



8 March 2017

## Speech

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### Tripartite Social Summit

*Future of Europe: Charting the course towards  
growth, employment and fairness*

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Dear President Tusk,

Dear President Juncker,

Dear Prime Minister Muscat,

We are only a few weeks away from the celebrations for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Rome.

Europeans are faced with unprecedented challenges: in the international environment, in up-coming Brexit negotiations, regarding employment, regarding security, concerning migration, etc.

Member states acting alone, will not be able to effectively respond to these challenges. They must stay united and work together within the EU to answer companies and citizens' concerns.

The European economic recovery is expected to continue in 2017 and 2018 and the outlook is improving. However, growth continues to be supported by exceptional factors, including strong support from the ECB and a favourable euro/dollar exchange rate.

Strong foundations and a resilient economy are key to provide a better future to citizens.

The European Council must ensure that this economic window of opportunity is fully used to make the reforms that will improve competitiveness, growth and employment.

The Commission just published its white paper on the future of Europe and announced the publication of a reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe in April 2017 and on the deepening of EMU towards end May 2017.

Economic and social challenges are two sides of the same coin. The economic and social dimensions of EMU need to be considered together to adopt policies that increase prosperity, employment and social well-being.

The EU is a good place to live and work. The standard of living in many member States is high and the vast majority of European workers are satisfied with their working conditions. The last Eurofound survey shows that 85% of respondents are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their working conditions.

The priority is to get more citizens into work because those who are worst off in the EU are those without a job.

This applies to older workers who are under-represented in many labour markets. Therefore, the **framework agreement on active ageing and an inter-generational approach**, which the European social partners signed today is an important contribution of the European social partners providing tools for European companies and workers to better respond to demographic challenges.

We also see in this agreement the concrete sign that the European social partners want to play their full part and contribute to finding solutions to improve Europe’s future.

Enhancing social rights on paper will not improve the chances of those seeking to work. On the contrary, it could play against job creation and undermine social well-being.

Enterprises are key but to invest in the EU and generate more growth and create more jobs they need a business-friendly environment. Moving forward the structural reform agenda is a must to increase productive private and public investment.

At the same time it is essential that the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) gives the fullest support possible to member states who wish to orient their budgets towards investment and growth-supporting expenditure while retaining its principles.

On 2 March 2017, BusinessEurope released its new **Reform Barometer**. Our members find that in 2016 only 17% of country-specific reform recommendations (CSRs) have been implemented satisfactorily. This is even lower than in 2015 (20%) and 2014 (22%).

The European Semester must therefore have an increased focus on implementation and the EU must

use all available tools to support Member States in their reform efforts.

The work on benchmarks envisaged as part of a European pillar of social rights should be done within the European semester process, without creating a parallel system.

Beyond the necessary more forceful implementation of structural reforms, we call on the Commission to develop with the social partners **an ambitious EU industrial policy**.

The conference organised by the Commission on 28 February was a positive step. But we need to do much more. We need an ambitious European strategy.

The Chinese, the Indians and the Americans – they all do have a strong industrial agenda. Don't get me wrong, we do not agree with all they are doing and certainly not with some protectionist tendencies, but we need our own EU industrial strategy, based on our own strength, in order to stay in the global race. Single market and Digital Single market are key but will not do the trick alone. We need a strong industrial strategy

with a **long-term vision for a sustainable industry in Europe** focusing on a strong manufacturing core and quality services, without picking winners and losers.

We also believe there is added value in exploring together some good practices at national level that aim at strengthening employers-trade union's joint actions on industrial policy. And to consider whether a similar approach could be set in motion at European level between the Commission, the Competitiveness Council and the European social partners.

Thank you for your attention.

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