



TOGETHER FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS

Minutes of the ETUC Standing Committee on Occupational Safety and Health

23 October 2025 (Brussels & hybrid)

Introduction

Giulio Romani opened the meeting by thanking participants for their engagement and added that thanks to the active contribution of members, the ETUC Executive Committee had unanimously adopted in early October a resolution on the sixth revision of the Carcinogens, Mutagens and Reprotoxics Directive (CMR6). Giulio Romani underlined that this outcome reaffirmed the central importance of occupational health and safety on the European trade union agenda. He stressed that defending the tripartite consensus reached in the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health is not merely procedural but a question of democracy, as ignoring it undermines the legitimacy of the EU social decision-making process.

Giulio Romani informed participants that ETUC is continuing to work with the co-legislators to ensure that trade union positions are fully respected in the forthcoming trilogue negotiations, noting positively that the Parliament's rapporteur, Ms Sommen (EPP, Belgium), has long-standing ties with the trade union movement. He expressed concern that the recent tendency to disregard ACSH tripartite opinions must stop with the CMR case. ETUC is also closely following discussions on the revision of the Directives on workplaces and display screen equipment.

Discussion on the Quality Jobs Act

Turning to the second item of the agenda, Giulio Romani introduced ETUC's work on the forthcoming European Roadmap and Act on Quality Jobs, announced by Commission President von der Leyen in September 2025 and led by Vice-President Minzatu. He described the initiative as a call to action to reaffirm a European vision of decent work built on fair wages, secure employment, and full respect for trade union rights. He presented ETUC's concrete demands: a Directive on psychosocial risks and harassment (including online), a legal framework on subcontracting and labour intermediaries, strong rules on AI at work, a Directive on telework and the right to disconnect, the strengthening of workplace democracy, a reform of public procurement rules linking EU funds to respect for workers' rights, and finally, the elimination of precarious work.

In conclusion, Romani warned against a narrative that prioritises competitiveness over social justice, arguing that deregulation weakens Europe rather than strengthening it. He reiterated that occupational health and safety are fundamental rights and drew attention to the ILO's 2025 call for the ratification of Conventions 155 and 187. ETUC fully supports



the ITUC campaign urging all affiliates to promote ratification in countries where it is still pending. In this regard, the list of countries failing to have ratified one or both conventions that ETUC issued in 2022 remains valid and it is available at the following link: <https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/red-card-eu-countries-over-failure-support-workplace-safety-fundamental-right>

Giulio Romani closed by emphasising that the quality of work, health and safety, and industrial democracy are integral parts of a single vision — that of a strong and socially just Europe where work is treated with dignity, because, as Giulio Romani concluded, “work is not a commodity”.

The following organisations took the floor: GSEE, FO, DGB, LO-S, MASZSZ, EFBWW, CGT.

ETUC thanked participants for their interventions and added that Commissioner Minzatu will take part in the upcoming meeting of the ETUC Executive Committee, where further information is expected on the forthcoming Quality Jobs Roadmap and Act. ETUC expressed its hope that psychosocial risks will be included in the policy and legislative proposals. An assessment will be made as soon as the document becomes available, and members of the ETUC OSH Committee will be informed in a timely manner on whether psychosocial risks are included and under which legislative framework.

Giulio Romani further noted that many of ETUC’s demands have a direct impact on occupational safety and health, even when they are not exclusively focused on this area—for instance, ETUC initiative on limiting subcontracting chains. In this context, Giuseppe Perretti (EFBWW) briefly presented the main demands of the joint EFBWW–ETF–EFFAT campaign (more information available at: <https://www.efbww.eu/news/efbww-effat-etf-launch-joint-campaign-to-limit-subcontracting-an/4097-a>). A relevant article on this topic also featured in the latest issue of the ETUI journal HESAMAG.

Károly György (MASZSZ), in his capacity as expert for the EESC opinion on Zero Death at Work, presented the main elements of this very strong and well-received opinion whose rapporteur was the colleague Nicoletta Merlo (more information available at: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/how-can-active-and-inclusive-prevention-approach-contribute-better-health-and-safety-workplace-0-death-goals>).

ETUI colleagues were thanked for their continuous support in providing scientific evidence to underpin ETUC’s political positions.

Finally, member organisations were informed about the latest developments on the 6th revision of the CMR Directive at Council level, particularly regarding the inclusion of isoprene.



