

# **DECLARATION**

## **ON THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN THE METALWORKING AND AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRIES IN SERBIA**

Adopted at the 9th Congress of the Metalworkers' Trade Union NEZAVISNOST, held on 2 October 2026 in Belgrade.

Based on the universal principle that all human and labour rights are equal and indivisible, the delegates of the 9th Congress of the Metalworkers' Trade Union NEZAVISNOST adopt this Declaration as an expression of solidarity with all workers employed in the Republic of Serbia, regardless of their citizenship, national or ethnic origin, religion, gender, language or country of origin.

The Metalworkers' Trade Union NEZAVISNOST considers that the employment of foreign workers must not be used to lower labour standards, reduce wages or weaken trade union rights. Foreign workers are not competitors to domestic workers – they are their colleagues and must enjoy equal protection and equal dignity.

## **WE THEREFORE DECLARE THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:**

### **1. Equal Work – Equal Pay**

For the same work, under the same working conditions, all workers must have the right to equal pay and equal employment-related benefits, regardless of their citizenship or country of origin.

Any discrimination with regard to wages, wage supplements, working hours, leave or other employment rights is unacceptable.

### **2. Equal Labour and Trade Union Rights**

Every foreign worker must have the right to:

- freely join a trade union or establish a trade union organisation;
- participate in collective bargaining;
- elect and be elected to trade union bodies, in accordance with the law and the trade union's statutes and rules;
- be protected against discrimination, pressure and retaliation on the grounds of trade union activities.

### **3. Occupational Safety and Health Has No Nationality**

The metalworking and automotive industries are among the sectors with an increased risk of workplace accidents and occupational diseases.

Therefore, we demand that every foreign worker be provided with:

- full occupational safety and health training in a language they understand;
- appropriate personal protective equipment;
- the right to refuse work where there is an immediate danger to life and health;
- equal access to healthcare and to the reporting of workplace accidents;
- the same protection standards as domestic workers.

No worker must be exposed to danger because they do not understand safety instructions or because an employer seeks to reduce costs.

#### **4. Decent Living Conditions**

Employers who engage foreign workers must provide accommodation and living conditions that respect human dignity.

Overcrowded accommodation, restrictions on freedom of movement, the withholding of personal documents, and any form of forced labour or exploitation are unacceptable.

#### **5. Respect for the Law and International Standards**

We demand the consistent implementation of the labour legislation of the Republic of Serbia, the conventions of the International Labour Organization and international standards guaranteeing the protection of all workers.

In accordance with international standards, labour inspectorates and other competent authorities must effectively monitor the working conditions of both domestic and foreign workers, without exception.

#### **6. Employers' Responsibility**

Employers who employ foreign workers must ensure:

- lawful employment contracts;
- transparent employment conditions;
- regular payment of wages;
- working hours and rest periods in accordance with the law;
- full implementation of occupational safety and health regulations;
- respect for the right to trade union organisation.

### **CALL FOR SOLIDARITY**

The Metalworkers' Trade Union NEZAVISNOST calls upon all trade unions, employers, state institutions and international organisations to work together to prevent all forms of discrimination and social dumping.

Workers must not be divided on the basis of nationality, language or country of origin. The unity of workers is the foundation for a fair labour market, a successful economy and a stable society.

## CONCLUSION

The delegates of the 9th Congress of the Metalworkers' Trade Union NEZAVISNOST commit themselves to ensuring that the trade union protects the rights of all workers employed in the metalworking and automotive industries in Serbia.

Our principle is clear:

**Equal Work – Equal Pay.**

**Equal Rights – Equal Protection.**

**Safe Work for Every Worker.**

Only a society that protects domestic and foreign workers equally can be a society based on social justice, solidarity and decent work.

**“No worker should be cheaper because they are a foreigner. No worker should be less safe because they come from another country. Solidarity knows no borders – workers' rights belong to every human being.”**

**Delegates of the 9th Congress of the Metalworkers' Trade Union NEZAVISNOST**

**LOUD, UNITED, POWERFUL**