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Onderwerp: Social agenda: modest step forward

Brussels, 02/07/2008

Social Europe has been "parked" for far too long although there have been signs recently of a modest renaissance. The agreement in the Council of Ministers on Temporary Agency Workers is one such sign. The proposals today on European Works Councils are another. And a new impetus to Social Europe is welcome, if overdue. Commenting today on the Social Agenda issued today by the Commission, John Monks, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), recognises it a "modest step forward".



European Trade Union Confederation [ETUC]
 Confédération européenne des syndicats [CES]

In today's social package there are some good intentions but will not be enough to win the hearts and minds of the people of Europe and to meet their needs. A more ambitious approach is necessary, for example on European Works Councils (EWC), on the Posted Workers Directive and on the current decisions of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) which are elevating the Single Market above fundamental rights. ETUC is also seeking a clear initiative on the social implications of the targets on carbon emissions.

We observe some modest improvements concerning the Revision of the European Works Councils Directive but they are not enough. Works councils need to be empowered to anticipate and manage changes, and the revised Directive is insufficient in this regard.

John Monks declared: *"We are waiting for stronger and more ambitious initiatives".* The ETUC notes that the proposal for a Directive on cross-border health care addresses the issue of health care only in terms of the internal market, i.e., freedom to provide services. The ETUC regrets the predominantly "consumption"- focused approach taken as potentially undermining the solidarity on which health care systems are founded and widening the inequalities in access to health care, especially by the poorest in society.

The ETUC exists to speak with a single voice, on behalf of the common interests of workers, at European level. Founded in 1973, it now represents 82 trade union organisations in 36 European countries, plus 12 industry-based federations.

The ETUC welcomes other necessary initiatives such as the horizontal approach on anti-discrimination (including gender equality, racism religion, disability, age, sexual orientation), and also the action on "Investing in people, more and more better jobs, new skills".

The ETUC will ensure the follow up of these questions and will be pursuing them with our social partners and others.

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