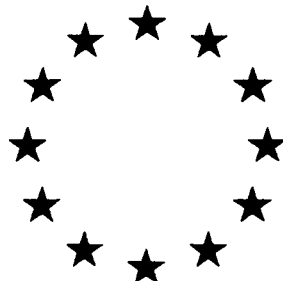


COUNCIL
OF EUROPE



CONSEIL
DE L'EUROPE

Committee of Ministers
Comité des Ministres

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Strasbourg, 17 January 1994

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For consideration at the 508th meeting
of the Ministers' Deputies
(February 1994, item SOC5)

FIFTH CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN MINISTERS OF LABOUR
(Valletta, Malta, 28-29 October 1993)

Report by the Secretary General

Secretariat memorandum
prepared by the
Directorate of Social and Economic Affairs

1. The 5th Conference of European Ministers of Labour was held in Valletta, Malta on 28-29 October 1993 at the invitation of the Maltese Government.
2. The Conference was attended by representatives of 31 member States of the Council of Europe (13 States being represented by Ministers, 3 by a Secretary of State, an Ambassador or Honorary Consul and the remainder by senior officials). Lithuania was excused.
3. The Parliamentary Assembly was represented by a delegation headed by the Chairperson of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee. The Standing Conference on Local and Regional Authorities of Europe was represented by the Chairperson of the Committee on Social Affairs and Health.

4. The Commission of the European Communities, the International Labour Office (ILO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) were also represented at the Conference.

5. Albania, Latvia and the Holy See attended the Conference as observers.

6. The full list of participants is given in Appendix II.

7. The Conference was preceded by a hearing of representatives of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE). Their representatives reported to the Conference on this hearing.

8. The Conference was opened by Mr Peter LEUPRECHT, Deputy Secretary General. The President of the Republic of Malta, H.E. Dr Censu TABONE also addressed the Conference.

9. Dr Mifsud BONNICI, Maltese Minister of Education and Human Resources was elected President of the Conference, and Mrs Jytte ANDERSEN, Danish Minister of Labour was elected Vice-President.

10. The general theme of the Conference was:

"The employment situation in Europe".

This theme was introduced by Dr Mifsud BONNICI. Replies were given by Mr Michael FORSYTH, the United Kingdom Minister of State of the Employment Department and Mr A VERLINDEN, Secretary General of the Belgian Ministry of Employment and Labour.

11. The Conference also examined two specific themes. The first of these was entitled:

"The Labour market consequences of population trends in Europe".

This theme was introduced by Mr Hans Joachim MAASSEN, Ministerialdirigent, of the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

12. The second specific theme was entitled:

"The vocational integration and reintegration of individuals into the labour market and their impact on structural change, productivity and growth".

This theme was introduced by Mrs Jytte ANDERSEN. Replies were given by Mr José da SILVA PENEDA, Portuguese Minister of Employment and Social Security and Mr Gunnar BERGE, Norwegian Minister of Local Government and Labour.

13. All three themes were followed by debate and at the close of the proceedings, the Conference adopted the Final Communiqué as it appears in Appendix I. The Final Communiqué includes:

- a series of observations on the employment situation in Europe, its causes, and in particular the role of economic and demographic factors and the contribution to be made by employment policies including training policies;
- general guidelines for the direction of future activities to be undertaken by the relevant intergovernmental steering committee in this field (the Steering Committee for Employment and Labour (CDEM)).

14. The Conference stressed during the debates the fundamental importance that employment represents for the very life and development of society as well as for the dignity and well being of every individual. It noted the current trends in unemployment and that the increasingly precarious nature of employment should be matched by making the creation and maintenance of employment a priority objective for both government and management and labour. Employment policies should aim at promoting a flexible labour market, enhancing the training and skills of the labour force and developing the role of employment services. The interrelation between work and the economy, at both national and international level, necessarily led the Ministers to consider general economic measures in favour of promoting employment, notably by the promotion of small and medium sized enterprises. These policies should be set in the context of the fundamental social rights secured by the European Social Charter and other instruments of the Council of Europe which should be promoted and developed.

