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Social Summit: EU debates impact of budget constraints on jobs and growth with workers and employers

The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, the EU Commissioner responsible for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, László Andor, the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy and Hungarian Prime minister Viktor Orban – for the Presidency of the Council – have met at the Tripartite Social Summit with European workers' and employers' representatives. Their discussions focused on the effect of budgetary and fiscal consolidation on jobs and growth as well as the governance role of social partners. The Prime Ministers and Employment Ministers of the forthcoming Polish and Danish Presidencies also took part in the discussion.

The Tripartite Social Summit takes place ahead of the Spring European Council, which is expected to agree on the comprehensive response to the economic crisis and to launch a new governance architecture as well as key structural reforms.

President Barroso said: *"This Spring European Council will be a real game-changer, which will help us to overcome the crisis and to bring growth and a recovery that creates jobs."*

He also declared: *"We need an agenda for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, with a strong social dimension. The Europe 2020 strategy is such an agenda. With the Annual Growth Survey and the Pact for the Euro we have clear common priorities for economic policy. When implementing them, we will fully respect national social dialogue, industrial relations traditions and social partners' autonomy in the collective bargaining process. We are committed to use the tripartite social dialogue mandate to achieve the social cohesion targets of the Europe 2020 strategy: fighting poverty, improving skills and increasing employment"*.

Speaking to the European social partners, Commissioner László Andor sought to alleviate fears that the current emphasis on austerity is hampering smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. He stressed that: *"Europe is recovering from the recession but this is still fragile and uneven. So while making progress with fiscal consolidation, we have to ensure that the conditions for investment and job-creation continue to improve. This is my priority. The macroeconomic stabilisation effort must remain consistent with our long-term objectives for economic and social development, as agreed under the Europe 2020 strategy and the Integrated Guidelines"*.

He underlined the role of the social dialogue in pulling Europe out of the crisis saying *"One key lesson of the recent past is that high-quality social dialogue has played a significant role in alleviating the effects of the recession. And we need to work out, with the social partners, how to coordinate on issues like wages, or pensions in a reinforced monetary union"*.

At the meeting, the European social partners (ETUC, BUSINESSEUROPE, CEEP and UEAPME) agreed on the need for stronger economic cooperation and for labour market reforms. They called for a proper involvement of social partners in the definition of national reform plans and in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy as a whole.

Background

The Tripartite Social Summit meets twice a year, ahead of the spring and autumn European Councils. It is an important opportunity for an exchange of views between the social partners, the Commission and the heads of government and employment ministers of the current and subsequent two Council Presidencies.

Further information

European social dialogue : <http://ec.europa.eu/socialdialogue>