

Response to EC targeted consultation on review of EU sectoral social dialogue

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Insurance Europe believes that sectoral social dialogue is an important instrument that makes it possible to anticipate and accompany change and find joint solutions based on sector-specific experiences and needs. With their specific knowledge of each sector, sectoral social partners are closer to the needs of companies and employees and they are best placed to discuss and, where appropriate, develop solutions according to national law and practice. Sectoral social partners are also in a better position to deliver a concrete picture of each sector and can provide specific data that can be used in the design of policy proposals.

The Insurance Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (ISSDC) has enabled social partners to address issues of key relevance to employment and social aspects in the insurance sector. In recent years, the ISSDC's work has produced key deliverables including:

- A report and conference on the demographic challenge in the insurance sector, addressing issues such as work/life balance, lifelong learning, and health and safety at work.
- A declaration on telework, providing guidance and encouraging national social partners to promote and address telework in individual or collective agreements.
- A declaration on the burden created by the significant increase in EU regulation in insurance, addressing the negative social effects of the recent rise in EU regulatory requirements and their impact on the workloads and stress levels of employees.
- Two declarations on the social effects of digitalisation, proposing concrete measures to ensure the long-term employability of the workforce.

Recently, the European social partners in insurance agreed a declaration on the COVID-19 crisis and another on artificial intelligence. Through the latter, the insurance social partners stressed that AI should be designed and used to enhance rather than replace human abilities. Insurance is the second sector in the EU to specifically address the challenges of AI in employment.

Overall, the ISSDC has been a successful tool that has helped to build consensus and pursue sustainable economic and social development in Europe. The ISSDC has helped to achieve this by:

- Addressing concrete issues such as digitalisation, telework and the Covid-19 crisis.
- Identifying, sharing and disseminating good practice examples implemented at national and company level in the EU.
- Reinforcing the cooperation, collaboration and trust between the insurance social partners at national and EU level.
- Among the employers' and trade union/employees' representatives at national and company level, increasing the awareness of and interest in: the EU; the impact of its policies and proposals, in particular on the social and employment aspects of the insurance sector; the role, functioning, activities and objectives of the ISSDC; and the role and activities of the associations represented within it.
- Bringing to the attention of policymakers the social partners' joint views and recommendations on issues related to the EU regulatory framework.

Looking ahead, the ISSDC has agreed a wide-ranging workplan running to 2022, with a focus on diversity, inclusion and non-discrimination in the insurance sector. The ISSDC will also continue to monitor the employment and social impact of the COVID-19 crisis, follow-up on the joint declaration on telework and monitor developments in digitalisation and the use of AI in the insurance sector and their impact on workers, jobs and the industry.

These key ISSDC's workstreams and the topics addressed show the need for the insurance social partners to continue to work together to find tailor-made solutions that reflects the needs of the sector. It is important to recognise that each sector of the financial services industry has its own challenges and the dedicated sectoral social committees, such as the ISSDC, are best placed to find solutions based on each sector's specific needs, experiences, practices and legislation.

Challenges for the future and areas for improvement

European sectoral social dialogue will need to continue to play a strong role in the future. Sectoral social dialogue contributes to stabilising employment, reducing inequalities and building resilience. It can thus help to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and support a sustainable recovery. This crisis was not the first and will not be the last that Europe will face. In order to amplify the impact of the sectoral social dialogue, Insurance Europe invites the European Commission to adopt measures to:

- Improve the visibility and accessibility of sectoral social dialogue deliverables. The outcomes of European social dialogue (such as process-oriented texts, joint opinions and tools) are only meaningful if they can be discussed, translated and used by national social partners. The European Commission should facilitate access to translation resources and improve the visibility of the outcomes of the sectoral social dialogue committees on their dedicated websites. The Commission and national authorities should substantially increase the visibility they give to joint outcomes of sectoral social dialogue, within and outside their institutions, and in the context of legislative and non-legislative processes.
- Ensure that sectoral social dialogue has appropriate resources. Budgets for sectoral social dialogue are being reduced and the administrative work to organise European social dialogue activities has been increasingly moved from the European Commission to the social partners. The Commission should review its approach to allow the social partners to focus on their core role in social dialogue.
- Facilitate coordination between sectoral social dialogue committees. Regular exchanges between sectors on common issues could benefit all social partners and help increase the weight given to the outcomes



of social dialogue committees. The European Commission should further facilitate such cooperation while ensuring the role and the autonomy of the individual sectoral social dialogues.

- Raise the profile of social dialogue within the EU and increase awareness of its importance. In this regard, Insurance Europe agrees with the suggestion by Andrea Nahles, special advisor to Commissioner Schmit, that sectoral social partners should have greater involvement in the European Semester.
- Improve consultation with social partners on Commission initiatives. Insurance Europe believes that sectoral social partners should be involved in the EU's policymaking process at the earliest possible stage. While consultation with social partners works relatively well in employment and social policy, there is room for improvement in other policy areas. Insurance Europe welcomes the proposal by Andrea Nahles to appoint a social dialogue coordinator in each directorate-general. This would ensure a more consistent approach to consultation with social partners across the Commission.
- Support capacity-building to benefit national social partners. The capacities of national social partners vary substantially across Europe. In recent years, the European social partners have urged the EU to step up its financial support for capacity-building and have called on national governments to make better use of the available funding.

Insurance Europe is the European insurance and reinsurance federation. Through its 37 member bodies — the national insurance associations — it represents all types and sizes of insurance and reinsurance undertakings. Insurance Europe, which is based in Brussels, represents undertakings that account for around 95% of total European premium income. Insurance makes a major contribution to Europe's economic growth and development. European insurers pay out almost €1 000bn annually — or €2.7bn a day — in claims, directly employ nearly 950 000 people and invest over €10.4trn in the economy