15. The heads of delegation from the new member States of the Council of Europe welcomed this opportunity to discuss these issues with their colleagues in a pan-European forum. It was considered that the Council of Europe had a particular role to play not only in the employment field, but also in broader economic questions which have necessary implications for the success of social policy. They stressed the importance of their being fully integrated in developing the Council of Europe's future role in these fields, and that activities be pursued which have a common interest for Europe as a whole.

16. Certain heads of delegation considered that the conference debates gave rise to a number of general themes not specially mentioned in the final communiqué which merited further consideration as possible activities in this field for the Council of Europe and in particular the CDEM. The following themes were put forward:

- the economic and social effects of the restructuring of the European economies and the means used to manage the social consequences;
- the reorganisation of work, its economic effects and social impact on employment;
- the role to be played by the various actors (eg. the State, local authorities, management and labour) in promoting social cohesion via employment policies;
- the role of the State in regulating the emerging vocational training market;
- the social effects of the globalisation of the labour market.

17. The Ministers took note of the proposal made by Mr Gheorghe BREHOI, the Romanian Secretary of State of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection to hold a subsequent Conference of European Ministers of Labour in Romania devoted to an examination of the particular nature of the unemployment situation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

APPENDIX I

FINAL COMMUNIQUE OF THE CONFERENCE

1. At the invitation of the Maltese Government, the fifth Conference of European Ministers of Labour organised by the Council of Europe, was held in Malta from 28 to 29 October 1993. The Conference was attended by the Ministers or their representatives of 31 member States of the Council of Europe¹, 3 non member States² and representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Standing Conference of Regional and Local Authorities (CPLRE) and the Commission of the European Communities. Representatives from the International Labour Office (ILO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also attended the Conference as observers.
2. The President of the Republic of Malta, His Excellency Dr Censu TABONE addressed the Conference.
3. Dr Mifsud BONNICI, the Maltese Minister for Education and Human Resources was elected President. Mrs Jytte ANDERSEN, the Danish Minister for Labour was elected Vice-President.
4. The Conference was preceded by a hearing of representatives of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE).
5. The Conference debated the following subjects:
 - General theme: The employment situation in Europe;
 - 1st specific theme: The labour market consequences of population trends in Europe;
 - 2nd specific theme: The vocational integration and reintegration of individuals into the labour market and their impact on structural change, productivity and growth.
6. At the close of their debates the Ministers formulated the following observations.

¹ Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovenia, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom

² Albania, Holy See, Latvia

Unemployment in Europe

7. The Ministers observed that since 1991, the employment situation in Europe has not ceased to worsen and has now taken on such a worrying character that, in human, social and economic terms, unemployment has become a major problem of the nineties. The Ministers noted that this situation had been brought about by the unfavourable economic international situation, the increase in global competition and the emergence of structural problems.

8. Indeed, unemployment represents a serious social injustice, a source of social exclusion, deep dissatisfaction and moreover a waste of human resources at a time when many of Society's needs are not being met, and at an increasing cost which takes substantial funds away from more productive uses.

9. In this context, the Ministers stressed the importance of promoting the development of fundamental social rights secured by the European Social Charter and other instruments of the Council of Europe, the importance of which was emphasised by the Heads of State at the recent Vienna Summit (October 1993).

10. The Ministers stressed strongly the fundamental importance that employment represents for the very life and development of society as well as for the dignity and well being of every individual. The creation and maintenance of employment must consequently be a priority objective for both governments and management and labour when formulating and implementing economic and social policies at national and international level.

11. The Ministers also observed that in a prolonged period of economic crisis, it was necessary to assure adequate social protection, in particular for unemployed people and other disadvantaged groups, both for reasons of social justice and to avoid the risk of social exclusion which would render much more difficult any effort of re-integration. They observed that social protection systems can also contribute to the integration or reintegration of unemployed people in the world of work.

