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SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND **THE SOCIAL MODEL IN** **THE SUGAR INDUSTRY**

JOINT DECLARATION

The social partners in the sugar industry have read with interest the Commission's Green Paper on the corporate social responsibility of companies, welcoming it as an important initiative, in keeping with the objective defined in Lisbon by the European Union of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. The social partners see it as a further contribution of the European Commission to strengthen the European social model.

Through their work in safety training, within the context of the Leonardo Programme, over the years they have become used to going beyond the strictly legal obligations laid down by the 1989 framework directive on health and safety. The Leonardo kit "active/interactive safety in the sugar factory"¹ is in fact based primarily on the concept of individual and collective responsibility at all levels in the company.

The partners have also endeavoured over time to develop apprenticeship schemes for young people as far as possible, and beyond what is strictly necessary, in order to improve their skills and enable them to approach the labour market on the best possible basis.²

Within the same spirit of collective responsibility as regards the future of their industry, the social partners organise regular exchanges on economic trends connected with their profession and intervene together vis-à-vis the Institutions whenever this seems necessary.

In November 2000, for instance, they asked the Commission to consult them on the economic and social impact of the draft regulation "Everything But Arms". In November 2001, they signed a joint declaration on the rules of origin, of crucial importance for their sector. This declaration was sent to eight Commissioners, the Council and the European Parliament.

¹ Interactive vocational training kit developed by the social partners within the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme from 1997 to 2000 (Project EUR/96/2/0543/PI/II.1.1.b/FPC), distributed throughout all sugar factories in fifteen European countries, in eleven languages. This work was handed over to Commissioner Diamantopoulou as a contribution by the social partners to the Lisbon Summit (see letter from Mrs Diamantopoulou No 1138 of the 13.04.00).

² See joint declaration by the social partners of November 1998 and letter from Mr Padraig Flynn No 0032 of the 8.01.1999.

At their joint meeting on November 14th 2001, the social partners in the sugar sector decided that in the near future they would pool their first reflections on a global approach to social responsibility adapted to their industry and develop certain aspects in greater detail together.

They recall that the sugar industry already forms part of a European social model through a whole series of guarantees relating to working conditions, quality of life and vocational training, going well beyond legal requirements.

In this connection, they deplore the fact that certain competing companies in third countries still tolerate child labour, which is ethically unacceptable and commercially inequitable. They regret that this subject cannot be addressed within the framework of the multilateral trade negotiations that have just resumed in Doha.

They therefore encourage the European Commission to take all necessary measures to :

- . ensure compliance with the ILO fundamental labour standards within the context of the Generalised System of Preferences,
- . incorporate these standards more effectively in the Union's development policy,
- . urge the Member States to strengthen their working relations with the ILO
- . and support the implementation of their recommendations.

Convinced that because of the knowledge that they have of their sector they are in the best position to determine for themselves a model specifically adapted to their industry, the social partners would more particularly like the Commission to promote exchanges of experiences and good practice between companies.

For their part, the partners are prepared, on the occasion of their next plenary meeting in November 2002, to let the European Commission have the results of their initial work and reflections aimed at defining a specific global approach to the social model in the sugar industry in Europe.

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