

## Draft of the final speech at the conference

6. 2. 2009

Dear European Commission Representatives,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I would particularly like to thank those speakers whose contributions were stimulating and mainly aimed at the core of the problem and we can certainly be inspired by them.

I would like to thank the participants for following the course of the conference with interest and for their participation in the discussions during the lectures as well as in the lobbies.

Those discussions that did not finish because of time often continued outside the conference hall. This demonstrates that family policy has been brought to the attention of every country due to the social and economic affects. With regard to demographic development, it is a matter of to be or not to be, and therefore, the solution has become a great challenge for individual countries as well as the whole of Europe.

The feedback from the participants as well as from the meeting of the ministries that preceded the conference has indicated positive appreciation for opening a theme focused on family and childcare in relation to employment and particularly for compensation for parents when raising children at the pan-European level. The contributions made by the speakers

have revealed the different approaches of individual countries to the issue, of which their interest in family and children is the common denominator.

It was also clear from the contributors that there is a need to offer a wide range of childcare support to parents so that they can freely choose and develop their parenting plans. At the same time, we heard strong voices telling us of the need to appreciate not only the work of an employee but childcare work as well. Some contributors referred to the unequal standing of families with children who often become trapped in harsh economic conditions while caring, despite the issue that children have to answer for and be liable for the costs of the demographic crisis. In order to secure our future, inter-generation solidarity which is fair to those who invest human capital in raising children should be created. One of the options suggested is a re-definition of work, including childcare work, and to reflect this re-definition in the tax and transfer system. To create a generation budgeting system not considering short-term economic goals but a long-term political plan should be our priority. The existing economic crisis has opened up possibilities of thinking about elementary values, which surely include family cohesion and inter-generation solidarity and not focusing only on consumption and economic growth.

With regard to the family support process, we must not forget the different solutions and historical experience of each country. As we can see the family area, which is intimate and hard to define, should be approached sensitively and countries should be allowed to implement different concepts of family policies within the plurality. Despite this, family values

as the corner stone of each society should be promoted at the all-social discussion level.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am convinced that an unambiguous conclusion can be made after two demanding days packed with information – this should be followed by the good experience of individual countries which should inspire each other. At the same time, the approaches of member countries to family policy should be respected. If I had to make a personal appeal, I would say “let’s create a family-friendly society in each country and in Europe”.

I believe – and I look forward to it – that we will discuss family policy further in the future and that each meeting will enrich us in favour of those who are primarily at stake – the citizens of our countries and their families. Ladies and Gentlemen, please let me thank you once again for your participation and opinions. I would like to thank the interpreters for their professional performance and patience due to the regular overrunning of times.

Finally, I would like to thank the representatives of the European Commission for their participation and support of this conference. I wish you a pleasant time during your stay here in Prague and I look forward to seeing you again sometime.