



**Ms Ursula von der Leyen**

President European Commission

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**Copy to: Mr Björn Seibert**

Head of Cabinet

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Ref: JWG/mv/hn

Brussels, 5 June 2026

Dear President of the European Commission,

Dear Ms von der Leyen,

We are writing to draw your attention to a matter of serious concern regarding social dialogue and collective bargaining in Montenegro in light of the EU–Western Balkans Summit in Tivat.

According to information provided by the representative trade unions of Montenegro, including the Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro (USSCG), the Government of Montenegro declined to endorse the jointly agreed proposal of the representative trade unions and employers' organisation regarding the renewal of the General Collective Agreement. As a result, the General Collective Agreement expired on 30 April 2026, leaving more than 100,000 workers without protections and guarantees previously secured through collective bargaining.

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We are further concerned by reports that repeated requests from the representative trade unions to resume negotiations and continue social dialogue have not received a meaningful response from the Government. Such developments undermine confidence in tripartite social dialogue and weaken one of the fundamental pillars of the European social model.

The European Union has consistently recognised social dialogue and collective bargaining as essential components of democracy, social cohesion and sustainable economic development. This commitment has been reaffirmed through the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Council Recommendation on strengthening social dialogue in the European Union, and more recently through the Val Duchesse Social Partner Summit and the Pact for European Social Dialogue, in whose development EPSU actively participated. These initiatives demonstrate the importance that the European institutions attach to meaningful social partner involvement and strong collective bargaining systems. These principles should equally guide candidate countries as they advance on their path towards EU membership.

For a candidate country seeking to advance towards EU membership, respect for these principles should not be viewed as a formal requirement but as a core European value. Meaningful engagement with representative trade unions and employers' organisations is an important element of democratic governance and an essential part of the EU accession process, particularly under Chapter 19 on Social Policy and Employment.

We therefore respectfully ask that the issue of social dialogue and collective bargaining in Montenegro be raised during discussions with the Montenegrin authorities at the upcoming summit. We also encourage the European institutions to continue closely monitoring developments and to ensure that assessments of Montenegro's accession progress accurately reflect the state of social dialogue and respect for collective bargaining rights in practice.

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At a time when Montenegro is seeking to demonstrate its readiness for EU membership, it is important that progress is measured not only through legislative alignment but also through the effective implementation of European social values. We thank you for your attention and remain at your disposal should further information be required.

Yours sincerely,



Jan Willem Goudriaan  
EPSU General Secretary

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