CETUN
CENTRAL EUROPEAN TRADE UNION NETWORK

Resolution

No Austerity on Workers' Backs: Solidarity with Slovak Workers Against Unfair Budget Cuts

Brussels, 29 September 2025 | **In Slovakia, as across Europe, budget consolidation plans are hitting workers hardest, while leaving the biggest corporations and private fortunes largely untouched. Pushed through without or insufficient social dialogue, these cuts threaten labour rights, social protections, and decades of hard-won progress. In light of current plans of the Slovak government, CETUN stands in solidarity with Slovak workers and calls for fair, socially responsible fiscal policies.**

Introduction

CETUN stands in full solidarity with the Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic (KOZ SR), which is opposing the government's latest budget consolidation package. Adopted without genuine social dialogue, the measures freeze wages, cut benefits, raise worker contributions, and cancel agreed protections, thus forcing employees to bear the heaviest burden while the wealthiest remain untouched. CETUN denounces this unfair approach and supports KOZ SR and Slovak workers in their fight for justice, dignity, and respect.

No budget consolidation at the sole expense of workers

While the current deregulation wave at European level is hitting labour rights, climate policies, nature protection, public health and more, in the name of a deeply flawed and one-dimensional idea of competitiveness, a succession of crises has intensified the pressures on national budgets. Shackled by the budgetary constraints of the European Union's fiscal reference values as stipulated in the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), many national governments embarked on radical efforts to consolidate their budgets.

More often than not, budget consolidation efforts focus almost entirely on cutting spending instead of sourcing new revenues and make working people bear all or the largest part of the burden. Meanwhile, the biggest fortunes, large-scale corporate subsidies or tax loopholes are left untouched. Such economic, societal and democratic short-sightedness is unacceptable.

Equitable fiscal policy must ensure that public resources are managed responsibly without sacrificing decades of social gains or compromising the well-being and dignity of workers. Workers across Europe already face the daily challenges of rising living costs, job insecurity, and limited social protections. Imposing austerity measures, cutting benefits, or reducing labour rights as a means to balance the budget exacerbates inequality, stifles consumption and slows economic growth.

On the consolidation package in Slovakia and its impact on workers

As in most European countries, Slovakia is facing the economic consequences of recent crises. As a member of the EU and the Eurozone, Slovakia has the obligation to conform with the fiscal reference values of the SGP. This obligation calls for budget consolidation measures.

However, we follow with deep concern the situation in Slovakia and support the objections raised by the Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic (KOZ SR) regarding the form and content of the government's consolidation package. The European community is founded on values of respect and dialogue with social partners. It is unthinkable that such fundamental measures, which directly affect all Slovak citizens and workers, are not properly discussed with their representatives.

We note that the Slovak government has already pushed through a third consolidation package, once again without prior dialogue, agreement, or respect for social partnership rules. Instead of pursuing necessary reforms with long-term effect, the government opts for short-sighted measures that place the heaviest burden on workers.

We consider it unacceptable that workers, who cannot avoid or "optimise" their obligations towards the state, are yet again asked to bear the greatest share of the burden, while other actors remain largely untouched. The proposed measures will cost workers around €814 million – almost €400 per employed person – and public sector employees will additionally lose agreed wage increases through the unilateral cancellation of collectively bargained wage indexation. Such a breach of agreement constitutes a serious violation of social dialogue and a sign of disregard towards employee representatives.

Overview of the main changes imposed by the Slovak government

- Wage freeze in the public sector – despite a 5% wage increase agreed in collective bargaining from 1 January 2026, the government proposes zero indexation.
- Changes in personal income tax rates – reduction of the non-taxable allowance and new tax brackets, hitting not the richest but mainly the middle-income earners.
- Increase of employee health insurance contributions by 1 percentage point – directly lowering net wages for all workers.
- Reduction of public holidays and retail restrictions – cancellation of three public holidays as days of rest and abolition of retail trade ban on nine holidays, leading to more working hours for retail workers with less compensation.
- Cuts in unemployment benefits – drastic reduction of the safety net: 50% of previous wage for the first 3 months, then reduced step by step to only 20% in the last support month.

In solidarity with Slovak workers

CETUN emphasizes that the situation in Slovakia is not isolated. Across Central Europe, governments are increasingly making workers bear the costs of fiscal consolidation, while large corporations and the wealthiest contribute little or nothing. This regional perspective highlights that defending workers' rights, protecting social dialogue, and ensuring fair responsibilities is a shared concern. Solidarity with Slovak workers thus represents the united voice of Central European trade unions committed to socially just fiscal policies and democratic labour standards.

CETUN therefore:

1. Condemns the Slovak government's approach of pushing through consolidation measures without genuine social dialogue and against the principle of respect for social partners.
2. Rejects the unfair shifting of the fiscal burden primarily onto workers and the middle class.

3. Calls on the Slovak government and parliament to stop these regressive measures and to engage in meaningful negotiations with social partners to design socially just fiscal consolidation.
4. Stresses that social-democratic governments must be able to engage in dialogue and ensure fair burden-sharing, with contributions from the wealthiest and protections for the most vulnerable, including employees.
5. Expresses full support to KOZ SR and solidarity with Slovak workers in their struggle for justice, dignity, and respect.

Conclusion

True fiscal responsibility requires equitable measures, shared across all sectors of society, rather than short-sighted cuts that disproportionately burden those who can least afford it. CETUN stands firm in solidarity with Slovak workers and calls on governments across Europe to uphold social dialogue, respect collective agreements, and ensure that reforms strengthen, rather than undermine, the dignity, security and well-being of workers.

About

The Central European Trade Union Network (CETUN) assembles trade unions from Czechia, Croatia, Liechtenstein, Hungary, Montenegro, Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Serbia, and Switzerland. As a regional grouping of ETUC members, the network's goal is to foster trade union structures and social dialogue in the region. Through greater cooperation and coordination, participants aspire to promote common themes at European level.

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