12. The Conference considered in detail the causes of this situation. Among the various economic and demographic factors linked to the current crisis in the employment situation, the Ministers gave special attention to those described below.

Economic factors

13. The Ministers acknowledged the adverse effects of the absence or low rate of growth in recent years on employment. They emphasised the importance of the promotion of sustainable growth and the need to implement economic and employment policies adapted to the present and future challenges of our societies. They also considered it important to establish conditions enabling the development of business activity, the creation of jobs and non-inflationary growth. They considered that active

labour market policies should concentrate on improving the working of the labour market and the adjustment processes within it, on the investment in human capital, on reintegration and on other measures affecting demand and supply. The Ministers were of the view that in so doing, labour market policies could contribute to resolving both the problems flowing from the lack of job offers and those social problems created by exclusion from the labour market, and thereby meet the demands of efficiency and of fairness.

14. In this context the Ministers acknowledged that although the primary role in the fight against unemployment fell to employment policy, the employment situation is also largely influenced, directly or indirectly, by other policies which it was accordingly appropriate to consider.

15. Special attention should be devoted to monetary policies which play a major role in influencing the economic and financial choices made by economic actors, both public and private, and which also considerably influence growth. In this regard, the Ministers confirmed the importance they attach to controlling inflation and stable exchange rates in Europe, factors which characterise healthy and competitive economies and facilitate both international trade and growth.

16. Interest rates have an important role to play in the promotion of economic growth. Certain Ministers considered that high interest rates might act as a disincentive to economic recovery, whilst other Ministers underlined their importance in controlling inflation.

17. It is important to co-ordinate around the priority objective of creating and maintaining employment those policies having an impact on employment such as social, education, budgetary, monetary, financial, industrial, research and investment policies, as well as regional development policies.

18. Improvements in productivity are an essential goal of business activity giving greater consumer choice through improvements in quality and lower prices. One of the roles of employment policy should be to facilitate the process of adjustment in the labour market provoked by the rationalisation of businesses. This was especially important in the view of certain Ministers who observed that the deepening recession was making it increasingly difficult for national economies to absorb the growing number of employment losses.

19. The Ministers noted that the pursuit of higher productivity implied an adequately qualified labour force. However, it is important that businesses have unskilled jobs available which can provide a route by which unskilled or untrained workers can enter the labour market. In this context, Ministers emphasised the importance of training those workers who are in unskilled jobs so that they can attain higher levels of qualification enabling them to secure better qualified employment.

20. Developments in the international division of labour were having a serious impact on European labour markets. These included the restructuring of national economies and the relocation of businesses or some part of their operations.

21. The Conference recognised the importance of these developments as being the necessary consequences of free trade and the globalisation of the world economy. The Ministers agreed that policies should be implemented which would enable European businesses to benefit from these trends. In particular such policies should include enhancing the availability of appropriately skilled labour, the development of necessary infrastructures, the encouragement of investment and promote the efficient use of all the factors of production.

22. The Conference recognised the need for the member States of the Council of Europe to co-operate together closely in developing and implementing policies capable of reversing the current trends, correct the economic situation and restart the process of job creation. The Ministers recognised that while indeed the principal responsibility for the implementation of policies to fight against unemployment is at national level, a significant contribution can be made at international level. States should continue to promote free trade and to intensify the exchange of information on the best means of reducing unemployment.

23. The Ministers held an exchange of views with regard to the changes taking place in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe faced by the problems arising from the transition to a market economy. These changes are bringing about a deep-seated restructuring, a steady increase in unemployment, as well as for certain of these countries, heavy social costs. Increasing unemployment is for these countries a relatively new and unknown feature which requires integrated national policies. It also calls for effective international co-operation and assistance aimed at the promotion of active employment measures. The Ministers took note of the efforts made bilaterally by many of the Western European States and multilaterally by most international institutions, including the Council of Europe, in providing technical and financial assistance to these countries, and expressed their determination to continue and intensify these efforts in the economic and social field, particularly with regard to the social consequences of restructuring.

