



European Economic and Social Committee

SEMINAR

on

***Organised civil society in the candidate countries
and the Future of Europe***

Brussels – 30 and 31 January 2003

Round Table 1

***"What kind of Europe do we want?
The European model of society"***

**Intervention of Mr Pavel PRIOR,
Vice-President of the Confederation of Industry in the Czech Republic,
Co-chairman of the EU/Czech Republic JCC**

"Our Europe: Dream changing into reality"

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

It is a great honour for me to be here today and to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the SP CR¹, as an official representative of the Employers' organisations in one of the future Member States. My confederation - SP CR - is a voice of the Czech business and industry, a fully recognized social partner acting at the national, European and international level.

The issue at stake here - *What kind of Europe do we want? The European model of society* – is a multifaceted one.

The Czech Republic was, is and will be geographically a central European country which, for different political reasons, has been playing different roles during the long European history and development.

The accession of the Czech Republic to the European Economic Area and to the European Union (EU) is nothing else than **a great comeback** to the situation which was prevailing more than fifty years. We are now looking forward to a reformed Europe which is ready to

¹ SP CR stands for Svaz Průmyslu ("průmysl" meaning "industry") Czech Republic. Although the complete name of the organisation since 1994 is in Czech "Svaz průmyslu a dopravy" (industry and transport), SP remains the logo of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic.

welcome us, to absorb us and to assist us so that the Czech Republic can become an integral part of the EU.

The Czech Republic and its citizens

For the Czech Republic, the historical decision made by the European Council in December 2002 in Copenhagen was, qualitatively, the beginning of a new on its way to joining the European Union.

The Czech Republic:

- Considers EU membership as a great challenge and commitment for the future;
- Does not want to be considered as an "unexpected baby" in the European family;
- Is looking forward to:
 - A reformed Europe giving equal opportunities both to the new and current Member States;
 - A single Europe without new dividing lines;
 - A well-functioning Europe based on its historical values, which sets itself real objectives and listen to the voice of its citizens.

The Czech people are:

- Starting to build confidence in the new enlarged Europe;
- Learning about the benefits and the risks (and how to face them) of EU accession;

In June 2003, the Czech people will have to make a decision: "YES" or "NO" to Europe (current opinion polls suggest that 60% are in favour against 70% in Hungary and Poland).

The Czech business facing the reality of the EU Internal market

Taking into account the historical chance that EU membership will represent, the Czech business is mobilising its forces in order to keep a leading position in this unique process, to support the Czech government in transposing and implementing the "*acquis Communautaire*" and to prepare the Czech companies and entrepreneurs to join smoothly the European internal market.

SP as a voice of the Czech business:

- Applauds the historical decision of the European Council in Copenhagen last year

- Calls for a reformed and well-functioning Europe and which gives equal opportunities to all its members;
- Welcomes the strong support of the partner federations in the current EU countries;
- Encourages the future Member States from Central and Eastern Europe to continue their co-operation and partnership within the new Europe.

SP as an integral part of the European business community calls for Europe to:

- Re-confirm the Conclusions of the Barcelona European Council that entrepreneurship is a key to growth and job creation;
- Recognise fully the role of entrepreneurship in creating wealth and to promote entrepreneurship;
- Set up a stable and supportive macro-economic environment and an efficient single market;
- Release market potential in reducing obstacles to its development.

Czech Social Partners in the enlarged Europe

The Czech Social Partners are strongly involved in the EU pre-accession process at national level and they are playing a vital role. The creation of the EU-Czech Republic Joint Consultative Committee was a clear commitment on the part of the Czech social partners as to their readiness to contribute to the debate on the future of Europe and to play their role according the relevant Treaty Articles.

Czech Employers:

- Call for Europe to protect the interests of its citizens and workers in this new global and competitive world;
- Consider that, with the enlargement, the EU integration project is more than a single market and a single currency;
- Advocate for a limited list of real European values, including reference to freedom (as an open way for further references to the four fundamental freedoms and the freedom of business undertaking);
- Applaud the words of Mr JACOBS, UNICE President :

"To strike the right balance between social aspirations and economic considerations"

- Find that a modern Treaty should reflect the essence of the Lisbon strategy;
- Accept that Social Europe is a reality, but Europe needs to modernise and update its social objectives.

Taking into account what has been said above, the European Union of tomorrow should be:

- **More realistic in the definition of its values**
- **More ambitious in setting its objectives**
- **More flexible in its competences**
- **More efficient in its decision-making process**
- **More co-operative in relation to the social partners**
- **More transparent for the European citizens**

The Czech employers, industrialists and entrepreneurs are willing to do their best to contribute to the common future in the European Union supporting and joining the process started in Lisbon in 2002. This year, Czech business should enter on a crucial period once the negotiations have come to an end and before the EU accession. Let me conclude using the words of our chief negotiator Mr Pavel Telicka, who said:

*"Our main goal for the future is not to loose out on our negotiated positions,
but to keep all of our commitments
and to become a full and respected partner in the European Union"*
