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FIRST MEETING OF THE TRIPARTITE SOCIAL SUMMIT FOR GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT:

EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS MEET PRESIDENTS OF COUNCIL AND COMMISSION ON THE EVE OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

Today, during the first meeting of the newly created tripartite social summit for growth and employment, representatives of ETUC and the liaison committee of CEC-Eurocadres, UNICE/UEAPME and CEEP met the President of the European Council, Mr Simitis, and the President of the Commission, Mr Prodi to take stock of implementation of the Lisbon strategy and present the social partners' contribution to the Spring European Council.

Faced with risks of a further deterioration in the economic situation notably due to the international context, the social partners called for a strong signal from the European Spring Council that governments will step up efforts to implement the strategy for growth and employment agreed in Lisbon.

In this context, aware of their own responsibilities and eager to contribute to the modernisation of Europe's labour markets and to improving employment, ETUC, CEEP and UNICE/UEAPME, recalled four key actions taken in the European social dialogue since the Barcelona European Council last Spring.

- On 16 July 2002, the European social partners signed a voluntary agreement on telework, which brings the Lisbon agenda forward by encouraging the development of telework in a way which corresponds to the needs of the employers and workers concerned.
- On 28 November 2002, the European social partners adopted a work programme for the social dialogue in 2003-2005, which envisages addressing 19 issues, 12 of which concern employment.
- On 26 January 2003, the European social partners published a joint declaration for the European year of people with disabilities.

- Today, UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC published the first annual report on the actions taken by the social partners at national and European level to promote the lifelong development of competences and qualifications.

This report follows on the framework of actions on this theme, which social partners presented to the European Council one year ago.

The framework of actions highlighted the joint responsibility of employers and employees for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications and defined four areas for priority actions: identification and anticipation of competence and qualification needs, recognition and validation of competences and qualifications, information, support and guidance, resources. On the basis of the information given by their members, UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC agreed to present to each Spring European Council meeting a consolidated European report on actions taken to promote these priorities.

There are clear signs that introduction of this framework of actions in the various national contexts has provided new impetus for initiatives of the social partners on development of competences and qualifications.

All four documents are available on the four web sites mentioned below.

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