Position Paper
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Green Deal

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The Clean Industrial Deal: A joint roadmap for competitiveness and decarbonisation

Executive Summary

Our key demands in brief

- **Sustainable competitiveness** requires **fair distribution, innovation, strong welfare states and workers' rights** instead of low wages. Important factors are legal and planning security, modern infrastructure, high educational standards, high-quality services of general interest, good work, high real incomes, an intact environment and social peace – a „**high road strategy**".

- **Focus on people** in order to close the investment gap: The Commission sees it as the basis of competitiveness, but the CID remains vague on its implementation. **More just-transition funding** and **the promotion of qualifications** are needed for sustainable innovation. The European Pillar of Social Rights also needs to be strengthened to achieve good work and prosperity.

- Finally driving forward **future investments**: AK is in favour of an **investment offensive** with an annual funding volume of €750 to €800 billion or around 4.5% of EU GDP from 2023, as proposed by Mario Draghi in his competitiveness report.

- **Strengthening strategic European value chains**: Establishing and strengthening European value chains in key areas is essential. Labour and co-determination rights and a commitment to social partnership must be anchored in transformation management. Publicly funded projects should include location and employment guarantees and be linked to social objectives. In support of this, RTI policy must be strategic and mission-oriented.

- More comprehensive measures are needed to secure **access to affordable renewable energy, storage and grids** and thus drive forward the energy transition and sustainable competitiveness. These must ensure a fair distribution of costs and strengthen the participation of everyone involved in the energy transition. The proposed measures are inadequate to ensure that the objectives are achieved.

- To achieve the climate targets and in view of the urgency of these challenges, in the coming years EU policy must be at the **service of socio-ecological transformation**.

- The CID's industrial policy focus on the **development and scaling of lead markets and the positioning of the EU as a pioneer in the circular economy** is certainly to be welcomed. Demand-side instruments, such as public procurement, should also be used to a greater extent for this purpose.

- The EU must strengthen its **global pioneering role** in the circular economy with concrete measures to reduce resource consumption, as pure efficiency and recycling approaches are not enough. European policy on raw materials must not focus unilaterally on securing raw materials, but must take into account **good working conditions, the circular economy and raw materials limitation**.

AK's Position

General preliminary remarks

The European Union is facing complex industrial and transformation policy challenges. The European Commission's Clean Industrial Deal (CID) is intended to provide an answer to this but remains inadequate in many respects. Whilst the identification of key problem areas – including the innovation gap, high energy costs, limited fiscal leeway and a lack of coordination – is fundamentally correct, there is a lack of consistent and effective measures to overcome these obstacles.

A central deficit is the fragmentation of industrial policy, which is made up of short-term, poorly coordinated initiatives. Different industrial policy goals such as climate protection, economic resilience and technological sovereignty often stand side-by-side yet unconnected, without forming a coordinated strategy. Added to this are inefficient administrative structures and unclear responsibilities, which make effective management difficult. Although the CID approaches many of these aspects, it fails to address them sufficiently.

Shift in priorities: From "green" to "clean"

Whilst Ursula von der Leyen's first term of office (2019–2024) focussed on the "Green Deal", the focus has increasingly shifted to competitiveness as a result of the recent crises and changes in majorities in the EU institutions. It is noticeable that the term "green" is increasingly being replaced by "clean". This opens the door to the inclusion of nuclear energy, which is CO2-neutral in terms of electricity generation but is not classified as a renewable energy source. This linguistic adaptation could facilitate political consensus, but carries the risk of weakening the original environmental policy objectives.

Closing the innovation gap: Unused potential

There is a lack of clear measures to promote a strong innovation ecosystem. So far, the proposals have focussed on financial incentives and tax relief without specifically promoting the link between innovative strength, qualifications and productivity. This is problematic, as sustainable industrial transformation is not achieved through capital alone, but above all through know-how and technological progress.

