Partnership for a new organisation of work. Green paper

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OBJECTIVE: The purpose of this Green Paper is to stimulate a European debate on new forms of organization of work. It focuses on three questions: - why a new organization of work? - what are the policy challenges of new forms of work organization? - is it possible to establish a new partnership for a more productive, participative and learning organization of work? SUBSTANCE: This Green Paper is about the scope for improving employment and competitiveness through a better organization of work at the workplace, based on high skill, high trust and high quality. It is about the role and ability of management and workers to take initiatives in this area and raises, in particular, three questions which are submitted for wide ranging discussion at European level: - towards a new organization of work - why and how?: the traditional organization of work has been questioned more and more during the last 20 to 30 years. A number of organizational changes have been tried in order to improve productivity, quality and working conditions (quality circles, just-in-time systems, teamwork). However, there is now a more fundamental change, a shift from fixed systems of production to a flexible system. There is no one model of 'flexibility', but an infinite variety of models, which are constantly being adapted to the circumstances of the individual firm and its workers. According to the Commission, the transformation can be explained by three factors: human resources, markets and technology. This new organization of work has unquestionable potential for productivity and prosperity. However, change is only taking place slowly and the great majority of firms and public authorities are still in the traditional form of work organization. - policy changes: the main question is how to reconcile security for workers with the flexibility which firms need. This raises a number of fundamental issues relating to employment, education and social policy: how to organize the necessary training and retraining, how to adapt social legislation to take account of new employment trends, how to adapt wage systems in line with the organizational structures on which they are based, how to adapt working time arrangements, how to take advantage of the new employment trends with regard to equal opportunities, how to develop more flexible organizations in the public service, and how to provide adequate support to firms, in particular small- and medium-sized firms, who wish to change but lack the resources to do so. - building a partnership for a new organization of work: the Green Paper invites all those concerned (social partners and public authorities) to seek to build a partnership for the development of a new framework for the modernization of work. The Commission is seeking primarily to establish a framework, in the broad sense, which includes a common understanding of the problem, and the definition of binding contractual or legal initiatives or joint declarations. The discussion is taking place in the wider framework of the social dialogue with a view to achieving the objective of a productive, learning and participative organization of work.