

18 March 2021

Statement of the ETUC Collective Bargaining and Wage Coordination Committee

OPINION OF THE COUNCIL LEGAL SERVICE ON THE DIRECTIVE ON ADEQUATE MINIMUM WAGES IN THE EU – BETTER LATE THAN NEVER!

Last week, the EU Council's legal service finally delivered its opinion on the Directive on adequate minimum wages in the EU.

The opinion confirms what trade unions have been saying all along: a Directive is possible and the proposed Directive is drafted on the correct legal base, i.e. the protection of working conditions (Article 153(1)(b) TFEU in conjunction with Article 153(2) TFEU).

There are now no more excuses or alibis. EU Governments can no longer hide behind a curtain of legal arguments to justify their not taking action.

The Directive is about workers' lives, about the possibility for workers on minimum wages to make ends meet, to pay the rent, to put food on the table for them and their families.

The Directive is about the guarantee of the right of trade unions to negotiate fair conditions for workers.

Governments must take their responsibilities.

Now is the time for the Council to start discussing the content of the proposed Directive and advance it quickly to ensure improvements for European workers.

The Directive must be improved to protect against unintended consequences and detrimental impacts and to ensure that it lives up to its stated aims, thus ensuring adequate statutory minimum wages that protect all workers and guarantees at least a decent standard of living, the respect of the right to collective bargaining and real increases in collective bargaining coverage.

The Council legal service has clarified that the Directive has the correct legal basis, however it has overstepped its role by also proposing amendments and concrete formulations.

It is clear that it is up to the co-legislators, in this instance the Governments and Members of the European Parliament, to propose the changes needed to improve the proposed Directive - this is not a function of the Council legal service.

Now that the opinion of the legal service has been finally submitted, it is now prime time for European governments to show they can deliver!