

INFORMATION FOR MEDIA

Address by Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma at the Social Partners' Forum "The Role of Social Dialogue in Ensuring Economic Growth and High Quality Jobs"

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Latvian Presidency, it is a great pleasure for me to open the forum that is jointly organized by the social partners of Latvia! Both this forum and the conferences of employers and trade unions already held provide a major contribution to implementing the work program of the Latvian Presidency.

The social dialogue plays an important role in European economic governance, in encouraging inclusive and sustainable participation in the labour market, in provision of high quality jobs and promoting labour protection.

Within the framework of the presidency, Latvia has organized discussions and advanced for the adoption the Council's documents on these issues. Extensive discussions on the social dialogue are also planned at the informal meeting of the Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs (EPSCO) to be chaired by Uldis Augulis, Minister for Welfare on April 21-22 in Rīga.

I met many of you – today's participants of the forum, at the Tripartite Social Summit on March 19 in Brussels.

At the summit we, jointly with the Presidents of the European Commission and the European Council, as well as with the heads of the social partners' organizations, in my opinion, had a very valuable exchange of views. We focused on the role of investment in growth and job creation, emphasizing the social partners' contribution to building a fair and competitive Europe.

The views heard at the Tripartite Social Summit could be divided into two groups.

First, we acknowledged that the economic situation in the Member States of the European Union, although slowly, is generally improving. To make this happen, the three aspects are equally important in all and each EU Member State – a balanced budget policy, structural reforms and investment.

Latvia has spent the first months of its presidency by actively preparing the necessary legal framework regarding the proposal for the Regulation on the European Fund for Strategic Investments. I am delighted that we have reached an agreement in the Council on the establishment of the Fund, and currently the negotiations are underway with the European Parliament.

Second, we also talked about the challenges that the Member States of the European Union are currently facing. The fight against poverty, inequality, social exclusion, long-term unemployment, insecure and poor quality jobs remain topical on the political agenda of many Member States. We have to work to ensure that more and more people really feel the improvement of the economic situation.

In both areas - the improvement of the European economy and mobilizing the investment, especially private investment, and in addressing the challenges that are still urgent – the full involvement of the social partners in policy-making and implementation is important at national and the EU level.

But wholesome involvement also means taking the responsibility. And not only for a self-represented sector or a part of society but for overall development of society and economy in one's own country and across Europe.



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The important thing here is mutual trust. I can confirm to everyone that the government of Latvia has always been and is ready for constructive cooperation with the social partners. I believe that you are also ready to work constructively – because we are all united by a single goal – prosperity in Latvia and wellbeing in the European Union where we all, in the name of common goals, are able to agree on the solutions, which bring the greatest possible equality and benefits to different groups of society, rather than create “paradise on earth” for a single person or a sector.

I call on everyone to keep in mind our goal, a dream to be realised for self-improvement and overall development of our state and Europe. To me, Europe is an objective that always has to be clearly visible. To me, Europe is all fundamental freedoms and fundamental rights, provision of equal opportunities and rights for all citizens.

To me, Europe is also economic logic, social standards, and even more directly – exactly the balance between the economic and social fields. These are the scales, which may not lose balance.

Finally, let me thank the social partners of Latvia for hosting this forum. I wish the participants of today's debate inspiring and interesting discussions when agreeing on joint recommendations of the social partners for further improvement of the social dialogue at all levels!

Thank you for attention!

Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia
Laimdota Straujuma