



*ETUC - EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION
ÖGB - AUSTRIAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION
DGB - GERMAN CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS*

Brussels, 17 January 2006
JM/WK/cd

Chancellor Angela Merkel
Federal Chancellor's Office
Willy-Brandt-Straße 1
D-10557 Berlin-Tiergarten

Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel
Federal Chancellor's Office
Ballhausplatz 2
A-1014 Vienna

Dear Chancellors Merkel and Schüssel,

We were pleased and relieved to hear of your initiative aimed at saving the shelved European Constitution by issuing a declaration or protocol on the social dimension of Europe, and we expressly wish to support you in this endeavour.

It will now be the turn of Austria's EU Presidency to move the Constitution project forward.

The trade unions affiliated to ETUC have always actively monitored and supported the process of putting together a European Constitution, and we fervently hope that the efforts made for Europe's future benefit will not have been in vain. In the current version of the Constitution we welcome the incorporation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the references to a balanced development with a strong social dimension.

ETUC has always viewed the Charter of Fundamental Rights as an essential core element of the Constitution and consequently opposes any attempts to dismember or partially renegotiate the latter. The European Constitution is only acceptable as an overall compromise. We hope that the German federal government will work closely with the Austrian and Finnish EU Presidencies to draft a Social Declaration or Social Protocol that takes account of calls for the strengthening of our social Europe, without falling into the trap of empty, formulaic phrases. We will willingly help you by submitting some proposals regarding the contents of such a declaration or protocol, and would be glad to discuss them with you if need be. For instance, in our view it is absolutely essential that the promotion of the social dimension be declared a cross-cutting issue that impacts on all areas of policy.

In conclusion, thank you once again for your announcement. We hope your promises regarding the need to find a harmonious balance between EU enlargement and the necessary institutional reforms, and for the development of economic, financial and monetary integration, on the one hand, to be coupled with enhanced social integration on the other, can be honoured.

Respectfully yours,

John Monks
ETUC General Secretary

Fritz Verzetnitsch
ÖGB President

Michael Sommer
DGB President