions throughout Europe and the organising support from UNI Europa.

Both, organising and collective bargaining are two sides of the same medal – union power.

Strong unions and strong collective bargaining are the backbone of democracy.

Let's make it happen!

Glück auf!