



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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*Mr Valeriu Ștefan ZGONEA
President of the
Camera Deputaților
Palace of the Parliament
Str. Izvor nr. 2-4, sector 5
RO – BUCHAREST*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera Deputaților for its Opinion concerning the Commission Communication on Strengthening the social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union {COM(2013) 690 final}.

The Commission is pleased to note the general support of the Camera Deputaților for the Commission's Communication.

The Commission shares the Camera Deputaților's view that the European Structural Funds, in particular the European Social Fund, will have a very important role in supporting the implementation of the necessary reforms in the social sphere to develop a genuine social dimension. The Commission is currently negotiating the Partnership Agreements and operational programmes of the Member States with a view to ensuring that full use is made of the resources made available by the European Structural Funds, including the European Social Fund, in order to support necessary investments priorities in areas such as fostering access to employment, integrating young 'NEETs'¹ into the labour market, promoting self-employment entrepreneurship and business creation, and improving education and social inclusion policies and capacity-building in public administration.

Concerning the key role of social dialogue at EU level - both in the form of the macroeconomic dialogue and of the tripartite social summit - in promoting the social market economy, the Commission would like to underline that it considers the enhancement of the European Social Dialogue within the European Semester to be crucial for a purposeful discussion of delicate issues concerning, among other things, wage-setting systems and labour market reforms.

The Camera Deputaților raises a specific point on the current structure of the thematic dialogues in the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee. It suggests

¹ NEET – " Not in Education, Employment or Training"

that the functioning of the two Committees would benefit from a streamlining and they may find ways how to more closely involve the social partners in discussions on relevant policy issues. In this regard, the Commission would like to note that it has put in place steps to improve synergies between the two Committees, in line with the direction suggested by the Camera Deputaților. Moreover, the Commission recalls that, drawing inspiration from the Joint Declaration of the European Social Partners on "Social Partner involvement in European Economic Governance" of 24 October 2013, EMCO and the European Social Partners have agreed on key principles and working methods for cooperation in implementing and monitoring the European Semester.² The Commission welcomes and supports this new development.

With a view to the Camera Deputaților's questions on the appropriateness of the monitoring methods used in the scoreboard of social and employment indicators to the specific situation of new Member States, including Romania, notably with respect to the comparative use of historical trends and of the EMU average as benchmarks for performance evaluation, the Commission would like to recall that the Council has approved the scoreboard of employment and social indicators, as presented in chapter 3 of the Joint Employment Report, as the starting version to be applied in the 2014 European Semester. Indeed, common methods of evaluation and assessment are needed across the European Union, also drawing upon the methodology used in the Joint Assessment Framework, the Employment Performance Monitor and the Social Protection Performance Monitor.

As regards the concerns expressed by the Camera Deputaților that the strengthening of the employment and social policy coordination processes within the framework of the European Semester, albeit necessary, may create an additional burden for the Member States in terms of monitoring and reporting procedures, the Commission wishes to clarify that the Communication in object does not envisage any additional monitoring or reporting task for the Member States within the framework of the European Semester.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the concerns raised by the Camera Deputaților and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*

² EPSCO Council Conclusions, 7477/14, Annex I, 12 March 2014.