



Dr. Viktor Orbán
Prime Minister Hungary

Telefax: +36-1-795-0381

E-mail: titkarsag@me.gov.hu;
viktor.orban@parlament.hu

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Subject: Draft Law T/3784 - lack of clarity for workers (chimney sweepers) concerned

Dear Prime Minister,

We have been informed that the Hungarian government is reorganising the public service organisations without the appropriate information and consultation with the trade union concerned. This is a violation of key European legislation in the area of information and consultation as well as the objective of anticipating and managing change to ensure workers will be prepared, for example through additional training and upskilling, to find another job in the organisation, or in case not possible will have the necessary skills and support to find an equivalent job in another organisation. We request that you enter into immediate discussions with the trade union concerned (HVDSZ2000 and an EPSU affiliate) to make clear what are the objectives and expectations of the new organisation and for its workforce.

There are many questions that have not been answered. What are the prospects for the workers and their jobs ? What are the longer-term investment plans ? What skills are required ? How will the rights of workers as well as those of their representatives be guaranteed ? What collective agreement will apply and how will you deal with the transition from one work organisation to the next so workers do not lose out on their entitlements to wages and retirement provision (pensions) ?

The reorganisation of the public service organisations is part of a larger plan of which the first step to create a holding of the electricity, gas and district heating companies has been completed. The Secretary of State has informed my colleagues that the next step is to create a holding for the waste collection, for the water services and for the chimney sweeper services. Despite repeated requests for more information HVDSZ2000 has not obtained any further information of the plans. This creates uncertainty for the workers and their families. They do not know what the future will bring for them.

The government also announced in February 2015 that the Chimney Sweeping Services will be included in the Disaster Management Organisation, a para-military organisation that also includes fire-fighters, flood and inland water protection units. The union, and together with the employers' associations involved has contacted the government seeking further information and to negotiate the conditions for the protection of the workers rights and their transition. Such requests have been ignored.

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The union also requested reconciliation and a meeting was held in which only a representative of the Disaster Management Organisation came. This representative did provide further information and committed that all workers concerned would become employed by the new authority. Promises were also made for further consultation with the union. However, no clarity has subsequently been created for the workers concerned. No consultations have taken place with the trade unions.

The union has continued its demands for clarity, but the proposed draft law T/3784 which has been sent to the Hungarian Parliament does not provide any details if the chimney sweepers will continue with their job, what the working conditions and pay will be, what their contractual status will be, how workers' rights will be protected and how the information, consultation and negotiating structures will be organised.

Despite repeated requests for information, for discussions and reconciliation, none has happened and this is causing a lot of anxiety for the hundreds of workers concerned as well as their families.

Dear Prime Minister,

We ask you to immediately enter into discussions with the union to provide the clarity sought and into negotiations to ensure the workers have their rights protected. As a member of the European Union, Hungary does support the core value of the social dialogue, and your government has also underlined the important role of anticipating and managing change. The European Commission as well as European social partners at both intersectoral as well as sectoral level (and including EPSU) has done much work in this regard which could be of assistance.

What is not acceptable is that changes are imposed without involving workers and their representatives. It is bad practice. It will not only have consequences for the workers concerned but also for the work organisation. The experience over many different industries, services and institutions underlines that such type of reorganisations that are imposed and do not involve the workers, will lead to additional costs for the organisation, demoralised staff, not obtaining the objectives etc. This can be prevented. We ask you to make sure that this re-organisation will not enter organisational restructuring literature as a case study of bad practice.

We look forward to a positive outcome.

Yours sincerely,



Jan Willem Goudriaan,
EPSU General Secretary