

Brussels, 18 June 2021

Mr. Thierry Breton
European Commissioner for Internal Market

Letter sent by e-mail to
cab-breton-contact@ec.europa.eu

Re.: Role of Social Dialogue in Transition Pathways

Dear Commissioner Breton,

Representing workers in all the sectors covered by the EU's updated industrial strategy and its 14 eco-systems, we welcome the proposal in the latest Communication that transition pathways will be co-designed by all the stakeholders in the eco-system. Equally, we welcome the inclusion of transition pathways in the new European Climate Act, and the renewed support for social dialogue and collective bargaining in the Action Plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Worker participation and functioning social dialogue are the bedrock for an inclusive Just Transition.

A clear and central role for existing European sectoral social dialogue committees is vitally important in developing European transition pathways. Our sectoral social dialogue committees have accrued extensive experience and knowledge on the facets of Just Transition in each sector. While there are common concerns across many eco-systems, there are sectoral and regional specificities which must be addressed if rhetoric on leaving no one behind is to meet the realities of our members. A number of sectoral social dialogue committees have undertaken joint studies or negotiated common positions on these key developments including anticipating and managing changing job profiles and skills sets.

Policy makers have a specific moral and political responsibility for ensuring that Just Transitions are possible for workers in all sectors, in every region of the EU. Worker voice must be better reflected in the development of eco-system policies and the recognition of sectoral social dialogue committees would enhance this.

The Commission should ensure that the spirit and letter of the Regulation establishing the Just Transition Fund, which insists on social partner involvement, be implemented to ensure that worker voice is amplified in national and regional transition and industrial strategies.



Moreover, Just Transition demands company and organisation/institution level strategies on the anticipation and management of change. Here collective bargaining, union recognition and existing rights to worker participation, information and consultation, as well as European works councils, have an important role to play. However, these rights need to be urgently extended to the anticipation of change if we intend to avoid damaging restructuring. This should be addressed by the Commission, notably through revisiting the proposals of the so-called Cercas report on “Information and consultation of workers, anticipation and management of restructuring”, adopted by the European Parliament in January 2013 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-7-2013-0005_EN.html?redirect).

Furthermore, we would stress that the framing of the eco-systems should also be subject to co-design. While, there is little logic in putting the social economy with security services on the one hand and ignoring other eco-systems which will be fundamental to ensuring a Just Transition entirely, such as the finance sector. The reorientation of the finance sector is vital for sustainable long-term investment. Private wealth has also to be tapped and redirected. Furthermore, in all of the eco-systems there are references to public policies and accessing public finance to support a Just Transition, but there is no reference to a ‘public sector eco-system’ itself and the need to build a resilient public sector in Europe.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Luca Visentini

General Secretary
ETUC

Luc Triangle

General Secretary
industriAll Europe

Oliver Roethig

Regional Secretary
UNI-Europa

Jan-Willem Goudriaan

General Secretary
EPSU

Livia Spera

Acting General Secretary
ETF

Tom Deleu

General Secretary
EFBWW

Kristjan Bragason

General Secretary
EFFAT

Nigel Dennis

Head of Office
EuroCOP

Ricardo Gutierrez

General Secretary
EFJ

Susan Flocken

European Director
ETUCE