



29 April 2010

**SPANISH PRESIDENCY CONFERENCE ON ACTIVE AND HEALTHY AGEING**  
**29-30 APRIL, LOGRONO**  
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**Round table: “Joint action between governments and civil society”**

1. Context

- Among the long-term challenges facing Europe, demographic change is perhaps the most serious threat to our future well-being.
- The fact that we are living longer in Europe is a good thing. This is the result of significant economic, social and medical progress.
- However demographic ageing brings challenges: fostering intergenerational solidarity, ensuring adequate and sustainable pensions, reducing pressure on public budgets and the key challenge - supporting more elderly people, with less people in employment.
- From 2008 to 2060 the old-age dependency ratio, (over 65s relative to the working age population), will double.
- From 2010 the working-age population will decrease, with a loss of 3 million potential workers by 2020 and over 50 million by 2060.

2. Main messages

- It is essential to reduce unemployment following the crisis, but also to raise employment levels in the longer-term.
- Social protection systems should be modernised and active labour market policies further developed, so that people are encouraged to return to the labour market.
- To compensate for the drop in the working age population, Europe needs to exploit the full potential of its labour force. One way is by raising the employment rate of older workers.

3. European Social Partner Agreement on inclusive labour markets

The European Social Partners on 25 March presented their agreement on inclusive labour markets at the Tripartite Social Summit. The aim of the agreement is for Europe to make full use of its labour force potential and increase employment rates. Labour market inclusion is a key concern for European social partners and is essential to foster economic development and social cohesion. With this agreement, we commit to take concrete actions to help disadvantaged people to enter, remain and develop in the labour market. The agreement acknowledges that achieving an inclusive labour market



also depends on the actions of other actors, for example public authorities. Therefore a number of recommendations are included in the Annex of the agreement.

Main points of discussion of the workshops:

#### 4. An active working life

- Employment rates of older workers should be increased by discouraging and progressively removing incentives for early exit from the labour market. There should also be incentives to stay longer on the labour market.
- Member states have undertaken reforms, particularly by raising the legal retirement age. This is indispensable, however the key is ensuring that the actual retirement age also increases.
- Benefit systems should provide adequate safety nets, whilst also acting as a springboard to employment.
- An appropriate framework should exist for companies to employ older workers.
- Boosting training and investing in education and skills during the entire working life is particularly important for older workers, to ensure active ageing and continued employability.

#### 5. Objectives to ensure intergenerational solidarity

- Do not shift the burden of demographic change onto future generations.
- Compensate for the increase in life expectancy and the shrinking working age population by raising the retirement age in member states.
- Ensure the long-term sustainability of pension and health care systems, through effective reform measures and support for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> pillar pensions.
- Return to sound public finances and ensure this continues.
- Modernise social protection systems and improve the functioning of labour markets to integrate more people on the labour market from all age groups.

#### 6. Healthy ageing

- Measures should be taken to increase older workers' ability to work for longer.
- Avoiding people leaving the labour market for health reasons is a shared responsibility of employers, workers, public authorities and other actors in this field.
- The focus should be on prevention and monitoring sick leave at company level, to encourage a rapid return to work and avoid long-term dependency on benefits.
- Social partners are heavily involved in the development of health and safety policies and the implementation of these policies in companies. This is an important path for the prevention of work-related health problems.
- It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between health problems caused at the workplace and those caused in employees' private life. As well as the impact on individuals' health, the impact of sickness absence on companies' productivity and costs should also be taken into account. A growing amount of employers also try to reduce health problems through voluntary company measures dedicated to improving the lifestyle and well-being of their employees.



- To support employment of older workers, companies have to adapt work organisation. This will require flexibility both on behalf of employers and workers.
7. Lifelong learning
- The employment prospects of workers can be improved by increasing efficiency of education and training systems to give access to lifelong learning opportunities to workers of all age groups.
  - Development of new skills also helps in the retention or reintegration of workers who have been on sick leave.
  - A framework of actions for the lifelong development of competencies and qualifications was developed (in 2002) by the social partners at European level and implemented by their members at national level.
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