

Tripartite Social Summit - Wednesday 16 March 2016

The Spring Social summit held a discussion on "**a strong partnership for job creation and inclusive growth**", focusing in particular on:

- The experience of implementing the country-specific recommendations (CSRs);
- Digitalisation: the labour market and skills challenges;
- Integrating refugees into the labour market: progress made and the role of social partners.

In his opening statement, the **President of the European Council**, Donald Tusk, stressed the need to agree on well-adjusted measures and emphasised that: "I have no doubt that the successful integration of refugees into our labour markets is in our best interest. It is the only way to enable the newcomers to stand on their own feet. And it is the only way to turn the current wave of migration into an economic opportunity. But the integration of refugees must not be done on the back of the most vulnerable individuals of our own societies: the poor, the unemployed, the disadvantaged. Questions like "why do refugees get so much support from the government, while it seems to have given up on me?" are legitimate. We must not provide any breeding ground for such questions to arise. And this is where I very much count on the social partners. Their role in maintaining social cohesion in Europe is key".

The **President of the European Commission**, Jean-Claude Juncker underlined: "Across the European Union as a whole, we have seen a return to growth but we know unemployment remains far too high and there are still fragilities and uncertainties. And there are more challenges ahead, like the integration of refugees into the labour market. There is a lot of work to be done to advance towards a fair and truly European labour market. On this journey, social dialogue and the deepening of Economic and Monetary Union have to go hand in hand - indeed there cannot be one without the other - just as EU institutions, member states and social partners have to work hand in hand. That is what we are doing and today's dialogue is proof of that vital and close cooperation."

From the side of the **rotating presidency, Netherlands'** Prime Minister, Mark Rutte, said that "we need to deliver growth and employment to both citizens and companies in Europe. To this end it is crucial that member states address their challenges and implement necessary and sometimes difficult structural reforms. This is also why making the Single Market both deeper and fairer is a top priority of the Dutch Presidency. We need the European social partners to bring this agenda further. Lodewijk Asscher, Netherlands' vice Prime Minister and minister for Social Affairs and Employment stressed "The Netherlands presidency of the Council is committed to reinforcing the social dialogue. Therefore, the Presidency will continue discussions on this in the Council with a view to establishing a Council position. We are also looking forward to speak with social partners in the Informal EPSCO, that will be largely dedicated to the issue of labour mobility".

For the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) General Secretary, Luca Visentini put emphasis on "The ETUC is committed to working with employers and EU institutions for a strong and socially fair economy. The social partners' joint declaration on a new start for strong social dialogue underlines our readiness to help tackle the many challenges the EU is facing, and I urge the Commission and Council to support this declaration. The ETUC has agreed statements with employers on refugees, digitalisation and industrial policy. We are participating in the semester process and put forward more socially fair recommendations aimed at boosting investment and demand. We welcome the new social pillar and will engage in detailed discussions on content, and how it can be implemented. We will propose improvements to the revision of the posted workers directive. We deplore the lack of European unity in dealing with the humanitarian crisis facing refugees, and are actively encouraging and supporting the integration of refugees and migrants into the labour market - on the basis of equal treatment."

BusinessEurope's President, Emma Marcegaglia, representing employers, declared "Europe is at a crossroads. A robust industry, supported by high-performing public services, is an indispensable basis to weather the multiple challenges facing us. Regulatory business environment has to be improved to strengthen private investments and job creation, in particular by SMEs. The European social partners - BusinessEurope, CEEP, UEAPME and ETUC- look forward to the swift adoption of the declaration on 'a new start for a strong social dialogue', in agreement with the Commission and Council. BusinessEurope's reform barometer 2016 shows that much more progress is needed to strengthen the implementation of CSRs. The European social partners have confirmed their interest in contributing to European solutions to the refugee crisis. Lastly, as part of a renewed European strategy on flexicurity, the EU employment policy agenda should be designed in a way that underpins the digital transformation of our economies".

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[Photos and videos from the meeting, Tripartite Social Summit, 16 March 2016](#)
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