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*(Information)***COUNCIL****COUNCIL RESOLUTION****of 6 February 2003****on Social Inclusion — through social dialogue and partnership**

(2003/C 39/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING THAT:

1. social inclusion was established as a political objective in the Presidency Conclusions of the Nice European Council, following the Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council which set strategic goals for sustainable growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and affirmed social inclusion as fundamental to the modernisation of the European social model. The Barcelona European Council Conclusions specified the contribution of the social partners to the achievement of these goals, and the Council is confirming its own commitment to making serious inroads into the eradication of poverty and social exclusion in adopting revised common objectives for the second round of the National Action Plans for the fight against poverty and social exclusion for the period of 2003 to 2005;
2. social dialogue is a force for promoting innovation and change through ensuring a balance between flexibility and security, through its response to challenges such as developing lifelong learning, improving mobility, active ageing and through promoting equal opportunity and diversity — as recognised by the High-Level Group on Industrial Relations and endorsed in the Laeken Declaration by the Social Partners and by the Commission's Communications on 'The European Social Dialogue' and 'Corporate Social Responsibility'. The Commission's Communication on Social Dialogue called on the social partners to broaden the agenda of the social dialogue through developing their autonomous dialogue and increasing their involvement in both tripartite concertation and the open method of coordination processes. The Laeken Declaration by the Social Partners affirmed their intention to establish joint work programmes in order to promote modernisation and change within the European Union, as well as to prepare for enlargement;
3. partnership and improved governance are a means of accommodating the increasing demands which civil society places on the State. There is therefore a need to strengthen collaboration between European institutions,

national governments, regional and local authorities, social partners and civil society organisations, to improve the involvement of stakeholders and to establish minimum standards for consultation — as most recently emphasised in the White Paper on Good Governance and the Commission's Communication on the European Employment Strategy. The European Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion held in Aarhus in October 2002 showed a strengthened commitment on the part of social partners, NGOs and other involved actors to contributing to the process. Accordingly, the revised common objectives and working methods for the social inclusion process stress the need to promote both dialogue with and the participation of all relevant bodies including social partners, NGOs and social service providers, and the active commitment of citizens in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Furthermore, the Commission's Communication on Corporate Social Responsibility highlighted the fact that undertakings are increasingly taking social and environmental concerns into account in their behaviour;

EMPHASISING THAT:

4. there is an increasing need for more widespread social inclusion which will allow as many people as possible to be active participants in the labour market and in society at large, regardless of racial and ethnic background, gender, age, disability, religion and sexual orientation; a need which is underlined by current demographic changes which pose serious challenges to the future supply of labour and the smooth functioning of labour markets;
5. the promotion of increased social inclusion will require a strong, coordinated multi-dimensional policy response to rapidly changing economic and social conditions, using preventive measures as well as new policies and approaches. This policy can be strengthened in time by streamlining the open methods of coordination in the Social Protection field and considering how they relate to other strategies. Because social inclusion goes beyond traditional labour market approaches, covering issues such as health, education, housing and social services, it becomes necessary to involve a number of different players, making dialogue and partnership important means for helping formulate, implement and take shared responsibility for activities;

6. there is a need for all relevant actors to be aware of the effects of their actions on social inclusion and on people at risk of marginalisation, across policy fields and in their respective fields of competence and work, as well as in cooperation with other stakeholders;
7. the enlargement of the EU, adding significantly to the number of Member States, and the variety of regions and different levels of economic prosperity, sharpen the need for social inclusion as a means for ensuring greater social cohesion;

INVITES THE COMMISSION:

8. to continue to promote social dialogue and partnership in the context of an enlarged Union as a means of promoting social inclusion at national, regional and local levels; particular emphasis should be placed on prevention, including keeping people in jobs, and remedial measures;
9. to ensure that particular attention is paid to the full integration of social inclusion in the economic and social strategy of the Union;
10. in the context of existing processes and programmes, to continue to collect and analyse national, regional and local examples of social inclusion through social dialogue and partnership, in order to help disseminate examples of good practice, in terms of stakeholders, target groups and models for collaboration;

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES:

11. in line with the revised common objectives for the fight against poverty and social exclusion, to reinforce the involvement of the social partners and all other relevant actors in the social inclusion process including, according to national practice, the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the National Action Plans;
12. in line with the revised common objectives for the fight against poverty and social exclusion, and in the context of the European Employment Strategy, to ensure that social inclusion will contribute to the eradication of poverty and the promotion of social cohesion and will improve access to the labour market for both men and women, in particular by taking full account of the positive

contribution to social inclusion of social dialogue and partnership;

13. to promote and invite the active participation in partnerships of stakeholders, such as local authorities, trade unions, companies, NGOs and those directly involved;

INVITES THE SOCIAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE IN CLOSE COOPERATION WITH THE SOCIAL PARTNERS:

14. building on the informal consultations which have been developed to date, to consolidate tripartite concertation on the ongoing work on social inclusion, and to promote the active involvement of the social partners in the social inclusion process, in the spirit of the Commission's Communication on 'The European Social Dialogue';

INVITES THE SOCIAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE:

15. to promote opportunities, in particular in the context of the annual European Round Table, to strengthen the dialogue with civil society organisations;

INVITES THE SOCIAL PARTNERS:

16. to identify possible partnership mechanisms and approaches for specific activities conducive to increased social inclusion;
17. to consider, within their autonomous dialogue, initiatives for strengthening social inclusion in an enlarged Union;
18. to increase their involvement in the open method of coordination on poverty, social exclusion and employment with a view to promoting an inclusive society and labour market;

INVITES THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS:

19. to identify and develop partnerships and approaches for specific activities with a view to promoting an inclusive society and, as appropriate, an inclusive labour market; and
20. to increase their involvement in the open method of coordination on poverty and social exclusion, with a view to promoting an inclusive society.