



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG

Social Dialogue, Social Rights, Working Conditions, Adaptation to Change
Social Dialogue, Industrial Relations

Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on Postal Services Plenary meeting on 28 September 2010, Brussels Minutes

The plenary meeting was chaired by Mr Bailly (POSTEUROP), President of the social dialogue committee. He welcomed the participants and pointed out the importance of the annual plenary meeting. He encouraged interactive participation and questions by the participants and gave an overview of the agenda.

1. Presentation by Copenhagen Economics on USO calculation

Mr Winiarczyk and Mr Okholm (Copenhagen Economics) gave a presentation on estimating the cost of the universal service obligation (USO).



Estimating the cost
of USO 28092010.ppt

The Chair inquired about the causes for the different results in Denmark and in Norway. Copenhagen Economics replied that these differences can be explained by the different geography of the two countries, such as the presence of remote islands, but also by the different regulatory environments.

POSTEUROP wondered whether the model assumed that staff could be laid off, or whether this would be considered as a restriction or cost burden. Copenhagen Economics clarified that the model does not restrict lay-offs; any restrictions or costs associated with redundancies would still need to be incorporated into the model.

UNI Europa asked how the compensation mechanism for USO works in practice. Copenhagen Economics responded that there is no compensation currently in place in Denmark.

UNI Europa enquired whether there are competitive providers that provide better service levels than the incumbent. Copenhagen Economics cited the example of competitors that offers higher liability compensation or newspaper delivery on 7 days of the week, where Post Denmark does so only on 6 days per week.

UNI Europa asked whether the value of the crown logo of Post Denmark had been estimated. Copenhagen Economics clarified that this had not been done.

UNI Europa requested clarification on the conclusion that territorial coverage doesn't matter, which implied that the social function of the postal service hasn't been taken into account. The Chair wondered how the situation would present itself in larger countries. Copenhagen Economics highlighted that different geographies would result in different

conclusions. It is likely that in larger countries, the result would be reduced service levels in some areas, like it would happen in Norway. The case of Germany is also interesting, since there is no officially designated USO and the policy is to see whether the market and the incumbent will continue to provide the USO. Thus far this has been the case. In the study for the European Commission, Copenhagen Economics also looked at the consumers' willingness to pay for postal services. It resulted that consumers really value the frequency of delivery, while the density of postal offices was less valued.

UNI Europa asked whether Greenland had been considered in the study of Denmark. Copenhagen Economic indicated that it had not.

UNI Europa stated that in Italy, the compensation for USO is insufficient to cover the costs associated with providing universal service. This discrepancy should be the real subject of debate, even if in Denmark the situation is different. Copenhagen Economic replied that there has been no study of the situation in Italy using the principles of estimating the cost of the USO as laid down in EU postal legislation, only an estimate of accounting principles leading to a high cost. A new study would need to be done.

The Chair pointed to the issue of post office coverage as part of the USO, which differs between countries. On the one hand, maintaining a network of offices imposes a cost, but on the other hand, it also provides marketing and business opportunities.

2. Presentation of POSTEUROP

Mr Szebeny (POSTEUROP) gave a presentation on the strategy and activities of POSTEUROP.



PE StrategyActivities
- SDCforPS(pdf).pdf

The Chair wondered whether the term "postal industry" is still appropriate in the context of postal operators' diversification (into banking, insurance, parcel service, etc.). Mr Szebeny replied that the transformation of the sector is an ongoing process, leading to discussions within POSTEUROP. These discussions centre on the operators' vision of the future of POSTEUROP and the sector. It is worth keeping in mind, however, that traditional parcel and letter mail still is the core business and the most important part of postal operators' activities. Still, in the longer term this discussion cannot be avoided.

UNI Europa asked why POSTEUROP had set itself the goal of improving social dialogue. Mr Szebeny answered that this did not imply that POSTEUROP was unhappy with the current functioning of social dialogue. Rather, it highlights the commitment of POSTEUROP to social dialogue and the key role it plays in the future.

UNI Europa enquired whether POSTEUROP had to adjust due to the changes in ownership of its member companies. Mr Szebeny responded that the general trend has been towards privatisation, but that the situation was different between countries. There are no tensions within POSTEUROP due to this issue. Member companies are competitors, but they cooperate within the organisation based on their common interest for the development of the sector.

3. Sector Councils for Employment and Skills

Ms Bercea (European Commission) gave a presentation on the planned sectoral skills councils at European level.



EUROPEAN SECTOR
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Mr Baldwin (UNI Europa) asked what the cost figures were based on, and what the period of a project would be. He insisted that social partners needed to be involved; otherwise the opportunity for funding would pass by. This is especially important in a sector in transformation, such as the postal sector.

The Chair asked about the role of the social partners after the creation of a skills council.

Ms Bercea responded that a project to explore the setup of a skills council would run for a year. The proposal from the Commission also foresees a yearly evaluation. The creation and operation of a skills council would be a bottom-up process with the involvement of social partners and other stakeholders in the driver's seat. Every sector would have to find its own way of working.

The Chair pointed out that there were no national skills councils in the postal sector, so he wondered how a European council could be set up for the sector.

Ms Bercea emphasised that the phase of identifying existing structures and stakeholders was the most important part, and that the specific situation in the postal sector needed to be studied.

