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Dr Horst Heitz
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Dear Dr Heitz,

Thank you for your open letter, in which you call on all actors, from EU level to the Member States, to follow-up on the 2019 Council Recommendation on Access to Social Protection. I am replying on behalf of President von der Leyen. Please accept our apologies for the delay in replying.

Supporting all workers and the self-employed is a paramount element of the global EU response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Commission will do all it can to cushion the economic and social impact of the crisis and to bring the EU economy back to a path of sustainable and inclusive growth.

It is crucial that people can benefit from social protection when needed and businesses remain afloat. In the past three months, a number of countries have therefore extended and scaled up existing social protection schemes, and rolled out a series of emergency measures for workers and the self-employed. The Commission is supporting Member States in this regard through, amongst other things, a COVID-19 refocused analysis and recommendations within the European Semester framework.

As a first response, the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII) and CRII Plus allowed Member States to re-orient their European Structural and Investment funds to limit the spread and mitigate the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic by assisting national health care systems, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and other vulnerable parts of the economies.

The Commission also proposed a new instrument for temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE), which was adopted by the Council in May. Up to EUR 100 billion in the form of loans to the Member States can be mobilised to protect employees and self-employed against the risk of unemployment and loss of income.

To help repair the economic and social damage brought about by the coronavirus pandemic, kick-start European recovery, and protect and create jobs, on 27 May, the Commission proposed a major recovery plan for Europe based on harnessing the full potential of the EU budget. This included a revised proposal for a Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, aimed at addressing the consequences of this crisis in all its dimensions, as well as the proposal to complement temporarily this with an emergency European Recovery Instrument ('Next Generation EU') to boost the EU budget. These funds will contribute to underpinning the immediate measures needed to overcome the effects of the COVID-19 crisis and support the most vulnerable.

Building on the crisis response, protection of the self-employed and non-standard workers should be further improved on a structural basis, by speeding up the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Access to Social Protection. In this context, the Commission supports Member States in providing adequate social protection for all workers and the self-employed, through mutual learning and monitoring activities. Member States are recommended to implement the principles set out in the Recommendation as soon as possible and submit a plan setting out the corresponding measures to be taken at national level by 15 May 2021. The Commission will constantly monitor progress towards the objective of the Recommendation and provide an in-depth review in 2022.

We continue working with Member States to protect workers and the self-employed and I count on your support in the coming period towards this goal.

Yours sincerely,



Valdis Dombrovskis