Investment mobilisation and fiscal challenges

The industrial transformation requires enormous financial resources. The Commission plans to mobilise EUR 100 billion, but primarily refers to existing instruments such as InvestEU, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Innovation Fund – without making substantial new funds available. Whether these measures will be sufficient to achieve the ambitious environmental targets while simultaneously strengthening the European economy remains questionable. The investment gap can neither be closed by existing budgetary resources nor by limited national financial leeway. It is therefore crucial to provide not only subsidies, but also liquidity instruments such as low-interest loans, public funds and state guarantees. These aspects have so far been given too little consideration.

Securing the Pillar of Social Rights and Just Transition

The industrial transformation must not only be thought of in technological and economic terms – it must also be socially cushioned. It is positive that the Commission emphasises that working people and local communities are at the heart of the transformation. A genuine "just transition" requires that all employees benefit from the measures – not just those with specific qualifications or access to training opportunities. Strengthening the European Pillar of Social Rights is therefore essential and must not be watered down under the slogan of "de-bureaucratisation".

Technological clarity instead of neutrality

While technological neutrality can be useful in early development phases, it leads to uncertainties once technologies are established. Companies need clear guidelines to minimise investment risks. However, the CID avoids setting a strategic technological agenda. Too strong an adherence to technological openness can lead to companies hesitating to invest in future-proof technologies. A mission-oriented strategy with clearly defined development directions is required to ensure planning security and avoid fragmentation within the EU.

Details of the proposed provisions

On Chapter 2: Access to affordable energy

AK welcomes the fact that access to affordable renewable energy, storage and grids has been recognised by the Commission as an essential prerequisite for the success of the energy transition and as an essential pillar of sustainable competitiveness. Nevertheless, the measures envisaged do not go far enough to actually achieve the desired goals.

The CID refers to the reform of the electricity market design adopted last year, which is based on **Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) and Contracts for Difference (CfDs)**. The EIB is to provide access to €500 million for cross-border PPAs (pilot projects). The technological-neutral approach should be viewed critically, as this means that state-subsidised PPAs also cover fossil fuels. However, it remains unclear how PPAs are actually supposed to reduce costs and not just volatility. When combining PPAs and contracts for difference (CfDs), for which the Commission intends to adopt guidelines this year, care must be taken to ensure that the state does not assume the full risk. Depending on how it is structured, however, there is the potential to create a separate market for renewable energies and thus reduce electricity prices. An efficient funding regime (symmetrical CfDs etc.) would also be important to this end.

AK welcomes the fact that the Commission is working towards concluding the amendment to the **Energy Tax Directive**. AK assesses the proposal as balanced, as it introduces the principle of "equal tax for equal use" and separates the taxation of energy and CO2 components. This instrument could usefully complement emissions trading for heating and motor fuels. In this context, AK emphasises the important role of social compensation mechanisms for low-income households, as energy levies in particular have a strongly regressive impact.

The EU-wide **harmonisation of the grid fee system** entails the risk that the discretionary powers of the national regulatory authorities will be restricted or that they will be disempowered altogether. However, the differences in flexibility potential in particular show that this national leeway is needed to leverage the potential in the best possible way. There are also interactions between the grid fee system and other energy policy regulations and measures, which differ depending on the Member State (promotion of renewables, use of public funds for grid expansion, etc.). Furthermore, measures such as greater producer participation and thus fair cost sharing could be rendered impossible.

The **acceleration of approval procedures for grid expansion, energy storage and renewable energies** must be supported. However, in the opinion of AK, no further EU legislative proposals are required, but rather the rapid implementation of the Renewable Energy Directive (RED III) in the Member States.