Mr Costa (POSTEUROP) pointed out that the existing horizontal councils in Italy already don't talk to each other, so he expressed scepticism how this would work on a European level. Ms Ausprung (POSTEUROP) asked what the output of a skills council would look like.

Ms Berger (UNI Europa) wondered when there would be a written document from the Commission on the European skills councils. She asked who would determine the participants, what would the evaluation of the work look like, and whether there would be any democratic control of these new councils. Mr Goncalves (UNI Europa) enquired whether the Commission already knew which councils exist at national level. Mr Scott (UNI Europa) judged the concept to be too academic and had an initially negative impression. However, he welcomed the idea of a bottom-up approach and could see such a council helping with the skills transition in the postal sector. He wondered, however, how this work would be different to the work of the skills and training working group of the social dialogue committee. Ms Mir (UNI Europa) pointed out that in some countries there are already large national cross-sectoral skills councils. If the Commission's proposal implies that new national sector councils should be created, this would lead to a duplication of work.

In response, Ms Bercea underscored that the Commission will not impose the creation of a sectoral skills council against the wishes of the sector's social partners. In many countries, however, the problems and constraints in a particular sector are very similar. The idea of a European council is therefore to have a platform for systematic exchange. In the case of the postal sector, this could also address some of the issues raised in the joint declaration on training and skills development of 2006. The danger of a duplication

of work is minor, since the goal is simply to have the world of work speak with the world of education. The management and membership of a council would be up to the social partners and would be decided in the framework of the first phase. The concept of European skills councils was also presented at the Liaison Forum on 29 April 2010, where an 8-page note had been provided to social partners.

The Chair suggested that a small team headed by Mr Scott (UNI Europa) and Mr Costa (POSTEUROP) should study the issue of a European skills council in more detail.

4. Election of the SDC Bureau

The Chair reminded the participants that the bureau of the social dialogue committee is elected every two years. The elections were last held in June 2008, so the term of office has already expired.

Ms Ausprung (POSTEUROP), in her capacity as chairperson of the employers' group, re-nominated Mr Bailly for a further 2-year term and thanked him for his ongoing work in the social dialogue committee.

Ms Saverstam (UNI Europa) announced that UNI Europa wished to re-nominate John Baldwin for a further 2 years in accordance to the decisions taken at the Dublin conference of UNI Europa.

The Chair and Mr Baldwin accepted their re-election.

5. Postal Sector Evolution Working Group

The Chair and Ms Margaux (POSTEUROP) gave a presentation of the activities and work programme of the working group.



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Mr Baldwin (UNI Europa) thanked his colleagues for their support for the coming 2 years. He highlighted the two main objectives for the working group. The first goal is to raise the visibility of the social dialogue committee through the communication action plan. The second goal is the implementation of the project "social partners preparing for change" as phase two of the social observatory project. This will require effort and presents some challenges, but is worth looking forward to.

6. Skills and Training Working Group

Mr Costa (POSTEUROP) presented the activities and work programme of this working group.



Plenary-Training
September 2010.ppt

Mr Scott (UNI Europa) pointed out that the precise subject of the funding application would still need to be defined. He reminded participants of the challenge to build on the

previous successes of the working group. The list of key skills will need to be made relevant to workers and trade union members, so this should be further developed. In an environment where jobs might disappear, upskilling and the transferability of jobs are very important. Working on a skills council might help in this context. It would also be necessary to get more information on the ESCO classification to understand it better.

The Chair suggested coordinating the funding application for a project of the working group and the work on setting up a European skills council. Mr Costa (POSTEUROP) argued for keeping the two issues separate and then deciding later which one would receive priority and be put forward. The Chair agreed with this procedure.

Mr Scott (UNI Europa) highlighted that there was no wish to duplicate the work of other working groups, but rather to cooperate. The starting point should be that the social dialogue committee can contribute to the creation of a European skills council in the postal sector.

7. Corporate Social Responsibility Working Group

Ms Ausprung (POSTEUROP) gave an overview of the activities of this working group, while Ms Mir (UNI Europa) presented the work programme, which will focus on the environmental pillar of CSR and integrate the topic of sustainable and green jobs.



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Ms Mir (UNI Europa) pointed out that the questionnaire was developed with input from employers and trade unions. It asked how the topics of diversity are integrated into collective negotiations and focused on the importance of age management and integrating workers over the age of 45. The discussion on how to publish the results of this work of the past 2 years is ongoing. A technical seminar with experts is a possibility.

8. Accident Prevention Working Group

Ms Ausprung (POSTEUROP) presented the activities and work programme of this working group, replacing Mr Spada (POSTEUROP) who had to leave early.



Accident prevention
plenary meeting2809.

Ms Ausprung announced that the questionnaire would be launched soon and that the discussion on how to follow-up on the results was ongoing. Whether an event or other form of dissemination would be organised is open at this stage.

Mr Baldwin (UNI Europa) criticised that the information related to this working group had been received quite late by the trade union side. He emphasised that the questionnaire had not yet been approved by the working group. This could happen via email, however, as there do not appear to be fundamental problems.

9. Exchange with Other Sectors Working Group

Mr Blikman (POSTEUROP) gave an overview of the activities and work programme of this working group.



Exchange with other
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Mr Baldwin (UNI Europa) emphasised that this presentation was prepared jointly by POSTEUROP and Ms Wiesner of UNI Europa, who had to leave early. UNI Europa looked forward to interesting results coming from this working group.

The Chair thanked the participants and the interpreters and closed the meeting.