

## CEC TRIENNIAL CONGRESS 2009



### PUBLIC CONFERENCE:

### "THE ROLE OF SOCIAL PARTNERS TO STIMULATE CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION - AN ANSWER TO THE ECONOMIC CRISIS"

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June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009 – 10:45-16:00

European Parliament, Brussels

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### WELCOME INTRODUCTION: ANNEMIE NEYTS ALDE PRESIDENT AND MINISTER OF BELGIAN STATE

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is certainly my pleasure to welcome you in this beautiful meeting room of the European Parliament. As you can see, it is in a new building that we started to use less than one year ago, so everything is still brand new.

I need to make a very small correction to the introduction by the President, I still am a member of the European Parliament and I am running again, so if things go reasonably well, I will again be a member of the European Parliament as of 8 June 2009, but the votes will decide of this.

Welcome to all of you, I would like to congratulate you to call this meeting under the theme of 'The role of social partners to stimulate creativity and innovation as an answer to the economic crisis'. It is obvious that all of the politicians and members of the European parliament running for the European elections are confronted with the question of what to do to try to overcome this crisis, which is undoubtedly one of the biggest we have gone through since the Second World War.

We all agree that creativity and innovation should play and must play an absolutely important role in this. I was in two television debates yesterday for France 24, one in French and one in English, with representatives from the Greens, the Socialists and the Christian-Democrats and we all agreed on that.

We also all agree more or less that the fight against climate change and the development of more environmental friendly techniques and technologies is certainly not incompatible with future and further economic developments, quite the contrary. As far as the Greens are concerned, this new approach is quite a revolution, but I don't need to make their promotion. I am from the Liberal group; I am even the President of the European Liberal party. What we have deemed extremely important beyond the fact of stressing again and again that economic development and environmental friendliness must be compatible, is that there lie the greatest chances for further European economic development.

There should be a much bigger sense of urgency. Last summer I had the pleasure of being in the United States, and of taking part in the Convention that nominated Barack Obama in the run for the American presidency. It was quite obvious, from many of the speeches we heard there, that the American economy is fully prepared to jump on this bandwagon for more environmental friendly policies.



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It is not going to be easy, it is also dawning on Chinese economic figures that this is the way to go, and so if Europe is not careful, we run the risk to be overtaken by both the United States and China, and eventually by India in the development of new technologies and new ways of doing things. So there should be no complacency amongst Europeans. We tend to be complacent, let us be honest, but it is not going to be enough. There should be a sense of urgency, it should be the call to everybody involved directly and indirectly and we should see it as a fantastic opportunity, to launch all over Europe, in the EU member states, in aspirant member states, a call for excellence.



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