Demographic factors

24. The ageing of the population, combined with early retirement policies and voluntary redundancy packages for elderly workers had resulted in a considerable decline in the labour force participation of older workers. Certain Ministers considered that these policies might represent a waste of important human capital as well as a serious financial burden of transfer payments for national economies.

25. The Ministers considered that a number of measures should be planned to encourage employers and the workers concerned to become aware of these developments and to invest in continuous vocational training. In this context, the Ministers expressed their appreciation for the investment already made by employers in continuous vocational training which they hoped would be continued and built upon. They also underlined the need for the workers concerned to be made aware of the increasing relevance of their undergoing further training. These efforts are all the more necessary as technological developments continue at an ever increasing pace and quickly make vocational qualifications obsolete.

26. The Ministers noted the increasing rate of labour force participation by women, encouraged as it is by a desire for greater economic independence. Moreover, the increasing proportion of single parent families was intensifying the imperatives facing women in search of better quality jobs. The Ministers agreed that it was therefore important to improve the access of women to better income-earning opportunities.

27. The Ministers also observed that this participation was characterised by a large percentage of part-time employment. Many of the Ministers considered that part-time work does represent or can represent for many persons with other responsibilities a satisfactory means of entering the labour market. Some Ministers considered that it was necessary to take particular care that part-time workers enjoy conditions comparable to those of their full-time colleagues (employment possibilities, job security, career development).

28. The role of business enterprises in this context has a particular importance because of the direct link that they can make between training and work. So much so that the Ministers considered it appropriate to recommend the development of particular measures to strengthen the participation of employers in the drive for occupational training, for example, through in and out of work job training, employment-training contracts and work experience.

29. The Ministers took note of the serious impact of current migration flows on European labour markets. They also expressed concern with regard to the diverse effects of these large movements of people for host and home countries alike. In this context, the Ministers reaffirmed the importance of a greater international co-operation.

The contribution of employment policies

30. The persistence of the unfavourable employment situation encouraged the Ministers to recommend the furtherance or implementation of labour market policies capable of playing an important role in reducing unemployment and creating jobs whilst maintaining an appropriate level of social protection for workers. Occupational training of young people and adults, unemployed people and, if appropriate, workers threatened with unemployment is at the forefront of these policies, the importance of which appears clear in the light of the rapid changes in the techniques of producing goods and services. Indeed, the Ministers recognised that today the labour market requires the higher and broader skills which need to be continually updated and that life-long skill development is not an option but a requirement. It was accordingly important to provide appropriate initial and further training.

31. The Ministers considered that an improvement in the functioning of the labour market could be achieved by, inter alia, the following measures:

- adjusting the relationship between earnings, income support measures and tax regimes;
- to accompany, if necessary, unemployment benefits with vocational reintegration programmes so as to make them an element of an active employment policy;
- seeking the right balance in employment regulations between the needs of business enterprises, the rights of employees and the aspirations of unemployed people;
- promoting flexible working conditions in order to improve access to the labour market and facilitate the reconciliation of the demands of working and family life, both for men and women and ensure equality of opportunity;

32. Some Ministers also considered it important to lower the labour costs particularly of young people and disadvantaged groups by temporarily reducing the social security contributions of employers, the amount of which often acts as an obstacle to recruitment.

33. With regard to the promotion of flexible working conditions, certain Ministers stressed the importance of further promoting part-time work which would enable women as well as men to better reconcile their working and family lives while at the same time contributing to the creation of jobs. They noted that at present a significant number of people who wish to work part-time cannot find employment suited to their needs, and invited employers and workers to search together for solutions.

