

Brussels, 3 December 2020

Statement by the Employers' Group

Employers voice concerns about 'unbalanced' opinion on twin transition adopted by the EESC

The Employers' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee voiced its disagreement on the exploratory opinion INT/913 *Industrial transition towards a green and digital European economy: regulatory requirements and the role of social partners and civil society*, requested by the Employment and Social Affairs Committee of the European Parliament.

Most of the amendments the Group has introduced were not retained, but as they collected more than 25% of the votes, they will be annexed to the EESC opinion and published in the official journal. The opinion passed with 149 votes in favour, 88 against and 19 abstentions, pending final confirmation.

The Employers' Group stressed that the opinion is far from balanced. The European Parliament requested an exploratory opinion from the EESC on just transition, green deal, digital transition, industrial strategy, employment and social inclusion policies, which lie at the heart of a series of ongoing and future legislative and non-legislative files linked to green and digital transformation.

Instead, the opinion focuses too much on the European Pillar of Social Rights and takes prematurely position on the action plan that the European Commission has announced for spring 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit the European economy hard: many companies are collapsing, workers are losing jobs, health services are under pressure and losing efficiency. Member States are in record debt, exceeding established spending rules, and the EU has also incurred common debt for the first time.

We should devote our attention and recommendations towards the effort to overcome the economic downturn as soon as possible. We must build a more resilient Europe, which lays down the foundations for a modern, green, digital, inclusive economy, able to fight poverty and inequalities.

The best policy response is to deliver on the expectations of the NextGenerationEU, which represents a unique opportunity for a fast and transformative recovery. Setting this in motion and engaging with the private sector should be given the highest priority.

Employers believe the advice given to the Parliament should stress much more the need to create a favourable business environment, featuring protective shields and further measures to achieve ambitious and legitimate goals, to defend jobs, create new ones and secure new innovative and green investments.



Our most pressing concern should be to find strong financial coverage for investments that will ensure stable and sustainable economic growth, as well as health security for Europeans.

A mechanism for channeling private-sector financial resources towards investments compliant with ESG (environmental, social, governance) criteria should be put in place in a coherent manner. The strategies on the Banking Union, Capital Market Union, sustainable finance, digital finance and SMEs are therefore all mutually reinforcing and warrant the channeling of funds to the more productive projects, in an economy that relies for up to 80% of its financing needs on the banking sector.

The Employers' Group agrees that the pandemic has made more pressing the need for a much broader and stronger participation of the social partners and civil society in policy-making at all levels. However, the opinion ignores the fact that the framework and standards at European level should be realistic and take into account the specificities of the Member States and the distribution of the competences between the EU and Member States as well as the subsidiarity principle, particularly on the social agenda.

Successfully transitioning into the work of the future requires tailoring employment and skills development policies to local labour market conditions. The Employers' Group agrees that the European Semester is a tool that can be used in this process.