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~FACTSHEET N° 1~

TRIPARTITE SOCIAL SUMMIT FOR GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT: AN INSTRUMENT OF SOCIAL DIALOGUE

On 13 March 2008, prior to the European Council, representatives of the Council, the Commission and the social partners will meet in Brussels for consultations at the highest level. Meetings of this type, known as the Tripartite Social Summit for Growth and Employment, are held at least once a year, and in any event before the regular spring European Council. The Tripartite Summit is an important meeting in the context of the social dialogue at European level. Its task is to ensure consistency between the different consultation processes between the Council, the Commission and the social partners and it enables the latter to contribute to the economic and social strategy launched by the European Council at its meeting in Lisbon in spring 2000 (the Lisbon Strategy).

Participants

The Tripartite Social Summit comprises the Council Presidency and the two subsequent Presidencies, the Commission and the social partners, represented at the highest level.

The ministers of those three Presidencies and the Commissioner, responsible for Labour and Social Affairs, are also present. Depending on the agenda, other ministers from these three Presidencies and other Commissioners may also be invited to take part.

In the event, the Council will be represented at the Social Summit on 13 March by the Heads of State or Government and the responsible ministers of Slovenia, France and the Czech Republic. The Commission will be represented by its President, José Manuel Barroso, and by the Commissioner for Social Affairs, Vladimír Špidla.

The Summit will be chaired jointly by the President of the Council and the President of the Commission.

P R E S S

The social partners send two delegations comprising ten workers' representatives and ten employers' representatives. Each delegation is composed of representatives of European cross-industry organisations representing either general interests or more specific interests, the latter representing supervisory and managerial staff, on the one hand, and small and medium-sized businesses, on the other hand, at European level.

Technical coordination for the workers' delegation is provided by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and for the employers' delegation by the Confederation of European Business (BUSINESSEUROPE – known as UNICE before 2007). The two coordinating confederations take account of the views of the specific and sectoral organisations and, where appropriate, include representatives from some of those organisations in their delegations.

Preparation of summits

The Summit draws on the upstream work of and discussions between the Council, the Commission and the social partners in the different consultation forums on economic, social and employment matters. The summit agenda is drawn up jointly by the Council Presidency, the Commission and the industry representatives at preparatory meetings. In addition, the agenda topics are discussed beforehand in the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council.

Background

The Tripartite Social Summit was established in 2003 by a Council Decision¹. From 1997, more informal meetings between Council presidencies, the Commission and the social partners had been held on the eve of European Council meetings. From December 2000 they were known as "social summits". In adopting the 2003 Decision, the Council wished to establish a formal framework for these meetings to ensure there was continuing dialogue with the social partners. The first official Tripartite Social Summit was held in March 2003, under the Greek Presidency. Since then, in addition to the regular spring meetings, special or informal social summits have been organised each autumn.

Agenda for the Social Summit on 13 March 2008

This spring's Social Summit will provide an opportunity to discuss two key subjects on the European Council agenda: the launch of the new three-year cycle of the Lisbon Strategy for 2008-2010 and the climate and energy package. In particular, the following questions will be considered:

- how can we further improve the ownership of the reforms?
- what strategies can we employ to enhance the implementation of the national reform programmes under the Lisbon Strategy?
- how can we exploit the positive employment and investment opportunities opened up by the fight against climate change and energy dependency?

¹ Council Decision 2003/174/EC of 6 March 2003 establishing a Tripartite Social Summit for Growth and Employment (OJ L 70, 14.3.2003, p. 31).

In addition, the social partners will be invited to present their plans for following up the joint analysis of labour markets which they submitted five months ago. The Council and the Commission await with great anticipation their views on the results obtained so far and on the new measures which will need to be taken in the context of the European social dialogue.

Venue and time

The Social Summit will be held at the Council's Justus Lipsius building in Brussels on 13 March 2008 from 10.30 to 12.30. It will be followed by a press conference.

For more detailed information on the tripartite social consultation at European level, go to http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_dialogue/tripartite_en.htm
