

Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis
Commissioner Nicolas Schmit
European Commission
B- 1049 Brussels

Sent by e-mail

**Open letter from the European Sectoral Social Partners
Review of the rules on the financing of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees**

Brussels, 8 February 2023

Dear Vice- President Dombrovskis,
Dear Commissioner Schmit,

We have read with great interest the *Communication on Strengthening social dialogue in the European Union : harnessing its full potential for managing fair transitions* published by the European Commission on 25 January 2023. If we appreciate the fact that it does take into account some of our concerns expressed during the many hearings and consultations organised by your services throughout 2022, it does not propose any solution as regards the future organisation and financing of Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees (SSDCs).

The Communication is not only recognising that social dialogue is a priority for the EU Commission, it is also stressing that it has never been so crucial in shaping and delivering fair transitions and crisis management. We therefore expect the Commission to maintain both its logistical and financial support for sectoral social dialogue committees and to enhance its political support.

Furthermore, we have serious concerns about alternative approaches on the organisation of Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees, notably the idea of multi-annual “project based” financing, which could endanger both the autonomy of the social partners and their capacity to come up with meaningful outcomes. The lack of security and predictability of financing could also threaten the existence of some SSDCs.

Against this background, with this letter, the undersigned EU sectoral social partners would like to reiterate their views on the future of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue, and more specifically as regards the modalities of the social dialogue committee meetings.

While we understand the existing financial constraints under which the European Commission operates, we strongly urge the Commission to come up with new proposals that fully respect social partners’ autonomy and avoid a severe devaluation of European sectoral social dialogue.

This implies that any proposal should avoid project-based financing as :

- It represents, especially for the smallest organisations, a huge administrative burden, and in the long-run the end of social dialogue. Our social dialogue should focus on the content and not on organisational matters.
- It represents an extremely rigid and uncertain framework (there is only one call for submission per year and it takes six to seven months at least before knowing whether a project has been approved or not), which does not allow the social partners to adapt their initiatives to a fast changing environment and to define an efficient planning of their work programme.
- It could imply an allocation of funds based on the foreseen outcome of the social dialogue leading to less autonomy of the social partners.

In addition, we would like to know whether all the Commission-backed experts' groups are to be subject to the same re-organisation. As social partners, it is reminded that we are deemed experts in our respective sectors. We would therefore find it extremely difficult to understand if a differentiated treatment would apply to these expert groups.

Finally, on various occasions during the informal consultation on the review of social dialogue, the Commission has said that it will keep the responsibility for the logistics and funding of negotiation meetings; we would like the Commission to confirm this.

If social dialogue is a political priority of the European Commission, there is an urgent need to ensure that the necessary financial and political support is made available to the sectoral social partners without increasing the burden on them.

Yours sincerely,

For the European employers' organisations



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