Presentation of upcoming activities within the framework of the project

ETUC presented the project (see Powerpoint [here](#)) "Prevention of OSH risks climate, PSR factors and EU strategy", which started with the kick-off seminar in Belgrade in May 2025 and focuses on three core objectives: examining trade union strategies to address occupational safety and health risks linked to climate change and the expanding green economy; advancing evidence and proposals on psychosocial risks at work; and strengthening trade union involvement in integrating, monitoring, and enforcing OSH provisions within EU trade agreements. Through an analytical research phase, external experts will assess climate-related risks to workers and review sectoral and company-level strategies negotiated by social partners, including unilateral trade union actions. Parallel work will identify trade union expectations for EU legislation on psychosocial risks and outline how social dialogue and collective bargaining can further address these challenges. Additional research will evaluate how OSH commitments in EU trade agreements are implemented in practice, producing guidance to support companies and unions in mitigating related risks.

Building on this evidence, the project will produce several outputs, including guidance on company-level risk-mitigation strategies, a report on OSH clauses in trade agreements developed with contributions from EU and non-EU unions, and an internally developed report on the content of a prospective EU Directive on psychosocial risks. In the dissemination phase, the findings will be presented to ETUC bodies, the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health, and a wider community of national and European stakeholders. The project also includes two conferences—one at the start and one at the end—and three thematic seminars across EU member states to translate analytical results into concrete policy recommendations.

The following organisations took the floor: EPSU, FO, CGT, GSEE, LO, DGB, FNV, ETUI, and MASZSZ.

Updating ETUC's position on the REACH revision

Giulio Romani recalled that ETUC had presented its position on the revision of the REACH Regulation to the Executive Committee in September 2023. He explained that members' contributions at that time had helped shape a balanced position - one that responded to concerns from different sectors while reaffirming the need for high levels of worker protection and recognising the industrial implications linked to chemical regulation.

ETUC then outlined the current state of play. The European Commission was still preparing its proposal for the REACH revision, now expected in early 2026 instead of late 2025. According to ETUC's understanding, the Regulatory Scrutiny Board had considered earlier drafts too business-oriented and insufficiently in line with REACH's core objectives - protecting human health and the environment - which partly explains the delay.



The following questions had been submitted ahead of the meeting of the OSH Committee:

According to your organisation, which parts (of the ETUC resolution of September 2023) remain valid as is, and which need clarification or change?

Where should we strengthen worker-protection/OSH provisions and industrial concerns?

What updates are needed in light of recent developments (e.g. PFAS restriction process; Essential Use concept and criteria)?

Giulio explained why ETUC considered it necessary to update its position. He noted that the concept of “Essential Use,” which ETUC had assessed critically in 2023, had since been clarified by the European Commission in April 2024 through two cumulative conditions determining what may be considered essential. While these developments supported substitution of hazardous substances, Giulio stressed that major uncertainties remained on how the concept would be operationalised in legislation, how “acceptable alternatives” would be defined, who would decide on them, and what level of performance loss could be accepted. ETUC also insisted that any essential-use exemptions must be time-limited and accompanied by measures to minimise exposure. He invited members to provide their views so these elements could be reflected in the revised ETUC position.

Turning to PFAS, which is another element that may merit a revision of the ETUC position, ETUC highlighted the growing evidence linking occupational exposure to cancer and reproductive disorders across many sectors. Giulio stressed that ETUC continues to support comprehensive restrictions with phase-outs for non-essential uses, but insisted that workers’ exposure must be fully integrated into assessments, which currently tend to focus more on environmental emissions. He recalled the enormous societal costs linked to PFAS contamination, drawing a parallel with the long legacy of asbestos. It was informed that five countries - Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden - had jointly requested a general restriction, and that ECHA had now issued an updated proposal expanding sectoral assessments and analysing circumstances under which risks could be controlled. Giulio pointed out that ECHA’s scientific committees were reviewing the health and socio-economic consequences and that their final opinions were expected by the end of 2026. ETUC insisted that workers must be placed at the centre of this process.

Finally, ETUC presented the next steps. Giulio proposed reviewing and updating the ETUC position ahead of the Commission’s proposal and invited members to share their views on the Essential Use concept, their concrete suggestions for strengthening the treatment of worker exposure in PFAS restrictions, and any further updates needed to the 2023 position. He informed the group that the trade union taskforce on REACH would meet shortly to continue the discussion and that an online meeting with all members would be organised in early 2026 to examine a draft report.



ETUC encouraged members to take the floor to contribute or to send written input if preferred.

The following organisations took the floor: IndustriAll, FO, EPSU, DGB, ETUI, CGT, and FNV.

