

To the European Commission President-elect
Ms. Ursula von der Leyen
European Commission

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The senders of this letter are all confederations of employers in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Norway, Poland and Sweden, who are social partner representatives in the European Social Dialogue.

Dear President-elect Ursula von der Leyen,

Let us first convey our heartfelt congratulations upon your re-election to President of the European Commission. We as national employers' organisations¹ and social partners are looking very much forward to continuing our close cooperation with you during the upcoming term and are as always strongly committed to doing our part and working closely together with both Trade Unions and European Institutions to contribute to solutions within the social agenda.

In the following, please find outlined priorities for us as employers' organisations which we ask you to take into consideration when lining out your priorities for the coming years. With quite some encouragement we can conclude from your political guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2029, that many of your ambitions for supporting people, strengthening our societies and our social model falls closely in line with our own priorities. Not least it is very reassuring that you point to the importance of competitiveness and prosperity and how to ease the life of companies throughout the European Union. Thereby clearly also focusing on tackling the skills and labour gap.

We will be happy to cooperate in full transparency with the European Commission and actively take part in the dialogue aiming at reducing administrative burdens and simplifying implementation.

¹ Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, Confederation of Danish Employers, Estonian Employers' Confederation, Confederation of Finnish Industries, The Confederation of German Employers' Associations, Employers Confederation of Latvia, Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise, Polish Confederation Lewiatan, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise.

A Social Europe Fit for the Future

In an ever-evolving global landscape, Europe stands at a crucial juncture where the balance between ensuring robust social conditions for our labour force and fostering an environment conducive to business growth and competitiveness is imperative. To achieve this, the EU needs a new sense of reality for its economic and social policy: without competitive companies, there will be no good jobs, no stable social security systems, and no necessary investment in structural changes. Achieving this requires a shift in the regulatory framework towards reducing bureaucratic barriers and optimising legislative frameworks.

As we embark on a new political cycle in Europe, we as European employers give our view on the future of a social Europe. This letter outlines three top priorities for the next political cycle to ensure a thriving social Europe.

Skills and Labour Shortages

Skills and labour shortages as well as other labour market challenges are a serious threat for European competitiveness and must be tackled. The twin transition and demographic shifts necessitate a proactive approach to all sectors of economy to ensure that we have a workforce with the competences necessary for shouldering the triple transition – digital, green, and demographic. Collaborative efforts between employers, educational institutions, and governments are essential to identify emerging skills demands and design targeted training programmes to match education and labour market needs.

By fostering a culture of lifelong learning and adaptability, individuals can thrive through job retention and possibilities for career advancement while contributing meaningfully to the economy. Furthermore, facilitating labour mobility and provision of services within the European Union and expanding approaches such as apprenticeships and vocational training programs can provide practical solutions to address skills shortages. By proactively addressing these challenges, Europe can build a more resilient and adaptable workforce, fostering social inclusion, economic growth, and sustainable development in line with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Respecting subsidiarity, Balancing legislative approaches and Flexibility

While securing social progress remains important, overly burdensome regulations impedes business' ability to develop new products and operate in new markets and thereby hinders growth. Therefore, we advocate for the next political cycle to prioritise a balanced approach that secures flexibility and subsidiarity in policymaking and respects the principles of better regulation. Empowering member states to tailor regulations to their specific needs could be envisaged, under the precondition that they remain within the limits of proportionality and do not undermine the functioning of the Single Market and the global competitiveness of the companies.

Social progress can be reached by effective collaboration and communication between employers, employees, and policymakers. Social dialogue is essential for creating sustainable solutions that benefit all stakeholders and reflect the situation faced by companies and workers. By fostering an inclusive and transparent social dialogue, Europe can harness the collective wisdom and expertise to address challenges and seize opportunities. The next political cycle should prioritise initiatives that enhance the transparency, inclusiveness, and effectiveness of social dialogue mechanisms.

As job creators, companies play a key role in the general pursuit of improving social conditions within the EU. The connection between people working and a social Europe cannot be stressed enough. A social Europe is a Europe where people work. Conversely, there will be no social Europe without jobs.

Only if conditions are good for European business can the full potential of the Single Market's social dimension be fulfilled. Long-term sustainable economic growth and job creation requires more reforms, not more regulation.

Future of Work

In an increasingly interconnected global economy, Europe must remain agile and competitive to secure its position in the global competition. The ongoing digital and technological advancements are reshaping our society, especially our workplaces. With the integration of artificial intelligence and robotics, many tasks currently performed by humans will be automated. While this holds the potential for heightened productivity and improved work environments, it has also to take into consideration the implications for employees.

To maintain Europe's competitiveness on the global stage, policymakers must strike the right balance in the approach to these innovations. A blend of risk mitigation and acceptance of the new opportunities they offer is needed, while minimising bureaucratic hassle and excessive administrative burdens for companies. Tailored solutions across different countries, sectors, and individual workplaces may be the right way to go.

Conclusion

We, the signatories, wish for the next European Commission to focus on the following:

- Address the critical skills and labour shortages to support the transitions and build a resilient workforce assisting the Member States with the implementation of the [Action plan to tackle labour and skills shortages](#).
- Ensure a competitive social market economy by strictly adhering to better regulation principles, reducing administrative burdens and preserving, protecting and developing the role of social partners in the EU policy making.

- Reduce the number of administrative burdens like reporting obligations, respect the better regulation principles and quality impact assessments at all levels of the EU legislative process to make sure European companies can compete in the global competition with the new digital and technological transformation bringing clear benefits to employers, employees, and job seekers alike.

We are as mentioned ready to approach the future of the EU labour market in the spirit of full and transparent cooperation.

Best wishes,



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