



Statement released by the ETUC – Tuesday 15 July 2025

The European Commission must not betray promise to keep its social fund

The ETUC calls on President von der Leyen to uphold the commitment she made last week to fully restore the ESF+ scheme with clear social objectives and to ringfence and increase the resources to meet its objectives.

President von der Leyen last week promised to include the ESF+ in the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework following a backlash from MEPs and trade unions.

However, on the eve of the presentation of the Commission's proposal for the next MFF, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has learned that the Commission still plans to maintain the ESF+ in name only, with no ringfenced resources or dedicated objectives.

Trade unions are warning Commission President Ursula von der Leyen that no amount of rebranding will convince workers – they need to see an European Social Fund with real commitments with objectives matched by guaranteed funding.

The futures of millions of working people depend on this decision. Between 2014 and 2020, the fund helped 10 million people a year to find work or acquire the skills needed to find work.

ETUC General Secretary Esther Lynch said:

"It appears that the Commission is trying to play a confidence trick with working people by keeping the European Social Fund Plus in name only but without resources or objectives.

"I want to send a clear message to the Berlaymont: working people are sick of politicians trying to pull the wool over their eyes – they must restore the ESF+ in full.

"Without ringfenced resources, the poorest and most vulnerable in Europe will be left to 'compete' for funding with multinational corporations who have been promised a 'Competitiveness Fund' but without any new resources to fund it.

"That would mean means millions of people will miss out on a good job or access to training. The Commission could never again say that it is building an economy that works for people."