



*Ministero
del Lavoro
e delle Politiche Sociali*



Talk by Roberto Maroni,
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*Encounter between the Social Troika and
the social partners and non-government
organisations*

Informal Council of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs
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Dear Commissioner,
dear fellow ministers,
representatives and friends of the social partners and of the
non-government organisations,

In keeping with tradition, today's meeting serves as the lead-in to the informal session of the Council of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs that will be held tomorrow, with more than 30 ministers in attendance. In fact, in addition to the 15 countries that are already a part of the Union, there will be 10 countries which are currently becoming members, plus 3 countries (Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey) that shall be joining the Union in the next few years, as well as 3 other countries which have asked to participate as observers (Croatia, Switzerland and Norway).

Today, therefore, represents a major occasion for the social partners and non-government associations to express their considerations and observations. Indeed, I intend to report on the results of this discussion at tomorrow's meeting of the Council.

As you already know, based on the paper drawn up by the Presidency and the documents we have transmitted to you, our debate will focus on the ways to reinforce the role of the Council of Employment and Social Affairs in the social

and economic policies of the European Union, doing so in light of the conclusions reached by the Spring Council, which established the so-called synchronisation of economic and employment policies.

In doing so, I intend to make particular reference to the May 27th Communication of the Commission on the reinforcement of the Lisbon process in terms of streamlining policies of social protection, which, as you know, include policies of social inclusion, health-care policies and social security policies.

Especially deserving of our attention are policies of social security and social inclusion. In both areas, important responsibilities must be met not only by the governments and the ministries of labour and social affairs, but also by the social partners and the non-governmental organisations. In fact, apart from the actions taken by the national governments, social policies also depend on the forms of behaviour and the practices of the social partners and the other organisations of civil society.

We must all assume a more active attitude, and one that proves more consistent with the general objectives, promoting policies of dynamic aging, plus initiatives encouraging the permanence on the labour market of the

so-called elderly workers, along with efforts aimed at the economic and social integration of the disadvantaged.

As is self-evident, these are spheres that remain fully within the jurisdiction of the national states, though it would appear necessary to develop and reinforce a European coordination, utilising the method of open coordination that has already produced excellent results in terms of labour and employment policies, starting from Luxembourg. Based on the discussion held today with yourselves, and tomorrow with my fellow ministers, the Presidency intends to present a resolution at the October Council of Ministers, with the objective of sustaining and accelerating the synchronisation of social and employment policies with economic policies.

The challenges that must be faced by the European Union in the years to come are complex and difficult.

Demographic changes, and especially the aging of the population, along with globalisation and the need to compete on an international level, plus a mode of organising working activities that is subject to continuous modifications, are among the most significant factors.

Europe and all its protagonists are called upon to respond to these challenges with structural actions that make it possible to combine the objective of competitiveness with

that of social inclusion.

Social policies are a factor of competitiveness which should be given independent visibility within the realm economic policies, as well as a role of equal importance in decision-making processes. This is why the role of social policies in the virtuous interaction contemplated by the Council of Lisbon must be reinforced, and why today we are asking you, the representatives of the social partners and of the non-government organisations, to make a significant contribution towards formulating a more effective definition of the reference framework for policies of social security, social inclusion and social welfare.

Today and tomorrow we shall discuss these topics freely, without any restraints, apart from the time limit on the talks.