

The European Trade Union Confederation called major demonstrations on the eve of the Laeken and Barcelona European Councils to demand more social Europe; a Europe, that is, better geared to the interests of its workers and its citizens.

This stance reflects a longstanding commitment to European integration – one which goes back, indeed, to its very beginnings – but it reflects also, and equally strongly, the need for change.

An adequate response to these expectations voiced by the world of labour entails, in our view, a rebalancing of the various dimensions of the EU – economic, monetary, social – and their completion by the achievement of a political dimension.

A first imbalance is to be found in the disproportionate relationship between the social and the economic dimensions.

The EU today is essentially synonymous with markets and currency. The present Treaty provisions do, it is true, include social goals but, quite apart from the delay in putting these into practice – remember that it took forty years from the Treaty of Rome until the EU received powers in the labour and employment fields – these social goals remain, in any case, subordinate to those of an economic nature.

To overcome this situation, there is a need for the new constitutional Treaty to recognise the European social model as a founding element of the EU, so that the Union's organisation on the economic front can take inspiration from the principles of the social market economy.

A second imbalance to be redressed is within the Economic and Monetary Union.

The stage reached so far is that of Monetary Union alone.

There is an obvious contradiction here between a Europe which, with every passing day, is increasingly becoming a single economic unit and the weakness – not to say the absence – of any active governance of this entity.

This is a situation which prevents advantage being taken of the added value represented by the integration achieved so far; a situation which means that the market and the currency are not placed fully in the service of the strategy of modernising the European economy in accordance with the goals of sustainable development, full employment and stronger social cohesion decided by the Lisbon European Council. It is increasingly urgent, therefore, that the Union be given instruments and procedures for the coordination of economic policy, fiscal policy and investment policy, as well as for tax harmonisation.

In this framework it will be necessary also better to define the contribution of the European Central Bank to pursuit of the EU's general goals of development and employment.

To give the European Union a political dimension entails both strengthening European citizenship and focusing on Europe's role in the world. In relation to citizenship, the first step to be taken is the full incorporation into the constitutional Treaty, with binding legal force, of the Nice Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Improvement of the Charter, particularly in relation to social rights, should not be ruled out a priori. However, should this not prove feasible, provision should at least be made for a monitoring procedure and an evolutionary clause to allow new developments over time.

The EU must, in any case, promote the broadest participation of citizens and the involvement of organisations representative of civil society.

In relation to Europe's role in the world, the trade union movement is in favour of a stronger and more independently self-aware political stance on the part of the EU in its international relations, in accordance with its conviction that this could represent a decisive contribution to democratic governance of the processes of globalisation.

This requires not only that Europe speak with a single voice but also that it safeguard its own social model which is an original combination of the *ratio* of the market with the *ethos* of social justice and solidarity.

This is exactly what is lacking in the current processes of globalisation.

We return here once again to affirming the importance of the central role of the European social model and the need for its values and common features – social regulation of the market, the role of services of general

interest, universal social protection – to be acknowledged, over and above their different national applications, by the Treaty.

One aspect to which we attach great value is the role of the social partners at European level, a role already recognised by the Treaty in the form of the social dialogue, and including a co-regulatory function via the adoption of European framework agreements.

In a joint declaration by the social partners to the Laeken European Council, we proposed strengthening the social dialogue to enable it to take also voluntary forms, and at the same time requested formalisation of seat entitlements and social concertation procedures.

At a time when Europe is in the throes of economic change, generating a sense of disquiet and disorientation, social dialogue and concertation are indispensable instruments for steering change and carrying out, on a basis of consensus, the reforms that are required.

When the time comes, we intend to present precise proposals in this context of Treaty reform.

Here today, however, on behalf of the trade union movement, I should like to stress that if the development of a European industrial relations system, complementary to the national systems, is considered to be in the general interest, this implies the need for recognition, also in their cross-border dimension, of the rights of association, collective bargaining and strike.

If the economy is European in scope, collective labour rights cannot be confined to the national sphere.

I have summarised our expectations. These are shared by the trade unions affiliated to the ETUC in the EU member countries and in the candidate countries, that is to say virtually the whole of the European trade union movement.

In relation to the Convention, our task is twofold: to put forward specific proposals, but also to contribute to stimulating a major debate in the world of labour on the Europe we wish to bring into being.

That this is already being done in individual countries and at European level is something to which many members of the Convention can testify from their own experience.

I spoke, at the beginning, of the enduring support of trade unions for the European venture. This support has never been uncritical in the past; nor can this be the case today.

In spite of the undeniable progress achieved as a result of European integration, numerous questions are rife within the world of labour as it faces high unemployment, the destabilisation of employment relationships, erosion of social security provision and public service systems, and the negative effects of ungoverned globalisation.

Only to the extent that the EU finds ways of responding appropriately to these concerns will it be able, in the future, to invoke consensus and to claim democratic legitimacy.

Original Italian: translation KL 26 July 2002