



# TOGETHER FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS

EL/LR/lh  
Brussels, 25 September 2024

**Ursula von der Leyen,**  
President of the European  
Commission  
[Letter sent by e-mail]

---

---

## Letter from the European Trade Union Confederation following the announcement of the proposed college of Commissioners

Dear Commission President Ursula von der Leyen,

I am contacting you following the announcement of the list of Commissioners designate and the publication of their proposed portfolios and mission letters.

The European Trade Union Confederation is very concerned that – for the first time since the Seventies – there is not a member of the college of Commissioners whose title refers specifically to Labour and Social Affairs (or to “Jobs and Social Rights”).

Substituting "jobs and social rights" with "people, skills and preparedness" minimises the importance of work and working people and has created the impression that, for this Commission, jobs and rights have become unimportant or unacceptable. Likewise, removing equality has created the impression that for working women, their equality takes a back seat.

This is out of step with the reality. Europe is today facing a quality jobs and social justice emergency. Discrimination is on the rise and many fear for their economic and employment future. Given the level of concern, it is essential to restore trust, give a clear answer backed up with commitments that this Commission genuinely intends to deliver a fair deal for working people, their families and communities.

For this reason, **we call on you to modify the title of the Executive Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness to refer explicitly to “Quality Jobs and Social Rights” and to restore "Equality" and to give a mission to the whole Commission to bring forward** concrete actions to deliver a fair deal for working people and their communities. This means backing for legislative initiatives, investments and action programmes. The guidelines included several important commitments for working people. However, it is now of paramount importance that concrete legislative proposals and additional investments and resources be put forward to deliver on these commitments in all sectors and in all regions in Europe. The European Trade Union Confederation has put forward its demands in the Manifesto for a Fair Deal for Workers.

**We call on you and the Commissioners to commit to deliver the legislative proposals needed to ensure quality jobs, building upon the La Hulpe Declaration on the Future of the European Pillar of Social Rights.** This includes, amongst others, the following legislative initiatives:



- A Directive on Just transition in the world of work, through anticipation and management of change, based on the principles of trade union involvement and collective bargaining, and to ensure the right for all to training without cost to the worker and during working time;
- Regulating the role of labour intermediaries and introducing an EU general legal framework limiting subcontracting and ensuring joint and several liability through the subcontracting chain;
- Addressing psychosocial risks and online harassment and shaming at work through a European Directive;
- Ensuring effective regulation of AI with the ‘human in control’ principle incorporated into EU law through a Directive on AI at the workplace;
- Delivering a Directive on Telework and the Right to Disconnect;
- Reinforcing democracy at work in the first place by strengthening collective bargaining, introducing a comprehensive EU framework on information, consultation and participation, and fully safeguarding well-functioning collective bargaining systems;
- Guaranteeing that the revision of the Directives on public procurement ensures that public money goes to organisations that respect workers’ and trade union rights, that negotiate with trade unions and whose workers are covered by collective agreements.

These proposals are included in the ETUC Manifesto for a Fair Deal for Workers, a programme that identifies the democratically chosen priorities of working people and their trade unions.

I underscore that it is essential to make sure that social partners and trade unions be fully involved by the different Commissioners when developing the proposals defined in the Commission guidelines.

The ETUC calls on the college of Commissioners to put Social Dialogue at the centre of its approach and working methods.

**We call on all Vice-Presidents and Commissioners to convene a meeting with social partners and trade unions to discuss the challenges Europe is facing in their areas of competence, and to exchange on how to advance in the implementation of the guidelines and on the measures necessary to deliver quality jobs and social progress.**

This should happen as a matter of urgency with regard to the initiatives to be delivered in the first 100 days, including the new Clean Industrial Deal.

I also raise with you our concern with the actions proposed about the reduction of administrative burdens and simplification – coupled with the absence of specific commitments to protect and improve working conditions and ensure quality jobs. Any initiatives on better regulation should ensure safeguards to protect and reinforce employment rights and standards and guarantee there is no downward pressure on rights, wages, working conditions, collective bargaining or pensions. Also, social partners must be involved in the definition of the possible measures and approaches, including with regard to new “checks”. This is a time for making advances by putting in place ambitious initiatives to guarantee that Europe is a great place to live, work and do business, on the basis of quality jobs, good working conditions, strong social dialogue and collective bargaining, social progress and upward convergence, and democracy at work.

**We call on the college as a whole and each Commissioner to clarify that the approach and initiatives on better regulation will not lead to lowering employment rights and standards, nor will they create obstacles to legislative initiatives needed to deliver better working and living conditions.** Otherwise there is a real danger that



conflicting priorities and actions between the different Commissioners may lead to negative impact on working people.

Finally, the ETUC has long identified the consequences for working people of the chronic under-investment in industry and public services, social progress and just transition. Mario Draghi has recently recognised in his report on the Future of European Competitiveness the need for additional investments of more than 800 billion Euros a year. The ETUC strongly backs an ambitious European industrial policy with significant investment that will support common goods and innovation and deliver quality jobs and social progress, based on strong public services, social protection, housing, transport and childcare. **Failed austerity policies must be rejected and instead the EU must develop ambitious common investment tools, develop progressive taxation policies and provide member states with the necessary room for manoeuvre to finance the investments for industrial policy, public services, just transitions.** It is key to implement a new fiscal capacity for investment, an EU sovereignty fund for just socio-economic transition and common goods, leaving no one and no region behind. Also, there must be no blank checks, **public money and support should come with social conditionalities to ensure the creation of quality jobs.**

We look forward to engaging with you and with the college of Commissioners on the above issues, to ensure that the EU delivers a Fair Deal for Working People.

Looking forward to your positive reply, I would like to thank you in advance.

Best regards,

Esther Lynch

General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation