



TOGETHER FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS

EL/TJJ/EC/ey
Brussels, 4 June 2026

To: Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission; Marta Kos, European Commissioner for Enlargement
[Letter sent by e-mail]

Joint Trade Union Appeal Ahead of the EU-Western Balkans Summit: Protecting Social Dialogue and Workers' Rights in Montenegro (Chapter 19)

Dear President von der Leyen,

Dear Commissioner Kos,

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), alongside Montenegro's two representative national trade union confederations - the Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro (UFTUM) and the Confederation of Trade Unions of Montenegro (CTUM) - are writing to jointly raise our deep concerns regarding the alarming deterioration of social dialogue and the systematic undermining of fundamental workers' rights in Montenegro.

As the country prepares to host the upcoming EU-Western Balkans Summit, we believe that progress toward closing **Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment)** is being severely compromised by the Montenegrin Government's recent actions. In addressing these concerns, we reference the critical issues detailed in our previous correspondences in January 2026.

Currently, social dialogue in Montenegro has reached a crisis point. The Government has marginalized trade unions by allowing the General Collective Agreement to expire, leaving over 100,000 workers without fundamental labour protections. This situation presents a profound concern, as it directly neglects the core principles of social dialogue and runs contrary to European objectives aimed at strengthening collective bargaining coverage and safeguarding democratic workplace representation. Furthermore, recent legislative processes have advanced without the necessary, transparent consultation of social partners, moving away from international labour standards and the benchmarks required for EU integration.

The Montenegrin trade union movement remains deeply and unequivocally committed to supporting the nation's European integration process. However, for this integration to be a true success, it must serve as an opportunity to elevate the living and working conditions of everyday citizens. A meaningful EU accession path requires that the alignment of European standards is accompanied by a robust implementation process, ensuring that social dialogue is respected and enacted not just in principle, but as a dynamic and continuous practice.

To constructively draw the attention of European leadership to this critical domestic situation, we kindly inform you that trade union members intend to organize a peaceful, legitimate public gathering on the day of the Summit. This initiative is born out of a desire to ensure Montenegro enters the European community thoroughly prepared to uphold its core social values. To this end, we respectfully urge the European institutions to emphasize that the successful closure of Chapter 19 must remain fundamentally linked to verifiable, practical progress in social dialogue and the protection of core European labour standards.

Given the urgency of these developments, the ETUC and our Montenegrin affiliates respectfully request a **joint meeting with Commissioner Kos and her team** to discuss how the EU can support the restoration of authentic social dialogue in Montenegro.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and ongoing commitment to a fair deal for workers.

Yours sincerely,

Esther Lynch

General Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

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