34. In this context Ministers examined the current trends towards job-sharing, either through the reorganisation of working hours or through a reduction in the length of the working day, week or year. In this respect, they reaffirmed the primary role and responsibility of management and labour in responding to the wishes of certain workers for a greater degree of flexibility. Some Ministers also considered that job sharing could be a means to create employment. Certain Ministers emphasised the value of a more flexible distribution of human activity between work, training and free time throughout the working life. This would permit the rigidity in the labour market to be reduced while assuring workers a much greater choice with regard to the different occupational, family, cultural and other needs arising during the course of their lives. In order to support this development, these Ministers considered that it would be appropriate to review the usefulness of maintaining legal, social, or fiscal obstacles which restrict the freedom of choice of workers to plan the periods and length of work during their working life and for employers to better manage their businesses.

35. The access of young people to the labour market being still subject in many countries to considerable difficulties, as is shown by their high rate of unemployment, the Ministers wished again to draw attention to the importance of education, vocational training and integration into employment policies. They stressed the need for greater co-ordination between education and the world of work, in order that young people, before entering the labour market, can count on an education of sufficient depth and breadth, and on an adequate vocational training. Moreover, the educational system should attempt to develop a sense of initiative in young people and make them aware of the importance of choosing a qualification appropriate to the needs of the labour market. Vocational guidance services should help young people in making their choice in order to select the most appropriate path into the world of work.

36. The Ministers stressed the importance which they attach to the role of small and medium-sized enterprises, the development of which it was necessary to promote because of their increasing share of overall employment and their potential in this field. Spread out as they are over a wide geographical area, these production units combine the benefits of flexibility, adaptability and socio-economic utility. However, in many countries, they

often experience varying problems, particularly of a financial nature, which hinder their development. Some Ministers considered that a special effort should be made, while respecting the rules of competition, to alleviate their burdens and promote their development, including assistance for unemployed people who want to create their own businesses.

37. The insufficient development of certain social services, the creation of which has slowed down through the current economic difficulties, led certain Ministers to recommend the adoption of incentive measures, particularly fiscal, to create so called neighbourhood jobs. These jobs allow certain needs particularly those of the family (child care and home care for elderly and disabled persons) to be satisfied and thereby contribute to an improved quality of family life.

38. The Conference re-emphasised the important role of public employment services in constantly changing economies, calling for a continual adjustment of human resources to the needs of the labour market, an increasing geographic and occupational mobility, direct assistance for workers, unemployed people and employers. They considered that the efforts taken by all the countries of Europe should be continued in order to allow employment services to increase their efficiency and meet the multiple needs of the labour market, inter alia, by active policies for job seeking, the early identification of persons exposed to long-term unemployment, and possibly the development of advisory services for employers, in particular for those at the head of small and medium-sized enterprises, in fields such as management and the development of human resources. An important element in this context appears to be the decentralisation of certain of these services' functions, because of their direct awareness of the local economic and social fabric.

39. The Ministers expressed their extreme concern over the worsening of long-term unemployment and considered that particularly important efforts should be made to assure by every means possible the social and occupational re-integration of this category of persons. Employment services should therefore give them particular attention through for example the use of personal interviews, individual social support for the more difficult cases, help in the search for a job, re-integration work experience and training. Efforts should be made towards the search for solutions adapted to each person's own situation.

40. There was a general agreement on the essential nature of the role played by national and international organisations of employers and workers in the fixing of social and employment policy objectives as well as in their implementation at national, regional and local level. Bearing in mind the complexity of the problems to be solved and the need to obtain the largest possible social consensus, the active participation and the taking of responsibility by management and labour should be encouraged.

Proposals for future activities

41. The Conference agreed that it would be appropriate for the Committee of Ministers to instruct the Steering Committee for Employment and Labour to concentrate its future work on tackling the problems raised by the Conference. This work should reflect the desire of the Ministers to maintain and strengthen the specific character of the Council of Europe's role in the socio-economic field, whilst at the same time taking account of, and complementing, the work of the European Community and other international bodies. The member States from Central and Eastern Europe should be fully integrated into this work and activities developed of common interest for Europe.

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42. At the end of their deliberations, the Ministers thanked the Maltese authorities for their excellent organisation of the Conference and their hospitality.