ETUC clarified that, concerning the concept of “essential use”, the Commission’s proposal had already been examined when the Communication was published and was reflected in the General Secretary’s communication to the Executive Committee in early 2024. The issue can, of course, be further discussed in the context of a possible revision of the ETUC resolution on the revision of REACH, should members wish to do so. The enforcement of the regulation remains a priority for the trade union movement, as does the need to push for safer alternatives.

The suggestion to include a reference to the need for a just transition within the framework of REACH was well received and considered a valuable point for a potential new document. One colleague also highlighted the importance of depollution, which could be incorporated into the resolution if members agree.

ETUC also clarified that two parallel processes are under way: the REACH revision, which — due to the Regulatory Scrutiny Board — has been postponed to early 2026; and the PFAS restriction, initiated at the request of the Netherlands, and the other countries mentioned before, for which ECHA will soon present its conclusions.

Point of information on ACSH

Sebastian Schneider, in his capacity of chair of the Workers’ Interest Group of the ACSH, reported on the latest meeting of the bureau of the ACSH. The need for better coordination of the members of the government’s group within the Chemicals Working Party, particularly in light of the fact that isoprene was not included in the Commission’s proposal, had been addressed. Another important topic discussed was the additional impact assessment linked to the revision of the Directive on workplaces and on display screen equipment. Also, it was announced that a presentation from Eurostat is foreseen during the December plenary session.

The proposal to organise extra meetings after plenary sessions, structured as workshops, was also discussed. However, further clarification is needed to ensure that democratic decision-making procedures are fully respected.

Progress within the Working Party on Climate Change remains difficult. The Working Party on Psychosocial Risks is also advancing very slowly. The Governments’ Interest Group is in alignment with the Workers’ Interest Group in relation to what should be included in a definition on PSR, but the employers’ group oppose this. All groups are in agreement that definitions are a necessary first step, and this will be the first agenda



point in December's meeting. The Commission considers that the discussions are constructive.

The Vision Zero Working Party is currently inactive. There is interest in relaunching it, particularly as the Cypriot Presidency intends to prioritise this topic. Additional ideas to help restart this working party would be welcome.

The following organisations took the floor: CGT and GSEE.

ETUC added that the proposal for “zero workplaces without risk assessment” seemed to be interesting.

Point of information on EU-OSHA

Andreas Stoimenidis, in his capacity of chair of the Workers' Interest Group of the agency EU-OSHA [presented](#) the three lines of action of the new strategy. The EU-OSHA strategy for 2025–2034 aims to protect workers by addressing new challenges such as digitalisation and the green transition. It is built around three pillars: generating knowledge and evidence to support policy, developing practical tools to prevent OSH risks, and raising awareness to promote a strong prevention culture. The strategy highlights the importance of close cooperation with social partners to ensure maximum impact across the EU.

The ongoing campaign on digitalisation will conclude in December, and an overview was given of the closing summit in Bilbao, including the various parallel sessions planned.

The next campaign, focusing on mental health at work, was also introduced. This will be the ninth campaign organised under the slogan “*Safety and health at work is everyone's business. It is good for workers and it is good for companies*”. The campaign is expected to concentrate on new or previously overlooked occupational groups, sectors and areas. Its aims are to raise awareness of how a good working environment influences mental health, to strengthen practical knowledge on the prevention of psychosocial risks, and to promote thorough assessments of these risks. Thanks to the work of the Workers' Interest Group, the approach adopted for the upcoming campaign will reflect the ETUC's main demands on the prevention of psychosocial risks, including a preventive and organisational approach and the involvement of trade unions, among other key elements. The agency will soon begin discussions on the campaign for the next period (2027-2029).

Updates were provided on the agency's sound governance and management, as well as the main decisions adopted by the Management Board. Also, Andreas said that the MFF Commission's proposal has maintained the funding for EU-OSHA.



An update was also given on NAPO, whose continuation now appears to be secured. A concern was raised that, too often, blame for workplace accidents in NAPO films is placed on workers.

The following organisations took the floor: MASZSZ, FO, and CGT.

In the conclusions, colleagues were informed that the MFF budget of the agency will be adjusted annually to account for inflation. It was also noted that Giulio will be one of the speakers at the summit.

PPE standards

Joanne Houston, member of the ETUC standardisation department, [presented](#) the work of the ETUC Task Force on Personal Protective Equipment Standardisation, created in the framework of the wider ETUC Standardisation Project. The project aims to strengthen trade union influence in standardisation both at the political level – notably in the context of the upcoming revision of EU Regulation 1025/2012 – and at the technical level through the direct involvement of trade union experts in selected technical committees. The Task Force also contributes to capacity-building through training activities and supports awareness-raising by improving the communication and sharing of information on standardisation with trade unions.

