



## Give the necessary space for the social dialogue

### BACKGROUND

Boosting productivity and employment growth is essential to ensure Europe's social and economic success. Social partners are well placed to find solutions to correct structural weaknesses on European labour markets by increasing flexibility, containing labour costs, designing effective tax and benefit systems and promoting a better match of labour market supply and demand.

EU member states and candidate countries differ greatly in size, state of economic development, current challenges facing social dialogue systems, resources available to the social partners and attitude of national government towards social dialogue. There is no "one-size-fits-all solution" or "single model of bipartite dialogue". Social partners in each country need to take varying routes even if the overall challenges they face can appear to be similar.

## Respect the autonomy of social partners

At European level, the European Commission policies to promote social dialogue must be based on a genuine respect of the autonomy of the European social partners, which means recognising that social partners are responsible for the content and management of social dialogue, both interprofessional and sectoral, within the framework of the existing Treaty provisions. In the way they consult social partners, EU institutions need to leave them the necessary space to ensure they can contribute to the implementation of structural reforms aimed to boost growth and jobs.

## Recognise social partners' contribution to the reform of labour markets

BUSINESSEUROPE believes in the complementary role European social dialogue can play in labour markets reforms in Europe. This manifests itself through the conclusion of joint opinions, autonomous social partner work programmes, framework agreements and frameworks of actions.

Recent and upcoming examples in this respect are the following:

- ➔ Adoption of a Social Dialogue Work Programme for 2009-2010, including the development of a joint recommendation on the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy;
- ➔ Adoption of joint recommendations on “support to economic recovery by the European Social Fund” presented at the Employment Summit on 7 May 2009;
- ➔ Revision of the European social partners' framework agreement on parental leave;
- ➔ Ongoing negotiations of an autonomous framework agreement on inclusive labour markets;

## Support tailor-made assistance to employer organisations in Europe

Strong and independent employer organisations are essential for effective social dialogue in Europe. Significant support is provided by European level organisations themselves. In addition, employers should be closely associated in decisions on the way to spend capacity-building funds, notably under the European social fund.