



PRESS RELEASE

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EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS CALL ON EUROPE'S POLITICAL LEADERS TO TAKE ACTION IN ORDER TO TAKE EUROPE OUT OF LETHARGY

Today, at the Social dialogue summit convened by President Barroso to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the European Social dialogue, UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC called on Europe's political leaders to take action in order to take Europe out of lethargy and announced the start of negotiations on a work programme for the European Social Dialogue 2006-2008. This celebration is a good opportunity to jointly contribute to the modernisation of the EU social model.

The EU social dialogue saw the light in 1985 to discuss the social dimension of the Single Market programme. The first legally binding agreements were negotiated in the run up to the Euro during the mid-1990s when the role of social partners was officially recognised in the Treaty. As the EU enlarged, ETUC, CEEP and UNICE/UEAPME adopted an autonomous work programme for 2003-2005, which focussed on two main priorities: employment and enlargement.

CEEP, UNICE/UEAPME and ETUC discussed how they could jointly contribute to the modernisation of the EU social model. They reiterated their strong support to the Lisbon Agenda and the EU growth and jobs strategy and agreed that:

- It is possible to have a well functioning market economy with low unemployment and protection against risks. The experience of some Member States proves it. However, with almost 22 million people unemployed, insufficient growth and falling productivity rates one cannot say that Europe as a whole is meeting its ambitions.
- The European social model is translated into different national social systems having in common that they seek to combine economic and social progress, competitiveness and social protection, productivity and solidarity.

- For the European growth and jobs strategy to contribute to restore trust and to gain momentum in Member States, policy at Community level must steer a clear course towards modernisation.

“During the past 20 years, the EU social dialogue contributed to the success of crucial European projects¹. Having strongly supported enlargement of the European Union and participated to the work of the Convention, we backed the Constitutional Treaty as a balanced compromise to improve governance in a European Union of 25 Member States. The European social partners intend to continue contributing constructively to the EU integration process. But the EU social dialogue counts on the EU Council and on the Commission to give a clear signal that they intend to steer Europe out of lethargy” concluded the presidents of ETUC, CEEP, UNICE and UEAPME.

The EU social dialogue work programme 2006-2008 will be published by end 2005. The speeches of UNICE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC at the Social Dialogue Summit are attached.

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¹Sixty five joint initiatives were taken by UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC since the mid-1980s. They include three legally binding agreements (on parental leave, part-time work, and fixed term contracts), two framework agreements (on telework and stress), two framework of actions (on life long learning and gender equality) and a programme to assist social partners of the new Member States joining in the EU social dialogue.