The group's structure and working methods were explained. The ETUC Standardisation Secretariat coordinates the overall work, while a nominated expert represents the ETUC in standardisation meetings and additional experts contribute to ETUC positions on topical standards. The Task Force typically meets two to three times per year, mostly online, and provides written feedback during official enquiry phases launched by CEN. These enquiries are key moments, as they allow the ETUC to submit consolidated comments on draft standards based on the input of all Task Force members. ETUC also participates in the CEN Coordination Group on PPE, where general updates in the field are shared.

Regarding current and future work, ETUC is involved in the revision of EN 469 on protective clothing for firefighters and is preparing for the upcoming revision of EN 136 on respiratory protective devices, for which a call for experts has been published. The intention is to broaden the scope of the Task Force, including through an application to join the European Commission Expert Group on PPE. Several additional harmonised standards linked to the PPE Regulation may also become relevant, depending on available resources and expertise.

The following organisations took the floor: FNV.

The Secretariat also referred to ongoing standardisation activities related to biometrics, noting their relevance for occupational safety and health. A gender approach is key in the



work of PPE and this is at the very core of the Task Force, together with respect to other groups.

Machinery Directive

Katrin Behnke, member of the ETUC standardisation department, [presented](#) an update on the ETUC's work on machinery, noting that working with machines remains a major source of occupational accidents across Europe. Injury numbers continue to rise, with machine-related accidents increasing from 75,000 in 2014 to 80,000 in 2019, and more than a quarter of fatal workplace accidents in the EU resulting from loss of control of machinery, tools, or handling equipment. ETUC has closely followed the transition from the Machinery Directive to the new Machinery Regulation and is now actively engaged in the implementation phase.

An overview was provided of the ETUC Task Force on Machinery, which coordinates trade union involvement in selected European and international machinery standardisation processes. The Task Force provides input to legislative initiatives, supports ETUC experts participating in CEN and ISO committees, and facilitates coordinated interventions at national and European level. Its work is carried out in close cooperation with ETUI, industriAll, EFFAT and EFBWW, ensuring consistent trade-union positions on machinery safety. Current areas of involvement include standardisation work on EN ISO 12100 (risk assessment principles), EN 614-1 (ergonomic design principles), and contributions to the CEN-CENELEC Coordination Group on machinery standards.

The presentation focused in particular on the ongoing revision of the EC Guide to the Application of Machinery Legislation, which is being updated to reflect the changes introduced by the new Machinery Regulation. This guide is widely used by industry to interpret regulatory requirements. ETUC nominates experts to several subgroups covering topics such as AI and software safety functions, risks of contact with overhead powerlines, seating, mobile and autonomous machinery, cybersecurity, and digital instructions. The next steps include finalising ETUC's written input, participating in meetings to resolve comments with other interested parties, and contributing to the editing of the guide. Parts of the updated guide will be published progressively as soon as they are finalised.

The following organisations took the floor: DGB.

ETUC stressed that industry is actively lobbying to influence the revision of the Interpretation Guide to the Machinery Regulation. She noted concerns that these lobbying efforts may aim to weaken or reshape key elements of the guidance in ways that could affect worker protection.

In response to a question about the legal status of the guide, it was clarified that the European Commission's guidance does not constitute a legally binding text. Rather, it



serves only as an interpretative document intended to support the application of the Regulation.

Conclusion

Giulio Romani underlined several key priorities for the ETUC. First, he stressed the importance of continuing the fight against deregulation and austerity from an occupational health and safety perspective. He highlighted the need to ensure that OSH legislation is fully integrated into the Quality Jobs Act, with a specific emphasis on the inclusion of a Directive on the prevention of psychosocial risks.

He also recalled the forthcoming work to update the ETUC position on REACH and invited colleagues—especially the European Trade Union Federations—to actively participate in the dedicated task force. Giulio referred to the activities that will be developed within the project on psychosocial risks and occupational heat. He further reported on the advocacy efforts underway to improve the sixth revision of the CMR Directive, noting that the ETUC has written to employers in an attempt to reach a consensual position, but no reply has yet been received.

Finally, he emphasised the importance of maintaining consensual opinions within the ACSH. He concluded by noting that this is not the most favourable moment for the trade union movement, and that strong work at national level will be essential.