

Brussels, 21 November 2016

To
Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker,
President of the European
Commission,
Vice-President Dombrovskis,
Commissioner Thyssen,
EU Labour Ministers.

[Letter sent by e-mail]

president.juncker@ec.europa.eu

cab-dombrovskis-contact@ec.europa.eu

cab-thyssen@ec.europa.eu

**Hairdressing Social Partner Agreement:
Open letter to the European Commission, the Council of Ministers for Employment
and Social Protection, to the European Parliament**

UNI Europa and Coiffure EU, the social partners in the hairdressing sector, have concluded a revised [European Framework Agreement on the protection of occupational health and safety in the hairdressing sector](#) (in attachment). In July 2016, they jointly requested the European Commission to submit the agreement to the Council for making it legally binding. While not changing the substance of the original agreement of April 2012, the new version takes account of concerns raised by the Commission. According to the Commission's legal services the revised agreement is now compatible with the applicable European legislation.

We, UNI Europa together with the ETUC and Coiffure EU, now urge the European Commission to submit the agreement to the Council with no further delay and recommend the Council to adopt it.

UNI Europa and Coiffure EU concluded the agreement to address the real needs of employers and workers in the sector. When implemented, the agreement will improve health and safety protection for over a million workers throughout the EU. Hairdressers are **ten times** more likely to develop skin diseases and ailments than the average worker and **five times** more likely to develop musculoskeletal diseases such as arthritis and tendinitis. **20%** of hairdressers develop work-related asthma and **hairdressers are regularly exposed** to chemicals that are likely carcinogenic¹. It is therefore high time to ensure the workers in this sector benefit from adequate protection.

The European labour movement does not agree with the position that this is "small stuff", not worthy of appropriate EU regulation. It is not about 'high heels' and we are surprised and

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https://osha.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/documents/en/publications/literature_reviews/occupational-health-and-safety-in-the-hairdressing-sector/Hairdressing%20sector.pdf

shocked that this offensive propaganda is still used by institutional representatives. The image is particularly derogatory towards women who compose the majority of the workforce in the sector.

The European Commission and the Presidency of the European Council are strongly promoting the relaunch of social dialogue in Europe, and have signed a relevant Quadripartite Declaration few months ago together with the cross-sectoral social partners at the EU level. In such context, we would also like to underline the importance of sectoral social dialogue.

Among European trade union organisations and employers' associations, sectoral social partners are the closest to the workplace and therefore placed where EU level decisions can have the most immediate impact on business and working people. To be effective, regulation needs to influence the work-floor and in this context, sectoral social partners have the most expertise. The hairdressing social partners' agreement is a case in point. It provides a clear example to European citizens and workers on how workers' health and safety, as a key priority in the Commission's work plan, should be protected and implemented.

We ask the European Commission to be consistent with its commitments for both health and safety and the relaunch of social dialogue. These commitments need to be put into practice with the full recognition of the autonomy of social partners and the Commission's obligation, according to the EU Treaty, to respect the request of social partners to have their agreements transformed into law – the only exception can be if there are substantial and objective reasons against using legislation. The European Commission should not use the impact assessment process, politically, to justify not referring the agreement to the Council for its implementing decision.

We request assurance that the hairdressing sector's social partners will be fully informed about the modalities and timetable of the Commission's decision-making process without further delay. This refers in particular to the different phases of the proportionate impact assessment process and the criteria for decision that the Commission will be using. The two sectoral social partners should be given the opportunity to comment on the result before the Commission takes its decision.

As President Juncker recently said addressing the European Parliament and Council, building a social Europe and a European pillar of social rights is central to regain the trust and support of EU citizens and working people. The hairdressing agreement is an essential test for this.

Yours sincerely,



Luca Visentini
General Secretary
ETUC and PERC



Olivier Roethig
Regional Secretary
UNI Europa



Jef Vermeulen
President
Coiffure EU