



Brussels, 25 January 2021

Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on Telecommunications/ICT

Working group meeting, 25 January 2021

Final minutes

Chairpersons (acting): Birte Dedden, Gregory Gillet

1. Approval of agenda

The agenda was approved. The draft minutes from the last meeting will be approved in written procedure.

2. Update DUFA project

Mr. Gillet gave an update on the DUFA project. In the context of the project, a round table on gender is planned. ETNO/UNI Europa are seeking experts within and outside of the companies. The list of speakers is almost finalised. Focus will be inter alia on the gender aspects of digital upskilling. The next round table will be on the digital upskilling of ageing workers. The project has stalled due to the Covid-19 crisis (cumbersome to run debates online) but is ongoing.

3. Review work-programme 2021-2022

The work programme remains largely intact. Mr. Gillet invited comments by the ETNO delegation. Overall, the work programme is balanced. The main changes to the work programme were presented: review in light of the Covid-19 crisis and the new situation (digitization and impact on culture, way of working and management, what needs to be done now but also future-proof policies on remote work), updated wording on social partner involvement in discussing third party violence in view of the two projects granted for co-financing by the EC. In this frame, observed increase of domestic violence due also to the Covid-19 crisis. Point 6 on the follow-up to the representativeness study has been deleted. The skills part remains the same (DUFA project underway). The AI declaration agreed at the end of 2020 should be promoted throughout the sector. The work programme for 2021-2022 was adopted.

4. Third party violence

a. The role of social partners in preventing third party violence and harassment at work (HOSPEEM presentation).

b. Strategy outline discussion

Simone Mohrs, policy officer at HOSPEEM introduced the agenda point, and what is planned in the future. She presented the background to the multi-sectoral guidelines on third party violence from 2013, the follow-up questionnaire and the implementation report. The follow-up project application has been accepted by the EC. Comparable recent data is missing. Data on the impact of third party violence at the work place was presented. Appropriate partners at the national level are needed. The elements of a suitable policy framework and the building blocks of the project were presented.

Carol Scheffer inquired whether guidelines for support for the employee are available, and on the implementation of training for middle management. Ms. Mohrs explained that certain such guidelines do exist (the details can be transmitted by the responsible officer for the project).

In the discussion, Mr. Gillet discussed the strategic approach to this topic by the ICTS committee. Ms. Dedden responded that, in her view, an efficient review of the guidelines and sector-specific work are warranted. The work should be in line with the UNI Europa project (run by another colleague). An informed discussion can take place after the second project is underway.

Further, it was agreed to set up a working group on third party violence: an email will be send out to inquire who would like to participate (for those not present at the meeting). A discussion can take place at the next plenary meeting in November.

Links to the joint declaration on attacks on employees (5G) were discussed.

According to Mr. Gillet, KPIs for implementation and monitoring would be useful.

5. GWGH II-input UNI

Carol Scheffer presented the implementation of the GWGH II project in Ireland. The main focus was on creating awareness. A presentation was provided to management and disseminated to the diversity and equality committee. The IR union has an online learning platform, which was shared with other unions (finance etc.). Specifically, the guidelines were implemented on one of the online programmes on stress management. A policy on mental health has also been put in place. Work is underway on introducing a code of practice on the right to disconnect.

6. Future of work

a. AI

b. VIVACOM

c. Best practices to keep the engagement with affiliates/employees

Eva Zehetner from A1 presented on the Austrian experience with Covid-19. Austria experienced a number of lockdowns. A come back to work (26% capacity) took place in May. Over the summer, restrictions were lifted temporarily, but re-took in October and December. Two surveys were conducted. Staff appreciates the flexibility and possibility to work from home i.e. feel safer, and would like to keep it. Home office can also become lonely, and creative work impacted. Social interaction is the weak link. Mobile working was already in place, as well as a social media tool. Desk sharing had already been implemented. Not everybody is able to work from home. Diversity is necessary and a one-size fits all approach should be avoided. Some general guidelines on team working and remote working were issued, and digital tools shared. Ms. Zehetner presented the work models developed within her company. The presence of colleagues in meetings will also be decided (who should attend). More self-organisation will also be required, and other aspects tackled. The speaker clarified that the plans refer to the Austrian headquarters, but the reflection on how to work in the post-Covid-19 era is taking place at the global level. It is difficult however to issue guidelines covering simultaneously many companies/countries.

Sofronieva Galina presented the Bulgarian telecommunications company VIVACOM's experience with remote working. Persons in shops were divided into teams to work on weekly rotation (shifts). Working hours were reduced. Call centre operations were moved to home working. The organisation of remote work was done quickly. Employees also adapted fast to the new work organisation. New training connected to the new type of remote work was also carried out i.e. online training for employees working from home and for managers on management in remote conditions. Regulatory issues: place of work (impossible to comply fully).

Jose Varela from UGT presented on the relations with affiliates and employers in the context of the pandemic (Telefonica). Mobility was completely restricted in Spain. More than 80,000 employees went into telework. Those in critical functions could continue to work. There was preoccupation amongst the members. Many of the members did not have experience with telework. A committee was set up to monitor the situation. The practices for meetings were described. New legislation has just been adopted in Spain that specifies that costs created by telework have to be borne by employers (to be defined).

Johannes Hofmeister mentioned that although companies reacted quickly, labour law, insurance policies did not yet adapt to working from home. Ergonomics in remote working is also key.

Carol Scheffer highlighted the need for remote work to take into account the gender dimension i.e. care responsibilities largely falling on women. A new strategy has been published in Ireland, on the longer-term use of remote work.

Others mentioned: the need for tools; the need to distinguish between the obligatory home office set-up under the pandemic and a remote working scenario post-crisis. There are also

disadvantages to working from home. Many challenges for the legislators to deal with (i.e. working from a country of origin). Communication is also key.

Mr. Gillet referred to the importance of sharing best practice. The future of work under Covid-19 will also be covered in the next meeting (presentations).

Ms. Dedden highlighted the need to look into a post-Covid-19 plan (long-term recommendations on remote working by the social partners in ICTS?).

7. AOB

a. Updates from the Commission

Ms. Hadjiantoni updated the group on recent developments in employment and social affairs. The publication of the action plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights is scheduled for the beginning of March. It will be endorsed at the Social Summit in Porto on 7-8 May 2021. She also referred to some new initiatives (exposure to carcinogens further limits, EU directive on adequate minimum wages) and referred to the Commission Work Programme for 2021 (CWP2021: https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2021-commission-work-programme-key-documents_en).

A number of dedicated hearings are planned/have taken place with the EU social partners. The Eurofound report on living and working in the context of Covid-19 can be found here: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/data/covid-19>

The policy watch database can be accessed here: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/data/covid-19-eu-policywatch>

Eurofound colleagues may be invited to present their work at one of the next meetings.

b. Mr. Gillet referred to the work on a joint statement on the future of social dialogue, as a contribution to the EC and also the Andrea Nahles report (special advisor to Csr Schmit on social dialogue). Discussions are still ongoing on a potentially new joint declaration (not concluded).

Mr. Gillet also recalled that ETNO has been accepted as an official sponsor to the ‘‘lighten the load’’ campaign by EU-OSHA: <https://healthy-workplaces.eu/en>.

Mental health aspects will also be addressed.

The next meetings will be on 27 May and 23 November.