

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TREATY OF ROME

24 MARCH 2017

STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS

The European social partners gathered in Rome on the invitation of the Italian government, the Maltese Presidency, the Presidencies of the European Council and the European Commission, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, solemnly declare their full commitment to the European Union and dedication to continuing to contribute to a successful project and united Europe that delivers for its workers and enterprises.

Seven decades of peace and stability in Europe is an historic achievement. The European Union, which created a union among the peoples of Europe and, step by step, tied together European States with a common purpose, made this possible.

Europe is faced with many economic, social and political challenges: lack of inclusive, balanced and sustainable growth, insufficient competitiveness and employment creation, inequalities, exceptional migration flows, security issues, and the need to redefine EU-UK relations. These challenges require ambitious European solutions. Together, the European Union and its member states have the means to provide common answers, show solidarity, and make a difference in a moment of geopolitical instability, economic problems, rising populism and extremism. Only united are we strong at the global level.

European social partners strongly believe in the European Union. Populism, nationalism, xenophobia, anti-European sentiments, isolationism or protectionism come from poor economic and social performance and people's fears about the future. This should be addressed through a serious, fact-based, transparent, and open-debate, and concrete initiatives that can improve workers and companies' everyday life, thereby preventing a downward spiral that will damage everyone. European and national commitment can and must go hand-in hand.

Our social market economies combine free markets, private initiative, economic freedoms, free movement of people and social rights, a well-functioning welfare state and high-performing public services. Both economic and social cohesion should be improved. A particular effort is needed to lift up our youth, to give them back prospects of a bright future, to demonstrate the benefits of the European project.

Europe has the most highly developed social systems in the world and it will continue to be so provided we ensure that the European social model is made more robust and sustainable with the active support of social partners. Providing equal opportunities and addressing inequalities in the labour market and society, increasing levels of employment participation and social inclusion, is part of the answer to greater economic prosperity and better social outcomes in the EU.

A well-functioning social dialogue at EU, national, sectoral and company level is important to devise efficient policies that will increase European prosperity and ensure social fairness.

To increase prosperity, giving room for more and better employment opportunities for all generations, we need to improve Europe's attractiveness as a place to invest and create jobs. After a decade of under-investment, increasing efficient and productive private and public investment is essential for Europe's present and future growth and employment. We need to achieve a proper balance between our stabilisation and sustainability needs including, where public investment is concerned, through a smart reading of our fiscal rules. In parallel with the extension of the so-called Juncker Plan for Investment, EU and national efforts to remove obstacles to investment, entrepreneurship and job creation in Europe must be stepped up.

To reverse the relative decline of European industry and given the importance of manufacturing as a growth and job creation driver in all sectors of the economy, including services, we call on the European Union to urgently put in place an ambitious industrial policy strategy. Our main competitors are not waiting. The time for action is now.

High performing public services must be fostered and we also urgently need a dynamic EU SME action agenda. The EU must support competitiveness and innovation, while managing transition processes towards the digital, low carbon and circular economy. We also need a strong skeleton of modernised and efficient public services able to reconnect citizens and enterprises with the European project while promoting social and territorial cohesion.

Having efficient European institutions is essential to have a well-functioning Economic and Monetary Union and devise balanced and effective European policies benefiting all Member States enterprises and workers. Europe needs transparent, democratically accountable and well-performing institutions. The European social partners count on the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament to be united and work together to improve the capacity of the European Union to address enterprises' and workers' needs and expectations. We stand ready to support you in this endeavour.