

Joint contribution by the social partners' representatives in the Convention working group on social Europe

Question 7: role of the social partners

A common feature of European economies and societies is that the social partners play an important role in economic and social governance. The nature of their responsibilities, their legitimacy and representativeness together with their capacity to negotiate agreements places them in a unique position.

In view of the above, explicit references to the social partners should be included in part one of the Constitutional Treaty as well as in part two of the Treaty for policy areas which fall within their competences.

To this end, UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC make the following proposals:

Part I

- With regard to governance in general, title VI of the first part of the draft constitutional Treaty contains an article 34 which sets out the general principle of participatory democracy. A clause to the effect that *"the EU recognises and promotes the involvement of social partners in Europe's economic and social governance, taking into account the diversity of national industrial relations systems. The EU promotes and support social dialogue between the Social Partners (Management and Labour), respecting their autonomy"* should be added to article 34.

Part II

- With regard to social policy (to be dealt with in part 2 of the draft constitutional Treaty in the section on areas where the Union has shared powers with Member States), the new treaty should incorporate, as they stand, articles 138 and 139 of the current Treaty.
- With regard to employment policy (to be dealt with in part 2 of the draft constitutional Treaty in the section on areas where the Union may take supporting action), the need to consult the social partners should be clearly stated.
- With regard to training policy (to be dealt with in part 2 of the draft constitutional Treaty in the section on areas where the Union may take supporting action), a reference to the need to consult the social partners should also be included in the new Treaty.

The European social partners would also like to recall that they are consulted on economic policy in the context of the macro-economic dialogue as well as on social protection, pensions and social inclusion. Their joint contribution to the Laeken European Council proposed that "the Standing Committee for Employment be replaced by a tripartite concertation committee for growth and employment which would be the forum for concertation between the social partners and public authorities on the overall strategy defined in Lisbon." In response to this, the Laeken European Council agreed that "a social summit of this kind would in future be held before each Spring European Council" and the Commission recently made a proposal for a decision on a Tripartite Social Summit, which the social partners support. An explicit reference to this should be made in the new Treaty.

Finally, UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC draw the attention of the members of the working group on the recently adopted work programme for the European social dialogue (attached for information).

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