



Summary of the V4 meeting – Gdańsk, 9 October 2025

Meeting of the Visegrad Trade Union Group was held in the historic OHS Hall of the Gdańsk Shipyard. It was the second meeting organized after a long break caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The event was organized with the support of the International Visegrad Fund as part of the project “Strengthening trade union cooperation in the V4 Region”.

This was a high-level meeting attended by leaders and experts from leading trade union organizations from the Visegrad Group countries – organizations affiliated to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). Esther Lynch, ETUC General Secretary also participated in the meeting.

The meeting was preceded by a solemn laying of flowers at the Monument of the Fallen Shipyard Workers who were killed during the events on the Baltic Coast in 1970.

The agenda covered the following issues:

- collective bargaining in the V4 countries;
- competitiveness of the V4 Region – opportunities and challenges;
- EU industrial and trade policy – the perspective of the V4 countries;
- security in the Region – defense spending, military threats and migration;
- in addition, the key priorities in the work of the ETUC were presented.

1. Main topics and themes of discussion

Green Deal and energy transition

The participants raised concerns about the impact of the Green Deal on industry in the V4 Region, job losses and growing dependence on China. They emphasized the need to take measures to ensure that the Green Deal policy does not lead to increased poverty and job losses. Among other things, discussions also focused on the need for a moratorium on redundancies if there are no plans for employees. It was suggested that a system equivalent to EU ETS should be introduced, which would impose charges on companies that do not respect workers’ rights and do not conclude collective agreements.

The situation of industry and industrial policy

Delegates agreed that current EU policy is leading to the decline of industrial sectors in the Region and that competitiveness cannot be based on low wages. An active industrial policy having at its core innovation and high-quality work is essential. Currently, investments are channeled outside the EU. There is growing social discontent with the observed consequences of the policies pursued. It was stated that progressive deindustrialization could lead to a situation where workers in different countries would compete for innovation by agreeing to work for wages lower than their colleagues in neighboring states. Investments which generate high-quality jobs are viewed as necessary.

Collective agreements and social dialogue

There has been noticeable weakening of social dialogue in the V4 countries. Refusals to sign collective agreements and situations in which agreements have been terminated are not uncommon. Particularly shocking are cases of violations of social dialogue principles in state-owned enterprises and agreements to which one of the parties are public authorities. According to the participants, the enforcement of



existing law is insufficient. The pace of wage growth remains unsatisfactory, especially given the persistent wage disparities between the V4 and Western European countries. In order to improve collective bargaining coverage rates, the need to centralize collective bargaining systems and motivate employers to join associations was highlighted. It was also pointed out that social dialogue would be more effective if trade unions themselves were strengthened. The need to support efforts to organize workers was emphasized. Existing strike regulations very often make it difficult to organize strikes.

Minimum wage directive and CJEU ruling

The effects of the CJEU ruling, which could eliminate such an important instrument as the Directive on adequate minimum wages in the European Union, were discussed. A negative decision by the Court could significantly weaken the social dimension of European integration and strengthen anti-EU sentiment. In addition, governments are delaying implementation while awaiting the Court's decision, despite the already existing significant delay in implementation. Participants expressed the need for changes to EU Treaties to strengthen social regulations at EU level.

Regional cooperation within the V4 and European Trade Union Confederation

Participants agreed on the need to enhance coordination of trade union activities both within the Region and across the EU. The potential for coordinated European-wide strikes was explored, and the importance of reinforcing the role of the Central and Eastern European Region within the ETUC was acknowledged.

Economic and social security

The risks arising from fiscal policy and budget cuts, particularly in the public sector, were highlighted. There is a growing problem of underinvestment in the public services sector. Energy, armaments and food security were also discussed, as was the need to protect key sectors of the economy. It was emphasized that both EU climate policy and trade agreements, especially the agreement with the MERCOSUR region, reduce the EU's independence from third countries, and their economic and social impacts are not sufficiently assessed. There was broad agreement that current tax policies are unjust. Governments tend to prioritize revenue collection from workers while granting preferential treatment to businesses, and show little effort to reform the system—such as by addressing the existence of so-called tax havens within the EU.

The future of the labor market

Attention was drawn to the growing psychosocial risks, the increasing automation of work and the marginalization of the role of humans in management processes. In light of these ongoing transformations, there is a pressing need for training programs and skills upgrading.

All participants expressed their satisfaction with the opportunity to meet and discuss such important issues. The role of the Visegrad Group was emphasized, common interests of trade unions and similar views on key challenges in the Region were identified. It was agreed that cooperation within this format should be continued and strengthened, and that it should have a greater impact on the Region's position in European structures where trade unions are represented.

The meeting featured a presentation on the International Visegrad Fund and the projects it supports, delivered by the Fund's representative, Ms Karolina Janik.