



Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe
Union des Confédérations de l'Industrie et des Employeurs d'Europe

**UNION OF INDUSTRIAL AND EMPLOYERS' CONFEDERATIONS OF EUROPE
EUROPEAN CENTRE OF ENTERPRISES WITH PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND
OF ENTERPRISES OF GENERAL ECONOMIC INTEREST
EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION**

S/TdL/13.11/JOP2.doc

9 December 1998

Joint opinion on the reform of the Standing Committee for Employment

Introduction

UNICE, CEEP and ETUC welcome tripartite discussions in the Standing Committee for Employment (SCE). They agree that the functioning of SCE should be improved and favour a reform of the SCE. However, they do not support all the elements of the proposed modifications to Decision 70/352/EEC as modified by Decision 75/62/EEC which are currently discussed in Council.

ETUC, UNICE and CEEP would like to make five general remarks as well as concrete proposals for amendments of article 2.

General remarks

CEEP, UNICE and ETUC believe that the composition and tasks of the SCE should be brought in line with the present context of the EU following the introduction of a new employment title into the Amsterdam treaty and the Luxembourg extraordinary summit on employment.

The Social Partners consider that the SCE should not remain linked solely to the employment guidelines and be restricted to discussions with the Social Affairs Council or with the new ELC. It should become a forum for discussion of a coherent strategy conducive to growth and employment where the synergy between the broad economic policy guidelines and the employment guidelines can be discussed, in the presence of representatives of the Social Affairs and Ecofin Councils.

In order to ensure that the positions expressed in the SCE for employment can have a real impact, the SCE must meet before the Social Affairs and Ecofin Councils take decisions.

UNICE, CEEP and ETUC regret that the proposed modification only foresees meetings with restricted delegations of the social partners. Systematically excluding national social partners who are involved in practical actions on the ground could be counterproductive. It would also be unbalanced and unacceptable to ask social partners to operate in a restricted format if the Council and ELC representation did not obey to the same principle

ETUC, UNICE and CEEP welcome the procedure initiated following the Luxembourg European Council whereby heads of states or government, the Commission and the European

Social Partners meet on the eve of the European Council meetings. They believe that these meetings should not be linked with the SCE or its reform.

Finally, CEEP, UNICE and ETUC would like to stress that tripartite meetings between social partners and European public authorities should clearly be distinguished from consultations in the context of the social dialogue or discussions between the social partners. The Social Dialogue is an autonomous process between employers and workers representatives leading to declarations and agreements supported by both sides.

Proposals for amendments for article 2 (based on document SN4401/98 (SOC))

Article 2

1. The task of the Committee shall be to ensure, in compliance with the treaty and with due regard for the powers of the institutions and organs of the Communities to ensure that there is continuous dialogue between the Council, the Commission and the European social partners in order to (... deleted) facilitate co-ordination (... deleted) of Member States employment policies and to harmonise them with the objectives of the Community, taking into account the need to ensure synergy between broad economic policy guidelines and employment guidelines.

2. The Committee shall fulfil its function before any measures in those fields are adopted by the relevant institutions.

The Committee shall meet at least twice a year.

3. The following shall take part in the work of the Committee :

the troika from the Ecofin and Social Affairs Councils,
the Employment and Labour Market Committee,
the Commission,
European employers organisations,
European workers organisations.

4. The employers' delegation and workers delegations shall each be comprised of 12 representatives. (... deleted) The (... deleted) workers delegation (ETUC, Eurocadres-CEC) shall be co-ordinated by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the (...deleted) employers delegation (UNICE and CEEP, as well as UEAPME, Eurcommerce and COPA) shall be co-ordinated by the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE).

5. The Committee shall be chaired by a representative of the Member State which holds the Presidency of the Council.

6. If the Chairperson decides in consultation with Member States to extend representation of the Council beyond the troika from the Ecofin and Social Affairs Councils, the delegations of the workers and employers shall be invited to include one additional representative of workers and one additional representative of employers per Member State added in the Council delegation.

7. The matters to be discussed by the Committee shall be placed on the agenda at the request of any of the parties referred to in paragraph 4.

Documents or proposals to be submitted for discussion shall be forwarded to the chairperson who shall bring them to the attention of the other parties, which may forward their comments in writing.

8. The Chairperson shall make preparations for the meetings in close contact with the Commission and the organisations on the two sides of industry taking part in the work of the Committee. He/she shall convene the preparatory and plenary meetings and shall draw up the provisional agenda therefor, taking into account any communications submitted to the Chair pursuant to paragraph 7.
9. The Chairperson presides over the discussions and summarises them at the end of the meetings. He/she shall draw up a record of the Committees proceedings in close co-ordination with the Commission and the organisations on the two sides of industry.
10. The Commission shall prepare and gather information, which enable the Committee to carry out its task.
11. Representatives of the organisations of the two sides of industry taking part in the discussions shall receive travelling expenses as determined by the Council.