The Commission also wants to speed up **approval procedures for industrial decarbonisation (Industrial Decarbonisation Accelerator Act).** It relies on deregulation instead of evidence-based measures such as better planning and more government resources. The proposed "tacit approval" of certain administrative decisions, which could jeopardise environmental and health protection, is particularly problematic. A positive development is the expansion of digitalisation and central contact points at authorities. In connection with the legal act on the accelerated decarbonisation of industry, AK also notes that any weakening of the **EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS)** must be avoided. The most important signal for industry in the EU continues to be the clear reduction pathway set out in the EU ETS. With the market stability reserve, an instrument has been created that successfully reduces the volatility of certificate prices. This gives the industry a high degree of planning security. It is also appropriate that the effectiveness of the **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** is reviewed, as it is the most important instrument for preventing the relocation of industry to third countries due to high CO2 costs in the EU ("carbon leakage"). In this context, reference is also made to the need, explained below, to remove allowances from the market and cancel them in the event of aid for ETS installations so as not to diminish the effectiveness of the EU ETS.

The announced changes to the CBAM are designed to simplify processing and, above all, reduce the burden on SMEs. AK supports the thrust of this measure. Above all, however, it will be necessary to observe if evasive action is taken. In addition, the Commission should investigate whether a mirror image compensation of CO2 costs for EU-based exporters would improve the competitive situation of these companies on the global market and whether it would be legally feasible and practicable.

A reliable and affordable supply of clean hydrogen will play a key role in replacing fossil fuels in the future. AK supports the goal of investment security, but rejects the idea that hydrogen produced with nuclear energy should be recognised as clean.

On Chapter 3: Lead markets to promote clean supply and demand

In the view of AK, the expansion of **non-price criteria**, i.e. quality criteria, in public procurement is a welcome step towards a more sustainable and social economy.

In the past, the lowest price was often the criterion on which public tenders were awarded. As a result, companies that operated in a socially and environmentally friendly manner were eliminated as bidders with higher prices. When quality, social and ecological aspects as well as European and regional added value are taken into account in selection and award criteria, public contracts can be used in a targeted manner to provide positive impetus for sustainable development and fair working conditions. EU law has offered this option for a long time, but it is used far too little by public contracting authorities. Certain aspects such as fair working conditions, European and regional added value and a high level of environmental protection in the production of products and services should be standard in the eligibility criteria in order to exclude companies with unfair business practices from the outset and to develop leading European companies through strategic procurement.

The design of non-price-related criteria in public procurement must be specific and transparent; instead of an unclear demand for technology neutrality, technology pathways should be specified in the sense of dual transformation. SME participation in the public procurement market should be facilitated by extending the possibility of direct awards and simplified award procedures. Awarding contracts locally also improves the CO2 footprint, for example by focusing on short travel distances. This also helps to preserve regional jobs and strengthen the economy, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas. This means that economic policy measures can be implemented by the public authorities and have an impact without lengthy and complex EU-wide procurement procedures.

AK is critical of the **creation of a market for captured CO2**, as there are currently still enormous inefficiencies in this context. AK is therefore in favour of the direct replacement of fossil fuels with renewable energy sources and decidedly against the conversion of CO2 into short-lived energy sources such as e-fuels, which have to date been characterised by a high degree of inefficiency in conversion.

On Chapter 4: Public and private investments

Public and private investments are crucial to achieving the goals of the CID. AK is in favour of the **investment offensive** proposed by Mario Draghi with an annual volume of EUR 750 to 800 billion. However, the financing has so far been uncertain, as it is mainly based on reallocations from existing funding pots and does not take account of revenue shortfalls. It is very regrettable that hardly any fresh funds are currently earmarked to achieve the investment targets. It is also important to ensure that the increased defence spending does not come at the expense of important investments in the future.

AK fundamentally calls for a stronger focus on **investment in public services of general interest and infrastructure**. These include the expansion of public transport, water supply and disposal, health and social services, health centres, digitalisation and care for children and people in need of care. A well-developed public infrastructure is an essential contribution to sustainable competitiveness. AK positively assesses the stronger strategic role of public procurement in key technologies and important sectors proposed by the Commission as well as the increased consideration of European added value and the simplification of procedures. AK also advocates the introduction of a de minimis regulation to facilitate regional procurement and reduce the carbon footprint. At the same time, the European Commission is being called upon to put a stop to harmful competition between Member States so as to prevent distortions of competition in favour of wealthier countries.

