



Commissioner Thierry Breton, Industrial Policy  
Commissioner Stella Kyriakides, Health and Food Safety  
Commissioner Janez Lenarcic, Emergency Response  
Commissioner Nicolas Schmit, Jobs and Social Rights

Contact person : Jan Willem Goudriaan

Ref.: JWG/cb

Brussels, 27 March 2020

Dear Commissioner Breton,  
Dear Commissioner Kyriakides,  
Dear Commissioner Lenarcic,  
Dear Commissioner Schmit,

We write you as representatives of Europe's workers in services, industries and the public sector. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on jobs, on families and our communities is enormous. You will be aware of this. As European Trade Union Federations we exchange our experiences. The stories that reach us from workplace trade unionists raise overarching concerns about health and safety. Not all employers are respecting the required sanitary protocols and continue to require non-essential work. There is a massive lack of personal protective equipment across all sectors especially for those directly facing (or working with) other people. It is reaching extremely worrying levels in health and care services where workers are in direct contact with patients, the elderly, the sick and the dying. Like us you will be aware of the stories of health and care workers that have been infected, have to stay home, end up in hospital themselves or even die. That is a prospect many workers in a broad range of sectors face as they continue trying to deliver for us all. You will agree that they all deserve our respect and gratitude. But more importantly that they deserve maximum protection to continue doing their work.

We welcome the fact that the Commission has coordinated a call for joint procurement for masks type 2 and 3, gloves, goggles, face-shields, surgical masks and overalls. We are concerned, however, that this is not enough to cover the health and safety needs of all those workers that are required to work and keep our public services, industries and services going. We ask you to ensure that sufficient protective equipment is procured, and inform us how soon the equipment will reach all those in sectors where work is continuing. Can you

also inform us if further procurement is being considered and whether testkits are part of the procurement to ensure massive testing?

Our Federations represent workers in the EU and beyond, including the candidate countries and Western Balkans. Will the Commission work with those governments to issue a joint procurement initiative so as to ensure workers in those countries, that expect so much from the EU, are not left behind? Their needs are very high and the countries will need financial support.

We understand that Commissioner Breton has asked industries to step up the production and delivery of personal protective equipment, the necessary medical devices, testkits and whatever else is required. Can you let us know how the industrial sector has responded? Is the Commission discussing with Member States the conversion and requisitioning of production capacity? As President Macron has repeatedly said, we are at war and that means mobilising all our resources.

Another major concern of workers is that many employers deem their activities essential. This is often nonsense. Trade unions should be involved in the discussions on determining what are essential activities and in these activities employers should meet with trade unions to discuss health and safety protocols to allow safe work. This will prevent workers from infecting each other which could lead to further disruption. We ask the Commission to call on governments, trade unions and the employers to sit together to define what are essential/crucial/vital activities.

We are adamant that public funding should not go to employers that do not work with trade unions and workplace representatives and refuse to engage in collective bargaining. We expect clear messages in this regard from the Commission. Many workers have lost their jobs or seen their income reduced. All these workers must be relieved of the fear of a massive loss of income through short-time work arrangements, the payment of high-level sick pay or wage compensation by public authorities. Posted and migrant workers and those with precarious contracts such as zero-hour contracts, mini-jobs, etc should be covered. We expect leadership from the Commission to safeguard jobs. This is a unique opportunity for the EU to show its added value for citizens.

These are the most immediate concerns that need to be addressed now. There are many others and we will come back to you on these. As soon as possible we request to meet with you to address how we can build our industries, services and public sectors for the future after the pandemic.

Yours sincerely,

Kristjan Bragason, General Secretary EFFAT  
Tom Deleu, General Secretary EFBWW  
Susan Flocken, General Secretary ETUCE  
Jan Willem Goudriaan, General Secretary EPSU  
Oliver Roethig, Regional Secretary UNI-Europa  
Peter Smets, Eurocop, Executive Committee member  
Livia Spera, General Secretary ETF  
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