

**Tripartite Social Summit  
Brussels, 25 March 2004**

**Intervention by Mr Philippe de Buck  
Secretary General of UNICE**

A few words on social partners contributions for this Spring Council. You have received, ahead of today's meeting, two reports:

- the second annual report on the follow up to the framework of actions on the lifelong development of competences and qualifications adopted by the European social partners in March 2002,
- a first report on actions by the social partners in the 15 member states of the EU which are relevant for the implementation of the European employment guidelines.

Both reports show the great variety of shapes and levels at which partnerships for change are formed across Europe.

Lifelong learning

The second annual report on lifelong learning testifies to the intensification of dialogue and partnership in Member States to find practical solutions to 4 priority challenges identified in the framework of actions:

1. identification of competence and qualification needs;
2. validation of these competences;
3. information, support and guidance to companies and workers;
4. mobilisation of resources.

For example,

- Ireland reported actions on 3 out of 4 priorities (1, 2 and 4) and an IBEC survey shows that average spending on training as a percentage of payroll increased to 3.15% in 2002 (from 3.01% in 2000).
- In Luxembourg, the opinion of the advisory committee on vocational training constituted the basis for the part of the national action plan for employment devoted to training and on 2 May 2003 the social partners signed an agreement on individual access to continuing vocational training.
- In the Netherlands, lifelong learning and employability remained high on the agenda of the social partners in a difficult year. 2003 was marked by economic recession and a cancellation of the general fiscal instrument to support training in companies.

European employment guidelines

Our joint report briefly describes how the national social partners were involved in preparation of the 2003 national action plans (NAPs) after synchronisation and streamlining of the economic and employment side of the Lisbon strategy.

It also provides an overview of key initiatives of social partners relevant for the priorities identified in the European employment guidelines.

Other initiatives

Moreover, 4 forthcoming initiatives foreseen in the work programme of the European social dialogue 2003-2005 also seek to contribute to achieving the Lisbon objectives:

- preparation of a framework of actions on gender equality
- ongoing negotiations on stress at work
- discussions on active ageing
- preparation of a joint opinion on undeclared work.

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