



5 March 2015

Speech

High level conference “a new start for social dialogue”, Brussels, 5 March 2015

**Concluding session: “Building a common approach to a new start for social dialogue”
Emma Marcegaglia, President of
BUSINESSEUROPE**

Dear President Juncker,
Dear Vice-President Dombrovskis,
Dear Commissioner Thyssen,
Dear Colleagues,

Throughout the day, we have had a rich exchange of views about the main challenges ahead at EU and national levels to reinvigorate the European social dialogue.

For the future of the European Social Dialogue, I would like to highlight four main points:

First of all, the direction for social dialogue must be to address and find solutions to the challenges of today. We need to react to the lack of competitiveness we are facing in Europe. This is the precondition for creating growth, employment and sustaining our European social model.

Today, the share of foreign investments coming into Europe is less than before - from 40% in 2005 to 24% in 2012.

We need to do everything to attract foreign direct investments into our region. This will lead to the creation of more job opportunities.

But attracting investments and reacting to the global challenges our economics face cannot be done without a clear understanding of why competitiveness is so important to both employees and employers.

The digital revolution that is ongoing is clearly a game changer, both for companies in terms of how they market their products and services, and for workers because skills need to be adapted. Global value chains are becoming shorter, more “on demand”, and

if we do not work all together to become more competitive, we risk losing opportunities for growth and therefore for job creation.

The social problems in Europe are due to a lack of competitiveness. The social dialogue should now be all about that: working together to shape the necessary reforms to tackle today's challenges and anticipate future ones. We should focus on a partnership for reforms.

My second point is – what do we need to do to execute this vision? What should be the contribution of social partners?

We need to stay strong, responsible, to build mutual trust, and to negotiate so that the outcomes will be a good compromise for both parties.

This means that EU social partners must deal with European issues, national social partners with national issues, sectoral partners with sectoral issues and leave enough flexibility for management and labour at company level to deal with their specific issues.

My third point is that social partners need not shy away from their duties. National social partners must implement what is decided on by the European social partners. We have done our homework. But progress is still needed on the implementation of our autonomous agreements. Where there are specific problems in some countries, we should tackle these.

But the solution should not come from a greater involvement of the European Commission in our bipartite work. It is up to the social partners themselves, at national and European level, to find the best solutions.

Negotiations need to deliver, but we can no longer bear the cost of inaction.

Social partners must therefore ensure that their agreements are relevant and address the relevant problems faced by companies and workers.

In other words and to use the expression of President Juncker, EU social partners too must be “big on big

things and small on small things.”

My fourth and final point is regarding the future.

At the start of the bipartite autonomous social dialogue, social partners were doing a different work than today. 30 years ago it was necessary to complete the single market with EU social agreements implemented as Directives. But today, with an enlarged Union and global economies, social partners must sit together for a straight forward discussion on reforms.

In our proposal for a partnership for reforms, national social partners have a critical role to play. Each country has to find the right balance and mix of measures to improve competitiveness, growth and employment. But it is clear that what is decided in one country has consequences in other countries.

Reforms should be carried out with our workers representatives and in partnership, which is

BUSINESSEUROPE's preferred route. Social dialogue is the best way to achieve results. But negotiations have to deliver.

Thank you.