The public sector should also contribute to reducing uncertainties with its use of funds. The low private willingness to invest is mainly caused by geopolitical risks and the high volatility of prices, especially energy prices. A stabilising economic policy and a clear regulatory framework can help to reduce these uncertainties. However, the assumption of risks by the state in private investments should be limited to clearly defined measures in key areas. In other areas, support of this kind is not sufficiently justified.

AK emphasises that the effectiveness and targeted reach of the proposed tax measures to promote clean industries must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. A possible **reduction in corporate tax** is viewed critically, as it hardly creates any investment incentives and would be difficult to administer and susceptible to abuse, particularly for "green businesses". The complex implementation could also open up new opportunities for tax fraud. Similar concerns apply to **capital gains tax**: A separate capital gains tax rate for "green investment income" is seen as problematic, as it is unclear how such income differs from other income and what objective justification there would be for preferential tax treatment. With regard to the range of investment facilitation measures, AK points out that these are basically to be welcomed, as they can help to direct investments specifically into desired areas. This could be regulated, for example, through allowances or depreciation benefits. However, the incentive design depends on the specific design of the measures on the basis of which the measures are to be evaluated.

On Chapter 5: Energy for the circular economy – secure access to materials and resources

AK welcomes the planned positioning of the EU as a pioneer of the circular economy by 2030 and a Circular Economy Act by 2026. A strong circular economy strengthens security of supply, although concrete measures to reduce resource consumption are yet to be specified – efficiency and recycling measures alone are not enough to cover the increasing demand for critical raw materials in the future. Furthermore, AK points out that although strategic access to European raw materials policy is necessary, the current approaches of the **Critical Raw Material Act (CRMA)** are too one-sidedly aimed at securing access to raw materials. Even more pressure on securing international sources of raw materials alone will not adequately address the problems of global scarcity of raw materials, their fair distribution and efficient use. Ensuring good and safe working conditions, expanding the circular economy and limiting the demand for raw materials must play a greater role in European raw materials policy.

In March 2025, the European Commission presented the first strategic projects to receive CRMA funding. AK once again points to the danger that the planned accelerated and simplified approval of strategic projects threatens to **undermine environmental protection rules, social sustainability standards and the involvement of local communities**. A purely administrative acceleration of procedures (and corresponding monitoring) by strengthening the capacities of the often poorly equipped authorities is to be welcomed.

An **EU Critical Raw Materials Centre** is planned as part of the CID. It is intended to centrally procure critical raw materials for interested companies and in cooperation with the Member States, thereby improving negotiating power with raw material producers and traders. This strengthened role should not only be used to negotiate favourable supply contracts, but also to ensure compliance with corporate due diligence with regard to their raw material supply chain. When designing the Critical Raw Materials Centre, attention must also be paid to funding and risk assumption. As the companies are hoping for benefits such as better prices and secure contracts, they also have to bear the costs. In particular, risks such as delivery failures must not be passed on to the public sector.

The CID notes that the Critical Raw Materials Centre could also coordinate the **strategic warehousing** of critical raw materials. Warehousing can help to balance out price fluctuations and bridge short-term bottlenecks. Before implementation, however, lessons should be learned from international examples of raw material warehousing and from experience with the strategic gas reserve. As strategic warehousing incurs high costs, it is also important to ensure that companies bear at least most of the costs.

An **EU crisis plan for raw material shortages** is needed to complement joint procurement and warehousing. If crisis plans arise due to shortages or supply disruptions, priority must be given to those areas of application that benefit the general public (e.g. public transport, renewable energy infrastructure).

It is to be welcomed that the European Commission sees circularity and the circular economy as the core of the European decarbonisation strategy. With regard to the recycling of critical raw materials, the increased 25% target by 2030 from the Critical Raw Materials Act is again mentioned. However, specific and binding **recycling targets** for the individual raw materials are more important than the overarching target; in some cases (e.g. for copper and tungsten) these need to be significantly higher due to the already existing recycling ratio. In order to promote the development and use of recycling capacities, it also makes sense, as announced in the CID, to export less waste containing critical raw materials. It is positive that the text mentions the possibility of export taxes, which could be part of a mix of industrial policy measures. At the same time, it will not be enough to rely solely on targets and price and market mechanisms; clear regulatory provisions will also be necessary.

