

Margrethe Vestager
Executive Vice-President of the
European Commission

Thierry Breton
Commissioner for Internal Market
European Commission

[Letter sent by e-mail]
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Urgent letter of the European Trade Union Confederation on upcoming “relief package” for small- and medium-sized companies

Dear Vice-President Vestager,
Dear Commissioner Breton,

We are contacting you to ask for an urgent meeting on the upcoming “SME relief package” for small- and medium-sized companies, that we understand will be published next week by the European Commission.

There can be no doubt that working people and working conditions will be impacted by the proposals. The ETUC recalls that 99,8% of companies in the EU are SMEs. In addition two thirds (65%) of workers in the EU work for an SME.

This means that only a third of workers would be unaffected by the proposals. The impact would be even greater in some member states, for example in Greece 88% of workers work for an SME, in Italy 79%. Even in France, which has the highest number of workers in large organisations, the proposals would affect more than half of employees.

SMEs are therefore critical to social cohesion and the creation and maintenance of sustainable and high-quality jobs.

It is clear that proposals regarding changes to the regulation of SMEs is not a minority issue affecting only self-employed artisans, but rather it will have a strong impact, directly affecting the majority of workers in the EU and the realisation of EU social and environmental objectives. The impact could be even greater if the proposals were to bring even more companies into the definition of SME, for example by increasing the threshold from 250 to 500.

In this framework, we are particularly concerned that, contrary to the guarantees provided under the EU Treaties, the trade unions were not properly consulted on the upcoming proposals. We ask you for an urgent meeting and consultation with the trade union social partners to discuss the content of the upcoming package and the trade union social partner perspective on effective regulation for the world of work that is simple to apply and enforce.

It is essential that the “SME relief package” does not negatively impact workers’ protection and working conditions, including Occupational Health and Safety requirements, including by undermining their enforcement and reporting.

The ETUC agrees that it is more important than ever that we give the right answers to Europe’s competitiveness challenges. Effective regulation - not deregulation - is one of the answers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Esther Lynch".

Esther Lynch,
General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation