



7 February 2013

INFORMAL MEETING OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTERS

Ms RENATE HORNING-DRAUS

CHAIR OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

- Ensuring that the European workforce has the skills to deliver the products and services that companies and people need is an essential ingredient for Europe to be competitive on the global stage.
- This starts with **initial education**. We expect from governments to ensure that young people leave primary and secondary education with the basic skills to participate in further education and training, for example in terms of literacy and numeracy.
- The present situation of mismatch between the skills needed on labour markets and the skills developed in education and training institutions is an inefficient use of resources which is detrimental to growth and jobs.
- In this context, achieving **closer cooperation between education providers and employers** is an important objective to pursue. We thank the Irish Presidency for taking this message on board.
- For example, the development of effective work-based learning models, in particular **apprenticeships**, taking inspiration from good practices of well-functioning dual learning systems is the way forward.
- There is no blueprint. But the basic approach to foster cooperation between enterprises, education providers and social partners, notably in the design of education curricula has proven its merits to ensure easier transitions from school to work.
- Countries that have a well-functioning dual learning system show that there is a positive correlation between having a well-functioning dual learning system and lower youth unemployment.
- BUSINESSEUROPE welcomes the proposal for establishing an EU Alliance for Apprenticeships and is ready to play an active part in this initiative.
- **Traineeships** also help young people to acquire the work experience they need to find a first job. Like is the case for apprenticeships, BUSINESSEUROPE believes that legal frameworks for traineeships should be set at national level.
- Therefore, in our response to the second-stage social partner consultation on traineeships, we have reaffirmed our willingness to address with ETUC joint recommendations/advice on traineeships to national governments and/or social



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partners as part of our ongoing negotiations on the framework of actions on youth employment.

- **Continuous training** is also important. SMEs may face particular challenges in this regard as they don't always have the size needed to organise training themselves. Devising effective and practical cooperation mechanisms between SMEs requires working together at the regional level, with active involvement of social partners and local governments.
- **Youth unemployment** is a key European concern. The EU and the Member States must do everything possible to help young people into work.
- At the same time, the diversity of youth unemployment levels in Member States shows that a differentiated approach at national level must prevail, taking into account current economic and social conditions.
- A **guarantee** of work per se ignores economic realities and runs the risk of creating expectations that cannot be fulfilled if the economic situation does not allow for job creation.
- Each national government should be able to appraise the need, scope and objectives of a possible guarantee scheme and in doing so should ensure the principles of quality, relevance and efficiency in actions that are undertaken.