



Mr. Jean Paul Tricart
Head of Unit
European Social Dialogue
Rue Joseph II 54
B-1049 Brussels

Brussels 5 September 2014

Ref. Ares(2014)2405385 - 18/07/2014

Dear Mr. Tricart,

Your letter of 18 July 2014 informed us of your unilateral decision to cancel 12 meetings of different sectoral social dialogue committees in the last quarter of 2014.

This came as a surprise and we ask you to reconsider your decision.

There appears to be no clear criteria for the choice of the cancellations. Contrary to what the letter says, you have cancelled plenary meetings as well as meetings that were to prepare for the plenary meetings. We wonder how you judged as to which meetings of social dialogue committees were contributing or not to a plenary, since none of us has been consulted over this. We find that this impacts on the autonomy of the social partners.

The argument that DG employment cannot provide assistance due to the temporary difficulties faced by the social dialogue unit is no justification for the cancellation, as other ways could have been found, and can still be found, to maintain the meetings as planned, certainly on a one off basis. We note that some of our members had already booked tickets for the meetings benefitting from cheaper priced flights and who have now lost their money due to your decision.

We are very much concerned about the lack of consultation. It intervenes with the planning and preparations, disrupts the work of the committees, and hence the capacity of the employers and trade unions to make progress in the social dialogue committees and the implementation of their work plans.

We also note from your letter that you will continue with the cuts of the activities in the social dialogue in 2015 reducing the number of annual meetings down to 3 per committee. This is yet another series of cuts, with no consultation of the stakeholders concerned, and which comes on the heels of those introduced recently with some committees seeing an immediate reduction of their meetings from four to three, all committees seeing a reduction to just one plenary meeting per year, and the impossibility to organise additional work group meetings.

Altogether this raises the question of the European Commission's commitment to the social dialogue. We note that the European Commission has encouraged the creation of many sectoral social dialogue committees ensuring that a large part of Europe's economic activities and workforce are covered. The budget available for this important development has remained largely unchanged. The Treaty does ask the European Commission to promote and facilitate the European social dialogue, cutting budgets and meetings is in contradiction with that objective.

The proposals are also rather premature as the Commission is planning a Communication on the Social Dialogue for 2015.

Therefore, we ask you:

- to keep unchanged the basis of 4 meetings per year (3 working group meetings and 1 plenary)
- to discuss where appropriate on ad-hoc basis with each of the committees if they need these meetings. We agree that it is our responsibility to ensure that each meeting has concrete discussions, is part of our work plan and leads to tangible progress. You will be aware that this is sometimes hard to judge due to the nature of our discussions. But it will certainly be almost impossible to reach concrete results should we have very few opportunities to meet
- to organise a meeting between the social dialogue committees and the forthcoming European Commissioner responsible for the social dialogue to discuss the future of the social dialogue and support from the Commission for it
- to discuss with all the social dialogue committees together the appropriate way forward. A suggestion is to consider a working group with representatives of different committees. This can provide an input in the aforementioned communication

All previous communications and statements of the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament have underlined the added value of the social dialogue. The recent measures give the impression the attitude has changed and we are concerned about this.

Kind regards,

Signatory social partners:

Harald Wiedenhofer (EFFAT)
General Secretary



Sam Hägglund (EFBBW)
General Secretary



Olivier Roethig (Uni-Europa)
General Secretary



Sylvain Lefebvre (industriAll Europe)
Deputy General Secretary



Eduardo Chagas (ETF)
General Secretary



Jan Willem Goudriaan (EPSU)
General Secretary

