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DG Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities
European Commission

Brussels, 18 December 2008

CEMR/EPSU joint response to the Consultation of the European social partners for a review of the implementations of the Commission Communication and Decision of 20 May 1998

Dear Mr Tricart,

The Social Dialogue Committee on Local and Regional Government, represented by CEMR and EPSU, welcomes the opportunity to respond to the questionnaire on the sectoral social dialogue. Please find our preliminary comments attached. We wish to emphasize the following key points:

CEMR and EPSU appreciate the support the European Commission, and in particular of DG Employment and Social Affairs, provided to the process of the European social dialogue. However, continuous support is also needed to further develop a well functioning social dialogue at national level in all countries.

We value the autonomy of the social partners. The European Commission should not put limits to this autonomy, such as narrowly determining the scope of the sector, the participating organisations, the organisation of work, etc. The social dialogue concept allows for flexible solutions, adapted to the needs of the social partners and the specific sector.

We want to point out the specific nature of our sectoral social dialogue committee. We are not only representatives from the employers and employees, but also form a part of the political structure and division of public responsibilities between national and local level in the Member States. This constitutes important premises and challenges for our sectoral social dialogue committee.

The European Commission should improve the mainstreaming of the sectoral social dialogue in its work across all Directorate Generals. All DGs should inform and consult the European social partners on relevant sectoral developments or on policies of particular importance for the sectors concerned.

Our social dialogue committee would be grateful if you could take our views into account.

We would welcome an exchange with the European Commission and other social partners on the follow-up of the questionnaire and are looking forward to continue good cooperation with you and your colleagues in 2009.

Yours sincerely,

Åke Hillman

Anders Hammarbäck

Chairs of the Social Dialogue Committee on Local and Regional Government