



Joint message of the European Social Partners to the Tripartite Social Summit 11 December 2003

The Lisbon European Council set for the European Union the strategic objective of becoming the most competitive economy in the world, based on economic growth, full employment; innovation, knowledge and social cohesion. Three years after the Lisbon Summit, the Union is confronted with low economic growth and increasing unemployment, putting into question achievement of the Lisbon objectives.

UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUCⁱ welcome the opportunity to discuss at the extraordinary Tripartite Social Summit measures that need to be taken to improve economic activity and employment in Europe.

The European social partners welcome the "Growth Initiative". Better public and private investment in R&D, ICT, education and training and European-wide infrastructures can improve Europe's medium-term growth potential. This initiative should help relaunch the Lisbon Strategy. But this will only happen if it will be carried out in a sound fiscal environment and is accompanied by Europe's capacity to ensure better coordination between the various policy processes.

Job creation remains key to fulfil the Lisbon agenda. The European Social Partners welcome the report of the Employment Task Force, chaired by Mr Wim Kok. They share the sense of urgency conveyed in the report if Europe wants to meet the Lisbon objectives on employment. They appreciate that the report addresses both current and new Member States. The four key requirements for success identified by the Task Force are in line with the European Employment Strategy, the Lisbon Agenda and the European social partners' multi-annual work programme 2003-2005.

The main chapter of the social partners' work programme is employment. The following social partner initiatives are relevant for the recommendations of the Employment Task Force Report and will contribute to achieving the Lisbon objectives:

- A second annual follow-up report to the framework of actions for the lifelong development of competencies and qualifications to be presented at the 2004 Spring European Council.
- A report on social partner actions in Member States to implement the employment guidelines to be also presented at the 2004 Spring European Council.
- Orientations for reference in managing change and its social consequences transmitted to the Commission in October 2003, to be followed by a study on restructuring in acceding countries.
- Ongoing negotiations on stress at work.
- Preparation of a framework of actions on gender equality.
- A seminar to discuss case studies and explore possible joint actions relating to the ageing workforce foreseen for next year.

To conclude, UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC call on the European Council to give a strong commitment to action. Failing that, Europe will not achieve the Lisbon objectives.

ⁱ The ETUC delegation includes representatives of the Eurocadres/CEC Liaison Committee