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## PRESS RELEASE

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### EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS PRESENT THE RESULTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN TELEWORK AGREEMENT

Today, the European social partners ETUC, UNICE, UEAPME and CEEP, in the presence of Commissioner Špidla, presented the report on the implementation of the European framework agreement on telework signed in July 2002. The framework agreement on telework is the first ever to be implemented by the social partners in their respective countries, using the procedures defined in article 139(2) of the Treaty. The report highlights the wide variety of measures adopted by the social partners during the implementation period.

The objective of the European framework agreement on telework, signed in July 2002, was to define a general framework to facilitate the use of telework in enterprises in a way that meets the needs of both workers and employers. Starting from 4.5 million employees in 2002, there is evidence that telework has developed over the years, and is spreading faster in certain sectors and among certain groups of workers. Teleworkers are estimated to represent from 8% of the working population in the Netherlands and the UK to just above 2% in the Czech Republic and Hungary.

The social partners in EU Member States, EEA and candidate countries implemented the agreement by transposing the European text into their respective industrial relations systems through social partner agreements, collective agreements, national legislation, guides and codes of good practice. Employers and trade unions have jointly chosen the implementation tools according to custom and practice in their own country.

The report analyses the initiatives that have enabled the European agreement to be implemented. It illustrates the commitment of the social partners at European, national, sectoral and company levels to back up agreements reached in the European social dialogue. It also shows that the EU social dialogue is a source for the development of innovative social dialogue practices across Europe.

*“The report clearly shows that the social partners across Europe can successfully get to grips with the important issue of telework. The different experiences throughout Europe also underline that there is a need to clarify certain questions, given the fact that this is the first autonomous framework agreement to be implemented by the social partners themselves. These issues will be taken up in the framework of the European social partners' work programme 2006-2008,”* declared ETUC General Secretary Mr John Monks.

*“The report demonstrates the wealth of initiatives taken across Europe to implement the EU agreement on telework. It is a very encouraging result showing companies’ interest in this flexible form of work,”* said UNICE Secretary General Mr Philippe de Buck.

*“The report proves the vitality of social dialogue at national level. It also shows that small companies equally take advantage of telework as one of the various flexible forms of work. We hope it will help to increase the use of telework in many sectors of the European economy,”* added UEAPME Secretary General Mr Hans-Werner Müller.

*“The report shows ownership of the telework agreement by national social partners. This is the key precondition for the success of autonomous social dialogue. Moreover, the variety of tools available in terms of implementation was the catalyst for increasing the use of telework in some public services and administrations where this form of work was not so widespread before 2002,”* concluded CEEP Secretary General Mr Rainer Plassmann.” concluded CEEP Secretary General, Mr Rainer Plassmann.

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