

Meeting of the Social Dialogue Committee

25 September 2019

DRAFT Minutes

The meeting of the Social Dialogue Committee (SDC) was chaired by *Barbara Kauffmann*, Director for Employment and Social Governance of DG EMPL.

1. / 2. Adoption of the agenda and approval of minutes

The agenda of the present meeting and the minutes of the last meeting of the Social Dialogue Committee on 20 June 2019 were both approved.

3. Information by the Commission

3.1 Update on recent developments in employment and social policies

Joost Korte (Director-General of DG EMPL) started by recalling the still pending proposals of this Commission. He continued with the overview of the proposed future initiatives as set out in the Political Guidelines of the President-elect and the mission letters. In that context, he underlined the strong emphasis attributed to social policies and social dialogue.

On the **minimum wage**, J. Korte stressed that the objective could not be to establish a European minimum wage, but, quoting the political guidelines, to “propose a legal instrument to ensure that every worker in our Union has a fair minimum wage.” *BusinessEurope* stated that this initiative is not seen positively on their side. In this context, it asked the Commission to help ensuring that social partners will get under future ESF+ support for capacity building in the nine countries having particular important needs. *SMEunited* and *CEEP* asked about the legal base and the way social partners would be consulted. *ETUC* expressed a strong encouragement for the minimum initiative, whilst pointing to the need to respect national traditions and stressing the role of collective bargaining. *ETUC* announced a position paper on minimum wage for end of October.

Regarding the announced initiative on **pay transparency**, *BusinessEurope* was sceptical as for them the main issue is labour market participation of women (family responsibilities, childcare infrastructure). *SMEunited* expressed doubts about its feasibility in small businesses. *CEEP* welcomed the new Gender Strategy, also mentioning gender segregation as key issue. For *ETUC* there was the need for a more comprehensive strategy, addressing pay transparency is not sufficient. *ETUC* also highlighted the key role of social

partners in the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, expressed deep concern on the name of the portfolio of Vice-President designate *Schinus* and stressed in the context of the Brexit contingency measures the need to allow EGF already intervene before workers are being made redundant.

3.2 Support for capacity building under ESF+

recalled the recent meeting of the ESF committee in Bucharest, the peer review on capacity building facilitated by ESF transnational cooperation in June 2019 and the interactions with the EU level social partners. He called on social partners to flag their particular capacity-building needs and invited them to make use of the existing toolkit, such as peer reviews and ground advice on programming and participation in programme activities at local, regional and national level.

ETUC welcomed the peer review as a good exercise but stressed the need to do more. The proposal by the EP to earmark 2% of the ESF budget is welcome, but even better would be a European fund to continuously and autonomously support social partner capacity building. *ETUC* and *SMEUnited* also reiterated their request to revise the European Code of Conduct on Partnership (ECCP). *BusinessEurope* recalled their request for a written position by the Commission to influence ESF+ programming and proposed to foresee within the next Semester missions dedicated discussions between national social partners and Commission on capacity-building (for the 9 MSs identified by social partners). Social partners referred to the on-going Eurofound study and their own work in the SDC sub-group on identifying capacity building needs.

The Commission reacted by underlining that there was a broad understanding that any changes to the ECCP have to be meaningful and of added value. It highlighted the role of social dialogue in the European Semester and invited the social partners to actively raise particular issues. Mutual learning and twinning activities for capacity building should be seen as opportunity stemming from concrete needs in Member States, and should also become more tailor-made in the future.

3.3 Follow-up to the Council Recommendation on a framework for quality and effective apprenticeships

On request by the social partners, the Commission informed about the follow-up to the Council recommendation on a framework for quality and effective apprenticeships, adopted in March 2018.

explained the EU-wide relevance of apprenticeships, gave an update on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and highlighted the role of the Tripartite Advisory Committee (ACVT) in terms of providing input and monitoring the recommendation.

ETUC stressed the need for quality aspects (e.g. working conditions, making sure apprentices are paid) as well as ensuring a role of social dialogue and collective bargaining in VET reforms. *BusinessEurope* praised the initial joint work conducted by social partners, which allowed for a straightforward process leading to the recommendation. *SMEunited* stressed the importance of a good follow-up and monitoring to the recommendation.

3.4 Presentation of the 2019 Employment and Social Developments in Europe Report (ESDE)

presented the 2019 Employment and Social Developments in Europe Report (ESDE) with a focus on “Sustainable growth for all: choices for the future of social Europe”. *BusinessEurope* emphasised that sustainability also needs to encompass the EU’s role in the global context and asked how the Commission will link the sustainable development goals (SDGs) to the Semester. Shortages of skills and inactivity trends were suggested by *BusinessEurope* as topics for future ESDE editions. *SMEunited* mentioned as a key issue investment, in particular with a view to a skilled workforce. *CEEP* welcomed the sustainability dimension and stressed the need to anticipate change and keep investment as priority. While generally welcoming the report, *ETUC* mentioned some key concerns (e.g. childcare, the increase of poverty and situation of middle class workers) and stressed the role of collective bargaining. *B. Kauffmann* indicated that how exactly the guidance of the President-elect on integration of the SDGs in the Semester and on the Pillar Action Plan would be taken up is still being discussed. But that it was clear that various interlinkages would have to be taken into account.

4. Information by the social partners

The Social Partners informed the Commission about the following items:
a) Negotiations of an autonomous agreement on digitalization; b) SDC subgroup on capacity building; c) Update on Integrated projects.

5. AOB: Presentation of CEDEFOP’s big data project on real time labour market information

The Commission presented CEDEFOP’s real time labour market and skills intelligence using big data. *SMEunited* stressed that skills needs are of crucial importance and saw some overlaps with information provided by Europass and EURES. *BusinessEurope* mentioned the cross-industry work on skills and innovation. *ETUC* referred to an added value when used for career guidance.