On Chapter 6: Global markets and international partnerships

Notwithstanding the frequently voiced criticism of EU trade agreements for harming the climate, workers and the environment, the Commission continues to uphold them as a central component of its foreign trade activities. This includes, for example, the EU's trade agreement with the Mercosur countries which is highly controversial from a climate, social and environmental policy perspective. Instead of making a positive contribution to a climate-neutral and socially just global economy, it focusses one-sidedly on the interests of corporations. The same applies, for example, to the planned modernisation of the EU-Mexico Agreement which also provides for privileged special rights of action for foreign companies. Old-generation agreements that reinforce unequal and unsustainable trade and production structures appear counterproductive in the context of the climate catastrophe and the need for a social-ecological restructuring of the global economy. AK therefore strongly opposes not only the EU-Mercosur Agreement and the EU-Mexico Agreement, but also identifies the need for a fundamental revision of all trade agreements. The focus must be on social, ecological and climate policy objectives and concrete plans must be drawn up on how to drive forward the decarbonisation of trade and the social-ecological restructuring of the economy. In the light of this discussion, it is also worth recalling the proposals for a "**Climate Peace Clause**" and a "**Climate Waiver**" in the context of trade and investment policy.

It is to be feared that the new Clean Trade and Investment Partnerships (CTIP) will remain anchored in the existing logic of trade agreements and that social justice and the global climate will remain marginal issues. This is evident from the fact that the Commission primarily focusses on the economic needs and interests of companies and, among other things, wants to secure their access to green energy. In this context, it should be noted that in many countries of the Global South, the majority of households have no access to the electricity grid or a stable power supply, for example. Without fundamental **infrastructure development** in these countries, there is a risk that renewable energy will be provided for export while local communities do not benefit.

In a world full of upheaval, the EU continues to cling to outdated, climate-damaging and socially unjust trade agreements and trade rules instead of developing partnerships on an equal footing that address social challenges. Instead of relying purely on the logic of competition, to prevent dumping practices, it would be necessary to enforce global standards not only through tariffs, but also through binding labour law and environmental regulations.

AK supports the **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** in principle, as the abolition of free certificates is intended to stimulate the decarbonisation of the economy. However, the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism should only be seen as one climate policy measure among many on the road to climate neutrality. In the revision of the CBAM, AK is calling for an improvement in the sense of a fair global economy: part of the revenue could, for example, be made available to countries in the Global South for climate protection measures.

As part of its plea to **"promote and protect"** European industries, the European Commission wants to ensure "that foreign investments do not undermine Europe's security and public order". However, with regard to the ongoing revision of the EU FDI Screening Regulation, the Commission is once again omitting key weaknesses in its far too narrow screening approach. Even from a current macroeconomic perspective – such as the greening of industrial policy – the one-sided focus on geopolitical and security risk considerations is once again in danger of failing to adequately reflect public protection interests.

The possibilities for **investment screening** must therefore be fundamentally realigned to take account of macroeconomic considerations. This includes, in particular, potential threats to, for example, security of supply and employment, risks to climate protection and human rights due diligence obligations associated with investment activities, technological independence and strategically important components from an industrial policy perspective. In addition, investment audits should also be used more specifically to promote technology cooperation between non-European industry leaders and European companies (e.g. in the form of joint ventures and through cooperation with green technology leaders in the battery sector). Consequently, investment controls should be used more as a strategic lever to promote environmental, social and economic development. The Commission does not sufficiently acknowledge current ecological, social and economic transformation requirements if it continues to reduce investment screenings to geopolitical and security policy risk considerations.

