

Declaration of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

Rejection in Switzerland of the so-called “limitation” initiative

Equal rights and efficient wage protection are the best solution for all workers, both European and Swiss

The so-called “limitation” popular initiative was a direct attack on the Swiss model combining free movement of persons and control of wages and working conditions. Its acceptance would have meant the end of the free movement of persons between the European Union and Switzerland, as well as a reassessment of the accompanying measures.

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) welcomes its clear rejection in a popular vote today, 27 September. The accompanying measures obtained and implemented by the Swiss trade unions are an example and a non-discriminatory model for strengthening the rights of workers, for fair mobility and for a social Europe. They guarantee that the effects of economic openness result in properly paid jobs without pressure on wages.

The ETUC advocates throughout Europe and towards the institutions of the European Union for effective measures against wage dumping and the deterioration of working conditions. Allowing wage dumping and wild competition only causes mistrust of the institutions at all levels. On the contrary, only a Europe that ensures fair and effective protection for working people has a future. Several member states and EU institutions are currently changing their approach on these issues, under pressure from the trade unions. We must continue the movement in this direction – and not weaken the protections in place.

The clear rejection of the popular initiative that aimed to return to the system of discriminatory quotas against workers coming from the EU and to weaken the rules on the labour market is a stage victory. Together with the Swiss trade unions, the ETUC will continue to commit to defending the accompanying measures and the protection of autonomous wages in Switzerland, wherever the attacks come from. These measures show the way forward: Europe needs more rights for workers, more wage protection and more inspections.

This is why the ETUC supports the position of the Swiss trade unions on the draft framework agreement with the EU. This new agreement must under no circumstances be used as a means to dismantle the accompanying measures aimed at protecting all workers, be they established in Switzerland or posted, from social dumping and the levelling down of wages.