



Making Social Objectives Central Components of the 'Lisbon Strategy'

EUCDW: Divided societies are not attractive for investment

The European Unification Process is more than mere competition

Brussels, 23.03.2006

The European Union of Christian Democrat Workers (EUCDW) welcomes the key messages of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council in view of the need to revise the European strategy for more growth and employment (the 'Lisbon Strategy'); **it rejects however every attempt to reduce the EU to mere competition.** Therefore the following points will be necessary:

1. An implementation of concrete measures
2. A focussing of initiatives on the labour supply and on specific, still disadvantaged target groups: Young people, women, older workers, people with handicaps, immigrants and minorities
3. Plus, in order to overcome the challenges of globalisation, initiatives for the poorly qualified and low wage-earners, especially for people on the periphery of the labour market
4. To regulate the issue of flexibility / employment in such a way that the needs of both employees and employers are taken into account

The EUCDW particularly welcomes the statement from the Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs that social objectives are a central component of the 'Lisbon Strategy'.

The EUCDW urges the Council to go one step further in its analysis and to acknowledge that Europe's problem lies not solely in the lack of jobs, but that the spectre of poverty is spreading. Unemployment, low wages and insecure jobs that provide no opportunity for workers to become better qualified or to plan their lives: The danger is growing that our society will become deeply divided.

The way in which the Lisbon Strategy is currently being implemented is increasing the danger. It appears that the one-sided focus on competition and economic growth has led to a race towards ever lower wages and more flexible working hours, a reduction in protection from unfair dismissal and other protective rights, and to lower taxes on corporate profits.

This is clearly no basis on which to build the productive, knowledge-based society of tomorrow, founded on confident, highly motivated and well-qualified citizens.

It is certainly no basis for a fragile structure such as a European Union made up of extremely varied peoples and regions. Anybody who sees the EU simply as a competitive event is undermining their own objective.

Over the longer term, competitiveness will not be improved by making the sole benchmark the interests of big business. Not by making such interests, for instance, the sole benchmark for reviewing the existing 'acquis communautaire' or current European legislation.

If we lose sight of the objective of social cohesion, the society we produce will not be one in which people want to live or work. On the contrary, divided societies, in which ever fewer children are born, are not fit for the future and even now are not attractive for investment.

The affirmation of competition and of the European internal market thus demands a positive commitment to a respect of social rights.

Long-term competitiveness demands social peace and an active policy of social cohesion.

The EUCDW therefore calls upon the European Council and the European Commission to revise the '**Lisbon Strategy**' so that it conforms not just to some but to all of the Union's aims.

In institutional terms, the implementation of these objectives for the EU can best be achieved by **strengthening the role of the EU Parliament, social partners and social associations**. The implementation of these reforms in particular should occur as quickly as possible.

The European Union of Christian Democratic Workers (EUCDW) is made up of 22 workers' organisations from 16 countries and is an association of the European People's Party (EPP). Officially responsible for the EUCDW is Christoph Weisskirchen, the General Secretary. Tel 0032 2 285 4164, fax 0032 2 285 4141, e-mail: eucdw@epp.eu
Website: www.eucdw.org