APPENDIX II

List of Participants / Liste des participants

AUTRICHE/AUSTRIA

Mr Helmut HOPFLINGER	Director, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
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BELGIQUE/BELGIUM

Mr A. VERLINDEN	Secrétaire général, Ministère de l'Emploi et du Travail
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Mr Ph. DOMS	Inspecteur général, Ministère de l'Emploi et du Travail
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M. E. LODDEWIJKX	Bestuursdirecteur bij de Administratie voor Werkgelegenheid, Vlaamse Gemeenschap
------------------	--

BULGARIE/BULGARIA

M. Evgueniy MATINTCHEV	Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Labour and Social Welfare
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M. Yordan CHRISTOSKOV	Vice-Minister
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CHYPRE/CYPRUS

M. Andreas MOUSHOUTTAS	Minister of Labour and Social Insurance
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M. Charalambos KOLOKOTRONIS	Director, Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance
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REPUBLIQUE TCHEQUE/CZECH REPUBLIC

M. Zdenek DOSTAL	Vice-Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
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M. Vit SUBERT	Director, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
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M. Ales UCHYTIL	Director, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
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M. Miroslav FUCHS	Deputy Director, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
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Mr Frank HEMPEL

Ministerialrat, Bundesministerium für Arbeit
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GRECE/GREECE

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Ministère du Travail et de la Prévoyance
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Mrs Anastasia GIUFFRIDA

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President of the Republic of Malta

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Minister of Education and Human Resources
President of the Conference

Mr Alfred FIORINI LOWELL

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Mr Lawrence ZAMMIT

Chairman, Employment and Training
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Mr John SANT

Administrative Officer, Ministry of Education
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Mr Bert DE VRIES	Minister of Social Affairs and Employment
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Mr Rolf KUGGELEIJN	Advisor, Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment

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Mr Ulf SAND	Secretary General, Ministry of Local Government and Labour
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Mr Bartłomiej ZIOLKOWSKI	Director of the Employment Department, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

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Mr Jose A. da SILVA PENEDA	Ministre de l'Emploi et de la Sécurité Sociale
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Secrétaire d'Etat, Chef du Département de la
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Mr Dominique BABEY

Suppléant du Chef de la Division du Marché
du Travail, OFIAMT, Département fédéral de
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TURQUIE/TURKEY

Mr Mehmet MOGULTAY

Minister of Labour and Social Security

Mr Ismail BIRCAN

Directeur général adjoint, Organisation turque
de l'Emploi

Mr Suphi SOKMEN

Expert, Organisation turque de l'Emploi

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Mr Michael FORSYTH	Minister of State, Department of Employment
Mr Peter BUCKLEY	Private Secretary to the Minister of State
Mr Leigh LEWIS	Director of International Relations, Department of Employment
Mr Stanley KING	Head of Section, International Relations, Department of Employment

**ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
PARLEMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

Mr Massimo PINI	Président de la Commission des Questions sociales, de la Santé et de la Famille
Mr Alfred GUSENBAUER	Commission des Questions sociales, de la Santé et de la Famille
Baroness HOOPER	Commission des Questions sociales, de la Santé et de la Famille
Mr Alexander MALACHOWSKI	Commission des Questions sociales, de la Santé et de la Famille
Mr Joaquim MARGUES	Commission des Questions sociales, de la Santé et de la Famille

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L'EUROPE
STANDING CONFERENCE OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF
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Mr Karl-Christian ZAHN	Chairman of the Committee on Social Affairs and Health
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Relations Industrielles et Affaires sociales

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INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE (ILO)**

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**ORGANISATION DE COOPERATION ET DE DEVELOPPEMENT ECONOMIQUES
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ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT
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Mr Thomas ALEXANDER

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du Travail et des Affaires sociales

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Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE)

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President of Social Affairs Committee

Mr Edwin CALLEJA

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Industry

Confédération Européenne des Syndicats (CES) /
European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

Mrs Maria Helena ANDRE

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Mr Jean-Pierre DALOZ

Professeur, Doyen honoraire des Facultés de
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