

Preparing for a successful enlargement

With enlargement on the EU agenda the EU institutions, the candidate countries, Member States and social partners have a common task in maintaining and developing socially sustainable labour markets and fair competition across Europe.



A merit-based approach

A fundamental condition for accession of new EU Member States must be full respect for fundamental rights and principles including **freedom of expression, rule of law and workers' rights**. On paper and in practice. This is the only way to create fair competition between companies and benefit all workers in Europe.

A resilient future requires the EU to put its own house in order

EU enlargement is not just a geopolitical imperative. It is a chance to build a more just, cohesive and resilient Europe. It is not enough to demand reform from candidate countries. The EU must also address existing internal market challenges prior to enlargement. Without this, enlargement risks increasing unfair practices in the Single Market.

Fair rules for fair competition begin now

To succeed, the EU Commission and co-legislators must, before the next enlargement, guarantee that workers in the old and the new Member States have equal pay for equal work in the same workplace and that companies compete on a level playing field. This will benefit Europe with economic growth, high quality jobs, a strong labour market and a fair single market.

More specifically 3F urges the **Commission, European Parliament and the Council** prior to before the next enlargement to ensure that:

- The respect for Article 28 of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights is enforced by actively monitoring progress and setbacks and addressing these
- The candidate countries are included early in the work of the European Labour Authority (ELA)
- The European Social Security Pass (ESSPASS) extends to include labour law, to create a unified digital system, simplifying the integration of social security and labor rights across the EU
- The public procurement legislation is improved to promote decent work and fair competition for businesses
- The need for a smoother functioning EU with more Member States does not lead to the use of passarelle clauses in employment and social policies, because it can have a negative effect on labour market models and welfare systems



United Federation of
Workers in Denmark

Workers want new EU initiatives before the next enlargement

There is a strong demand for the EU to lead by example and ensure its labour standards are robust before new members join.

85% of 3F members say new EU initiatives are needed to protect workers before further enlargement takes place.

Turning challenges into opportunities

Many candidate countries face serious shortcomings in labour rights and their enforcement and social dialogue. Enlargement offers a rare opportunity to empower labour standards in the candidate countries before they become Member States.

Most candidate countries have a cluster ranking of 3 or higher on the global rights index. A high-rated cluster means that workers in the country have no right to their collective voice due to government failure to guarantee rights.

Country	Global Rights Index's cluster ranking: 5+ (worst) to 1 (best)
Albania	3 - Regular violations of rights
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3 - Regular violations of rights
Georgia	4 - Systematic violations of rights
Moldova	2 - Repeated violations of rights
Montenegro	3 - Regular violations of rights
North Macedonia	4 - Systematic violations of rights
Serbia	4 - Systematic violations of rights
Turkey	5 - No guarantee of rights
Ukraine	5 - No guarantee of rights

Elevating labour rights in candidate countries

To provide the best possible outcome for the negotiation between the EU and the candidate countries, multiple actors play a key role in ensuring social and labour rights, strong social partners and transparency.

For Candidate Countries:

- Boost the usage of digital tools: Implement digital tools like business registers, postings registers, and social security coordination to enhance transparency and prevent unfair competition.

For the Commission:

- Strengthen the monitoring and enforcement: Conduct fact-finding missions to monitor and enforce social and labour rights in candidate countries.
- Facilitate annual dialogues: Create a platform for yearly discussions between social partners from candidate countries and EU Member States to foster cross-country and sector-wide social dialogue.
- The social dialogue and industrial relations in candidate countries are invested in financially by earmarked funds

For the Commission and Member States:

- Ensure compliance with standards: Politically push for adherence to ILO and EU labor standards in candidate countries.

We cannot afford to repeat past mistakes

The two enlargements in the 2000s triggered two decades of labour market challenges and patchwork solutions to social dumping, unfair competition, labour exploitation and pulled labour from East to West, leaving new Member States in the East with serious brain drain and skilled and unskilled workers from the old and the new Member States exposed to social dumping



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