Statute for a European company: involvement of employees

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The Council took note of the latest information provided by the French Presidency with a view to reaching political agreement on the proposal for a directive on the involvement of employees in the European company, which was a necessary adjunct to the Regulation on the Statute for a European company. The presidency expressed its intention of making every effort to reach agreement before or at the Nice European Council. Following this presentation and contributions from delegations, the presidency drew the following conclusions: 1) the discussions revealed the determination of the 15 Member States to quickly find a way of breaking the deadlock on this issue since it was an essential element in completing the internal market and contributed to a more general effort to increase employee involvement; 2) Member States stressed that the involvement of employees in the European company should: - take account of the diversity of national cultures as regards industrial relations; - give priority in this context to free negotiations between participating companies and employees. Against this background, there was wide agreement to involve employees in the European company; 3) Member States noted that at this stage the only question remaining open was that of the provisions applicable in the absence of an agreement between employee representatives and management, where only a minority of the employees concerned benefited from such rights. They felt that one solution to resolve this difficulty would perhaps be to make the transposition or non-transposition of the reference provisions on participation optional for Member States. They agreed to continue their efforts to define arrangements to implement such a solution with a view to enabling the Nice European Council to decide on the basis of a compromise acceptable in the 15 Member States.