

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Council Charles Michel
President of the European Parliament David Sassoli
Prime Minister of Portugal António Costa

Copenhagen, Helsinki, Oslo and Stockholm, 5 May 2021

The senders of this letter are confederations of employers in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden.

The Nordic Business Community welcomes the high-level conference organized by the Portuguese Presidency in the context of the Porto Social Summit. The summit represents an important and timely opportunity to herald a broader discussion on social policies in the EU and set tracks for a social compass of the Union in the wake of the pandemic.

We, the Nordic employers, fully subscribe to the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and to the principle laid out in the Lisbon Treaty, that social and economic progress must go hand in hand. These are the foundations of our social market economy – a model of cohesion and competitiveness that has brought well-functioning welfare systems and high living standards.

The summit gives us the chance to reaffirm our commitment to these fundamentals of the European Union and to kick-off the discussion on what we want the social Europe of the future to look like.

We welcome the EU-Commission's focus on the role of the social partners in the transposition of the pillar's targets at national level. The social partners must play a central role in order to adapt the targets set out in the implementation plan for the pillar to national models and circumstances. We welcome the Commission's commitment to respect the division of competences between the EU and member states. And we welcome the Commission's support of the European social dialogue as an important instrument to ensure solutions without political interference.

When the pillar was signed back in 2017, it was an essential prerequisite for several member states that the 20 principles of the pillar should be non-binding. These countries, among them Denmark and Sweden, made the assessment that the principles could have significant consequences for their labour market models if the Commission would use the pillar as a



basis for proposals for revision of existing directives, or as a reference point for new initiatives. This has already happened in a number of cases, for example the Work-life Balance Directive, the Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Directive and the proposals for a directive on a minimum wage and on pay transparency.

The Future of Social Europe Summit in Porto aims to strengthen the European social dimension in the light of the digital and green transitions, as well as the post-pandemic economic and social recovery. The Nordic employers stand fully behind this endeavour and are committed to contribute to this aim.

However, in order to succeed we need to reaffirm our common standing when it comes to social and labour market policies in the Union:

- Respect for the core principles in the Lisbon Treaty – the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality
- Respect for the competence of the member states and national welfare and labour market models
- Importance of the pillar being a legally non-binding document

We look forward to a thorough discussion on the social Europe of the future and on how to work together on achieving our common goals.

Yours sincerely,

Jyri Häkämies, Director General, Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK)

Jan-Olof Jacke, Director General, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (SN)

Ole Erik Almlid, Director General, Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO)

Jacob Holbraad, Director General, Confederation of Danish Employers (DA)

