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**Onderwerp:** Joint letter from the European social partners on childcare

Brussels, 07/07/2008



*If EU Member States continue to invest in childcare infrastructures at the current pace, they will fail to meet the Barcelona targets which they set for themselves in 2002 regarding the provision of childcare – 33% of 0-3 year olds and 90% of 3-6 year olds.*

*This is the main message voiced by the European social partners in a joint letter sent to Commissioner Spidla on 7 July 2008.*

The European social partners agree on the crucial role childcare plays in promoting the participation of women in the labour market and narrowing the gender pay gap. For this reason, as part of their broader discussions on reconciliation of professional, private and family life, they have decided to launch their joint activities in this field with a letter on childcare sent to the European Commission in view of a communication on this issue, due in September 2008.

Building upon the 36 contributions received from social partner organisations in 24 EU countries plus Norway and Iceland, the European social partners recognise the need to invest more in childcare in order to improve the overall situation on the labour market in line with the objectives of the Lisbon strategy. While public authorities are mainly responsible for the provision of accessible, affordable and quality childcare services, the complementary role of the social partners is also highlighted through practical examples in the letter and its annex.

The European social partners call on the Commission and the Member States to monitor progress on the basis of National Reform Plans, and to make recommendations and take action accordingly.

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