Distorting subsidies from third countries (Foreign Subsidy Regulation) are currently being discussed as a major challenge for industrial policy. However, the focus is exclusively on financial benefits that are granted directly or indirectly to a company and that can actually or potentially distort competition in the internal market. These include capital injections, grants, loans, tax incentives, the assumption of operating losses or the waiver of state revenues.

Initial practical experience shows that the diverse forms of such benefits and their clear allocation to a third country makes them very difficult to assess. From the point of view of employee interests, to overcome the challenges of decarbonisation and to promote local value creation and regional economic cycles, so-called "local content" requirements – in the sense of European added value – would be a sensible and more effective alternative to the existing "Foreign Subsidy Regulation". Such requirements, for example in the context of public procurement or the granting of state subsidies within the EU, would be easier to implement, would avoid trade conflicts and would have significantly more positive effects for employees, the environment and the climate in Europe. In contrast, the use of the Foreign Subsidies Regulation harbours the risk that, for example, the procurement of green technologies or goods of general interest will be made more difficult. The mandatory consideration of European added value as an award criterion for public contracts or as a condition for state subsidies, on the other hand, would strengthen employment and value creation in Europe. AK therefore also advocates a **change in WTO rules**, as "local content" requirements are currently incompatible with WTO law and international investment protection agreements.

The Commission currently only examines third-country subsidies to determine whether and to what extent the subsidy is suitable for improving the competitive position of the company concerned in the internal market and whether competition is actually or potentially impaired as a result. In the view of AK, the **assessment indicators** for identifying a distortion of competition are clearly too narrow and should therefore be expanded. Particularly in the case of public procurement, it is of crucial importance that social dumping practices supported by third countries or the undermining of standards in relation to wage regulations, labour law, social protection, environmental sustainability and human rights are assessed as a "third country subsidy" that distorts competition and are included in the assessment under Article 4 (Distortions in the internal market). As part of the review of the indicators, it is clear to AK that the violation of international minimum labour and environmental standards should in any case be sanctioned by exclusion from the public procurement procedure.

Furthermore, it seems important in this context to provide for close involvement of the Member States and interest groups in the individual case assessment. This is because comprehensive local expertise is required in order to be able to assess possible positive or negative effects, for example in the context of public procurement.

On Chapter 7: Qualifications and high-quality jobs for social fairness and a just transition

With the Clean Industrial Deal (CID), the European Commission is pursuing the goal of creating high-quality jobs, developing the skills of EU citizens, promoting social standards and supporting workers during their transition phases. This objective is welcomed as a matter of principle. The section on skills and high-quality jobs refers to the **Union of Skills (UoS)** initiative. From AK's point of view, however, it is clear that the support announced in the CID and the UoS for a just transition is not sufficient. A statutory right to further training is necessary, for example as set out in the training allowance model proposed by AK. Employees must receive appropriate and long-term livelihood security during their (re)qualification.

A **Just Transition Directive** for anticipating and managing transformation processes in the world of work is urgently required. The necessary substantial increase in funding for the **Just Transition Fund** is not part of the package, nor is a fundamental overhaul of its inadequate governance structure. However, questions of distributional (in)justice are also excluded, the impact of which could be magnified by the upcoming transformation processes. Many – particularly vulnerable – groups, but also certain regions, will be disproportionately affected by structural change. Here, the Commission must focus more on the realities of life and the actual needs of people: In view of the few social initiatives in the CID, it seems surprising, to say the least, that there is a focus on "**social leasing**" of e-cars, for example. People at risk of poverty who cannot afford a car, but also Europe's carbon footprint, would be better served if the EU were to focus more strongly on developing public transport and accompanying social measures in this area.

As the CID aims to decarbonise the industry, one pilot project announced in the UoS in particular is of central importance: the **Skills Guarantee**. This skills guarantee is intended to offer employees who are disadvantaged or at risk of unemployment due to restructuring as a result of digital and ecological change the opportunity to continue their career in another company or sector. In its vague wording at present, this proposal comes close to a demand for a job guarantee. AK assesses the announced **Quality Jobs Roadmap** for the creation of high-quality jobs as fundamentally positive. In any case, the Commission must ensure that the social partners are closely involved in the development of the roadmap. It is crucial that jobs are only considered high-quality if access to training and further education is guaranteed for all – during working hours – and good working conditions and health and safety measures are ensured.

