

Resolution 2146 (2017)¹

Reinforcing social dialogue as an instrument for stability and decreasing social and economic inequalities

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In the globalised economy in the early 21st century, social partners – trade unions, employers' federations and public authorities – are acting in a complex environment. Trade unions in particular are expected to represent the interests of workers in the face of various, often contradictory, trends which have significantly changed their role in social dialogue, both at national and European level, and in society in general.
2. Like other labour market institutions, trade unions need to adapt to the fast-evolving world of work, which continually requires new capacities from workers at all levels. They also need to react to declining membership levels in their organisations, and to an increasing use of information technologies and social media as means of communication, including in labour relations. In a number of countries the scope of action and influence of trade unions, and collective bargaining coverage, has diminished over the years due to legal restrictions applied to collective labour rights under austerity programmes, as already pointed out by the Parliamentary Assembly in [Resolution 2033 \(2015\)](#) on the protection of the right to bargain collectively, including the right to strike.
3. The Assembly is concerned about some of these trends negatively affecting trade unions and social dialogue. It fears that the diminished importance and changing role of trade unions could further increase currently widening social and economic inequalities. Trade unions themselves should be prudent and take the utmost care to always act in a democratic manner and avoid contradictory decisions, for example when acting as economic stakeholders and investors themselves.
4. While the collective rights they defend, including the right to strike, should be protected as essential elements of the European social model, trade unions should act in a responsible and accountable manner at all times. While any legal restrictions to trade union action, including the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike, should only be applied in full respect of international standards as laid down by the International Labour Organization (ILO), trade unions should always use their fullest discretion and bear in mind their social responsibilities by keeping strike action as targeted as possible. A precondition for fruitful social dialogue is internal consent and mutual trust between the social partners that their respective interests will be understood and respected.
5. Convinced that the need for a strong social dialogue, based on a healthy balance of power, an open and trustful dialogue and full respect for international standards, should be recognised and its implementation supported by all social partners, the Assembly calls on member States to:
 - 5.1. ratify and fully implement the European Social Charter (Revised) (ETS No. 163) and the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter Providing for a System of Collective Complaints (ETS No. 158), if this has not yet been done, and draw up or revise national labour legislation accordingly to conform to these standards;

1. *Assembly debate* on 25 January 2017 (6th Sitting) (see [Doc. 14216](#), report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Mr Ögmundur Jónasson). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 25 January 2017 (6th Sitting).



- 5.2. promote and support industrial relations and collective bargaining coverage, through appropriate legal frameworks and constructive political action, as a means of securing the stability of economic processes and of decreasing social and economic inequality;
 - 5.3. reverse, wherever necessary, the measures which weaken social dialogue, including by re-establishing social dialogue institutions where they have been abolished, with a view to bringing national social dialogue and other collective rights back into conformity with the International Covenant on Social and Economic Rights, the ILO conventions, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the European Social Charter;
 - 5.4. keep legal limitations on the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike to the strict minimum, as provided for by well-established ILO and European standards;
 - 5.5. raise the awareness of all social partners of their specific roles, of the need for responsibility and accountability in social dialogue and industrial action, as well as of the need to respect individual and collective social rights and democratic processes when it comes to collective action;
 - 5.6. co-operate closely in designing modern labour market policies and institutions capable of continuously adapting to socio-economic changes, and ensure that social partners jointly address major challenges, including economic stability and growth, social and technological trends, more equal income distribution and social cohesion in Council of Europe member States.
6. Furthermore, the Assembly calls on the ILO to conduct a comparative assessment of the implementation of its substantive provisions of labour legislation on the right to strike, including the conditions for the exercise of the right to strike, essential and minimum services to be upheld and the individual right to work, in the light of its latest provisions on labour legislation and policies. At the same time, the Assembly calls on State parties to relevant ILO conventions and members of ILO monitoring bodies to support such an undertaking.