

# Pressemelding

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SPERREFRIST Ingen

DATO 5. 11.92

### **NORWAY PROPOSES EUROPEAN UNEMPLOYMENT TALKS**

Norway proposes that the finance and economy ministers of all EC and EFTA countries meet in early 1993, to discuss measures to provide a stable framework for increased employment in Europe.

The initiative was presented by Norway's Prime Minister, Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, in her opening speech to the Norwegian Labour Party's congress, in Oslo on Thursday. A letter presenting the proposal was on the same day delivered to the heads of state or government of all EC and EFTA states, and to the President of the EC Commission.

The Prime Minister's letter states that issues for discussion should include measures to improve the climate for investment as well as means of increasing the level of activity in such fields as infrastructure, education, training and the environment.

The initiative is taken within the framework of the European Economic Area (EEA), which is expected to take effect on 1 January 1993. The Prime Minister says the EEA Agreement offers a new framework for consultations on important economic matters.

Mrs. Brundtland says unemployment in OECD Europe may increase to almost 10.5 per cent of the labour force in 1993, only to remain as high also in 1994. "I propose that the ministers of finance and economy of EC and EFTA countries meet in the spring of 1993 to discuss causes and possible remedies to the widespread unemployment and the economic problems we face", she says.

Mrs. Brundtland asks her colleagues to support this initiative to make use of the practical possibilities for enhanced economic cooperation between EEA countries provided by the agreement. She also notes that Norway's Minister of Finance, Mr. Sigbjørn Johnsen, will be contacting his British colleague, Mr. Norman Lamont, on the matter, in order for them to discuss the proposal when they meet later this month.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** We enclose the full text of the Prime Minister's letter:

"As you know the EEA Agreement has recently been approved by the

European Parliament and national assemblies of a number of EFTA countries. Norway views this agreement as an important opportunity to further strengthen cooperation in Europe.

At the same time, the economic prospects of most European countries are unsatisfactory. Unemployment in OECD Europe may increase to almost 10.5 per cent of the labour force in 1993 and, if current policies are maintained, may remain roughly at this level in 1994. Thus, there is an urgent need to discuss measures to reinforce economic cooperation in Europe. The climate for investment should be improved and we need to assess means of increasing the level of activity in such fields as infrastructure, education, training and the environment while enhancing structural reform so as to strengthen confidence and provide a stable framework for increased employment. The current OECD study on how to reduce unemployment may prove useful in this connection.

The EEA agreement will offer us a new framework for consultations on important economic matters. The Norwegian Government is eager to explore the possibilities of enhanced cooperation when the EEA Agreement takes effect in 1993. The preparations for this meeting could be made the responsibility of experts from the OECD, the EC and EFTA, and the meeting itself could be scheduled e.g. back to back with a regular ECOFIN meeting.

I kindly request your support for this initiative to make use of the practical possibilities for enhanced economic cooperation between EEA countries provided by the agreement. The Norwegian Minister of Finance, Mr. Sigbjørn Johnsen, is writing to Treasury Secretary Norman Lamont about this matter and he would be ready to discuss with Mr. Lamont preparations for such a meeting when they meet later this month. I am sending identical letters to the Heads of State or Government of all EC and EFTA states as well as to the President of the EC Commission. Yours sincerely, Gro Harlem Brundtland".