The announced **Skills Portability Initiative** aims to facilitate the recognition of qualifications and skills both within the EU and between Member States. This project is positive for workers as it enables them to use their formal and informal skills effectively across the EU labour market.

AK also welcomes the Commission's intention to improve the implementation and disbursement of the **Just Transition Fund**. At an Austrian level, there are still considerable bureaucratic hurdles and inefficiencies in processing and the targeted use of funds. One positive point is that the rules for public subsidies to companies are to be updated as part of the CID. Investments in (re)qualification and high-quality jobs should become necessary prerequisites for receiving subsidies. It has also been announced that investments will be made in income security and **active labour market policy**. This is particularly advantageous for Austria, as the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) is an important player with extensive expertise in training and further education.

However, the **key performance indicator (KPI)** defined in the CID must be rejected. Based on the Commission's proposal, the success of labour market policy measures will be measured by whether the number of occupations for which Member States currently report a shortage and which require specific skills for decarbonisation can be reduced. This metric does not, however, provide any information on whether high-quality jobs are actually being created, whether employees are gaining access to training and further education and whether they can successfully expand their skills – although this is precisely what the CID aims to achieve.

In addition, the CID completely ignores the issue of **co-determination in companies**, although this is a decisive factor for the creation of "quality jobs", which are addressed in its objectives. The quality of workplaces goes far beyond purely technical or financial conditions and is significantly linked to employee co-determination. Without strong company co-determination and the promotion of trade union organisations, the desired quality jobs cannot be achieved. After all, it is co-determination that enables employees to actively participate in shaping their working conditions, be it by influencing working hours, job security or the further development of their professional skills. A Clean Industrial Deal that does not take this dimension into account risks neglecting the social dimension of the transformation – and thus jeopardises the acceptance and success of the entire project.

The importance of co-determination and trade union organisation cannot be underestimated, especially in times of extensive structural changes such as the decarbonisation of industry. Only through close cooperation between employers, employees and trade unions can jobs be created that are not only environmentally sustainable, but also socially just and economically viable. In this context, the question arises as to how the European Union can align its industrial policy in such a way that it strengthens the rights of employees and enables a fair and inclusive transformation. It is crucial that European initiatives include concrete measures to promote co-determination and support trade unions in order to ensure and raise social standards in the industry. Otherwise, the success of the deal will be jeopardised, as employees will have little incentive to actively support the necessary change without sufficient opportunities to have a say.

Contact us!

In Vienna:

Michael Soder
michael.soder@akwien.at

Peter Hilpold
peter.hilpold@akwien.at

In Brussels:

Florian Wukovitsch
florian.wukovitsch@akeuropa.eu

Bundesarbeitskammer Österreich
Prinz-Eugen-Straße 20-22
1040 Vienna, Austria
T +43 (0) 1 501 65-0

www.arbeiterkammer.at

AK EUROPA
Permanent Representation of Austria to the EU
Avenue de Cortenbergh 30
1040 Brüssel, Belgium
T +32 (0) 2 230 62 54

www.akeuropa.eu

About us

The Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour (AK) is the legal body which represents the interests of approximately 4 million employees and consumers in Austria. It represents its members on all social, educational, economic and consumer policy-related issues at a national level and in Brussels at an EU level. In addition to this, the Federal Chamber is also part of the Austrian Social Partnership. AK is registered under number 23869471911-54 in the EU Transparency Register.

The AK EUROPA office in Brussels, which was opened in 1991, is tasked with representation of the Chamber of Labour vis-à-vis European institutions and interest groups, the monitoring of EU activities and the transfer of knowledge from Brussels to Austria, as well as lobbying in Brussels for the expert opinions and positions of the Chamber of Labour that are developed together with the regional chambers.