



Newsletter

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EU leaders and social partners debate next steps for Growth and Jobs strategy

Current challenges in the global economy, appropriate labour market and social policy approaches and climate change were high on the agenda of the Tripartite Social Summit held in Brussels on 13 March 2008.

The Tripartite Social Summit meets at least once a year, usually in advance of the Spring European Council, to allow for an exchange of views between the social partners, the European Commission, heads of government and employment ministers of the current (Slovenia) and two following Council Presidencies (France and the Czech Republic), the so-called "Troika".

CEEP welcomed the inclusion of climate change on the agenda of the Tripartite Social Summit and emphasised the importance of considering the employment impact of climate change as well as the need to fully analyse the role that internal market rules in the energy sector could play with regard to the efforts of electricity and gas companies to tackle the need to reduce CO₂ emissions. It was acknowledged by all that Europe must be ready to face the challenges of globalisation, particularly in the context of current turbulence in the financial markets. This can only be achieved by making the knowledge economy a reality and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Commissioner Špidla therefore particularly welcomed the social partners' commitment to negotiate on granting better access to the labour market for disadvantaged groups, particularly through lifelong learning. He again emphasised the importance of gender equality and in this context acknowledged the willingness of the social partners to undertake joint actions to better achieve the aims of the parental leave Directive and to enhance work-life balance. He called on CEEP, Business Europe, UEAPME and ETUC to "launch negotiations on improving work-life balance. Their 1995 agreement on parental leave needs to be adapted to today's realities".

Women still trapped by "glass ceiling" according to EU report

Despite recent progress, women continue to be highly underrepresented both in political and economic decision making according to a new report published by the European Commission to coincide with International Women's Day on 8 March. Across the EU, 24% of parliamentarians are women—up from 16% a decade ago—with a similar proportion holding ministerial office. Although the UK is only 19th in the EU "league table", the number of female Parliamentarians has doubled between 1997 and 2007. The proportion of female MEPs in Brussels is currently slightly higher at 33%. At the same time, there has been significant progress in promoting women within central administrations, where they currently fill nearly 33% of positions in the top two levels of the hierarchy (compared with 17% in 1999). Women continue to be underrepresented in economic decision making. Although across Europe women account for over 44% of all workers, they make up only 32% of those considered as heads of business (chief executives, directors and managers of small businesses). In leading blue chip companies, women still only make up 10% of board members. This figure has barely improved in recent years. The UK ranks 14th in the EU regarding the share of women members of the highest decision making bodies of the largest companies. Of particular concern is the fact that their number has actually declined between 2003 and 2007. The European social partner organisations are also not leading the way in this regard, with trade union organisations faring better than employers' organisations (with 24% and 8% of women in key decision making positions respectively). While in 2003, CEEP used to have 24% of women in the highest decision-making bodies in the cross-industry social dialogue, in 2007 this figure had slipped to just 8%. However, these figures must be taken with a hint of caution, as they are based on very small numbers of individuals.

For further information, see http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/publications/2008/

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Diary of events 2008

3 April, CEEP UK General Assembly, London

7-9 April, "The changing framework for public services in Europe", Potsdam

22 April, CEEP Local Enterprises Committee, Brussels

23 April, CEEP Social Affairs Committee, Brussels

21 May, CEEP Delegates Committee/ General Assembly, Brussels

9 June, CEEP Social Affairs Committee, Brussels

25 June, CEEP SGI, Internal Market and Local Enterprises Committee, Brussels

10 September, CEEP UK Executive, London

23 September, CEEP Social Affairs Committee, Brussels

25 September, CEEP Delegates Committee/ General Assembly, Brussels

6 October, CEEP SGI, Internal Market and Local Enterprises Committee, Brussels

24 October, CEEP UK AGM, Winchester

6 November, CEEP UK Executive

17 November, CEEP Local Enterprises Conference, Brussels

15 December, CEEP Delegates Committee/ General Assembly, Brussels

17 December, CEEP SGI Committee

EU report argues neglect of older people is widespread

As Europeans live longer the share of those aged 80 or over is projected to increase three or four fold to 12% by 2050. A Eurobarometer survey published on 17 March indicates that as more and more of us become reliant on family or professional carers, the risk or neglect or even abuse is widespread. This is often the result of an inability to cope on the part of stressed and overburdened carers rather than being a deliberate attempt to harm older people. Almost half of Europeans consider this phenomenon to be widespread in their country.

Protecting the dignity of older people was the subject of a European conference involving ministers, EU institutions and key stakeholders in Brussels on 17 March. A discussion paper presented by the European Commission at the conference refers to a number of national good practice initiatives aimed at addressing this problem and sets out a number of measures the European Union could take, including:

- Fostering a better understanding and greater awareness of the issue;
- Support research to prevent dependency and improve mental health;
- Encourage mutual learning between member states;

- Encourage social dialogue on the issue, particularly in the health and local and public administration sectors;
- Strive for a better reconciliation of work and informal care;
- Making use of the European Social Fund to support relevant measures;
- Considering the cross-border dimension in the provision of elder care, bearing in mind that an increasing number of elder carers come from another member state.

While CEEP has previously acknowledged the importance of this issue as an impact of demographic change, concern has also been expressed over suggestions by the European Commission that new leave entitlements might be introduced for long-term elder care.

The cross sectoral social partners have jointly expressed the importance of considering a new target for the provision of care services for dependents within the Lisbon strategy.

For more information see http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/elder_abuse_en.htm