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DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Employment and Social Legislation, Social Dialogue
Social dialogue, Industrial Relations

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SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE INSURANCE

Minutes of the working group meeting

27 May 2014

The meeting was chaired by Mr Hopfner (AGV-Insurance Europe). The agenda of the meeting and the draft minutes of the plenary meeting (10 March 2014) were adopted.

1. The demographic challenge in the insurance sector

The tour de table on new developments and initiatives at sectoral and company level consisted of a contribution by German delegates announcing that next week, there would be a new tentative to come to a joint declaration at German level as a follow-up to the European declaration of 2010.

Ms Bastien (employers, BE) and Mr Vandebossche (workers, BE) presented jointly a good practice example from Belgium (see slides), addressing the following 5 points:

1. Demographic challenge: the statements in the Belgian insurance sector
2. Lifelong learning, sector recommendation
3. FOPAS, the joint training fund of the Belgian insurance sector
4. FOPAS Focus on workers with more than 20 years of experience
5. Update: Sectoral agreement 2013-2014 – 13 February 2014.

As careers get longer, the Belgian social partners saw a crucial need for workers to consider developing new career orientations. The sector has therefore developed recommendations addressing lifelong learning and career counselling/coaching. The trade union representative has provided some nuances, noting that sometimes the recommendations were not followed within the companies (why no obligation?). The Belgian employer's side stressed that the joint training fund works efficiently (see figures) and that the recommendations trigger and stimulate positive dynamics. Asked about the role played by the European declaration of 2010, both Ms Bastien and Mr Vandebossche confirmed the importance of the European joint work and in particular the booklet. The joint training fund Fopas (www.fopas.be) was received with great interest by participants from both sides (how it is funded, how it is managed, how the three trade unions work together, how it is equipped).

Regarding the follow-up project, UNI Europa had sent a second draft project outline on 30 April 2014. The objective would be to submit the project proposal by the 25 August deadline;

hence the application should ideally be ready before the summer break. The participants had some doubts regarding the changes in the call for proposals¹ from "partner" to "co-applicant" which had been necessary to be in line with the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the Union, and they raised concerns about the administrative and financial impact that such changes would have in practice. The employers' side was happy with UNI Europa's preparatory work so far and indicated that the changes concerning one target country (from Slovenia to Slovakia) would need to be considered further.

2. Telework

As announced at the beginning of the meeting, InsuranceEurope had sent a revised version of the draft statement the day before. Mr Hopfner explained that the employers' side had extensive discussions on the three points on which UNI Europa had insisted (inclusion of mobile sales workers, employees' availability and recording of working time). Insurance Europe made a wording proposal with regard to mobile sales workers. Regarding working time, one should avoid introducing uncertainty in our text and running against practices based on mutual trust between workers and their employers. As far as the comments received from the Commission were concerned, Mr Hopfner stressed that the ISSDC was working on a statement (not an agreement), focusing on the insurance sector's needs. Due to its nature, the future ISSDC statement could not have the effect of changing the 2002 cross-industry agreement. Insurance Europe suggested a wording clarifying this point in the draft statement. The chairperson announced that the text, once finalised within the ISSDC, would need to be reviewed by native English-speakers and be endorsed by the employer organisation's executive committee.

UNI Europa stressed that the three points were fundamental (a *conditio sine qua non*) to the trade union side. If there was no progress on these three points, which should be mentioned specifically in the text, the joint work on this statement should be discontinued because there would be no added value with regard to the cross-industry agreement.

After extensive discussion of the three points, including break-out discussions, the employers' side confirmed its view that the three points were already covered by their wording proposals and, when it comes to working time, by the initial text. However, they would make a further proposal with amendments mentioning the key words of paramount importance to the workers' side. UNI Europa replied that this move was an important positive sign for them; they would closely look at the proposed changes. It was agreed that after receiving UNI Europa's reaction, both sides of industry would meet in a small group, if possible together with the Commission representative, to finalise the text.

3. Directive on disclosure of non-financial and diversity information

The chair stressed that the Directive on disclosure of non-financial and diversity information by certain large companies and groups² would be relevant for banks and insurance companies. It would therefore be important to discuss the implementation of this directive which still needed to be adopted by the Council. As the responsible unit in the EU Commission was not available to present the Directive and the next steps at this meeting, it was agreed to put the item again on the agenda of the next meeting and to consider discussing together how the

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=629&langId=en&callId=402&furtherCalls=yes>

² http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/accounting/non-financial_reporting/index_en.htm

foreseen eg diversity report could look like, possibly based on an exchange of existing reporting practices.

4. Any other business

Ms Saller (UNI Europa) informed the participants about the joint declaration on CSR (corporate social responsibility) signed by the EU bank social partners on 31 January 2014³.

The social partners thanked Mr Zylberberg (workers, FR) for his most valuable contributions to the European social dialogue. It was his last meeting today.

The chair proposed to put an agenda point "Exchange on the ongoing reflections on European social dialogue" and to invite the responsible Head of Unit to present his thoughts at the next meeting. Ms Durst (DG EMPL) announced that the future Commission Communication on social dialogue would be accompanied by a proper information and consultation process of the social partners; it was unlikely to hold a discussion with the Commission in each sectoral dialogue committee.

UNI Europa asked the employers if they would, like other sectoral committees, co-sign a statement regarding the hairdressers' agreement which the Commission has not submitted so far to the Council for implementation according to Article 155 TFEU. Mr Hopfner asked about the reasons for this blockage, the employers' association representativeness and whether BusinessEurope supported this statement.

³ Available in the social dialogue texts database: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en>