

Brussels and Geneva, 15 July 2026

Ms Ursula von der Leyen

President

European Commission

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Belgium

Sent by email to: ec-president-vdl@ec.europa.eu

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Detention of Mr Yarema Zhuhaievych, trade union leader in Ukraine and the accession negotiations

Dear President von der Leyen,

We are writing this letter on behalf of industriAll European Trade Union and IndustriALL Global Union, both with affiliated unions that represent workers in mining, energy, and manufacturing industries throughout the world, including the Trade Union of Aircraft and Machine Building Workers of Ukraine, to draw your attention to a case in Ukraine that touches directly on Cluster 1 of the accession negotiations: the functioning of the judiciary, fundamental rights and the rule of law.

Mr Yarema Zhuhaievych, Chairman of the Trade Union of Aircraft and Machine Building Workers of Ukraine, has been in pre-trial detention since 1 May 2026, with bail set far beyond his personal means. He was arrested over decisions taken collectively by the Supervisory Board of PJSC Ukrproftur, a company established by the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine to manage trade union assets. The Federation delegated him to that board, and he was legally obliged to sign its collegial decisions. Who owns the property is a matter for the civil courts, and Ukraine's own Supreme Arbitration Court confirmed the lawfulness of the company's establishment in a final judgment back in 1997. What concerns us is the use of criminal law, and of prolonged pre-trial detention, against a trade union leader for doing his job.

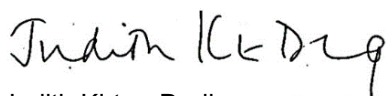
Criminalizing legitimate trade union activity is incompatible with the legal framework of the European Union, especially with the Charter of fundamental rights, which guarantees the right to form and join trade unions. Nor is this an isolated episode: it comes on top of the ongoing labour law reform which is being carried out without genuine consultation with the unions, on which our organizations intervened with the EU, and a wider trend that weakens labour protections and social dialogue in the country.

Our organizations have stood with Ukraine and its people since the first day of Russia's invasion, and we support Ukraine's European perspective. That perspective rests on the conditions the European Union itself has set, and its credibility depends on those conditions being applied consistently.

We therefore ask the Commission to raise this case with the Ukrainian authorities in the accession dialogue, to seek assurances that the proceedings against Mr Zhuhaievych will meet the standards of judicial independence, due process and the presumption of innocence, including his release from pre-trial detention, and to reflect freedom of association and social dialogue in the Commission's monitoring and reporting on Ukraine under Cluster 1 and the social acquis.

We look forward to your prompt action and reply.

Sincerely,



Judith Kirton-Darling

General secretary

IndustriAll European Trade Union



Atle Høie

General secretary

IndustriALL Global Union