



Work Programme Social Dialogue Committee Local and Regional Government 2015-2017

FINAL DRAFT

I. Introduction

Local and regional government in Europe is operating in a very difficult economic and financial context. Pressures on local and regional government expenditure as a significant part of overall government expenditure will continue, albeit with some variation depending on the country. In some countries local and regional government has been more heavily affected by cuts than the public sector as a whole.

Across Europe local democracy and the autonomy of local and regional government must be strengthened in order to develop sustainable, inclusive and socially-just funded local public services in order to develop sustainable inclusive and socially-just funded local public services. Across Europe local democracy and the autonomy of local and regional government must be strengthened in order to develop sustainable, inclusive and socially-just funded local public services that respond to the needs of citizens, communities, workers and businesses. Developing positive social dialogue agenda for local and regional government means recognizing the diversity of local and regional government structures, its competences in Europe and its workforce. This has to be considered a strength and not a weakness. Local and regional governments also play a central and significant role in fostering competitiveness and employment in the private sector. The major part of public procurement of good and services- which represents more than 18% of EU GDP- is carried out at local level. Local regional governments guarantee local democracy and influence people's lives and their surroundings, by producing and delivering a variety of local services to citizens and businesses. Local public services are therefore essential for the quality of life, proximity of service delivery, territorial development and social cohesion. Municipalities are large employers and of great importance for the local economy and to the local community which means that the local and regional government sector needs sufficient, well-trained, motivated and well-paid workers. This demands good and transparent management and trade union rights to information, consultation and negotiation, strong social dialogue and collective bargaining, and an end to all forms of insecure and precarious employment, serving also as a model for employment.

All these aspects and the context in which local and regional government is operating will be taken into account when formulating objectives, themes and tools for implementation of the Social Dialogue Committee Activities for 2015-2017.

II. Objectives

Represent employers and trade unions in the local and regional government sector in a social dialogue as intended in the Treaties, have discussions and make joint agreements on issues of common interest;

AND

Strengthen the European social dialogue in the local and regional government sector consistent with the recognition of the general principle of local and regional autonomy conferred by the Lisbon Treaty by:

- organising activities to maintain and reinforce the social dialogue between employer and trade union organisations in local and regional government in the Member States and candidate countries, making sure that these activities effectively achieve genuine outcomes and progress,
- promoting quality local and regional government public services based on values of social and environmental responsibility and accountability and exchange information on labour market issues and promote the interests and good practice in the local and regional government sector,
- responding to consultations and other initiatives by the Commission, Parliament and Council ,being pro-active and influencing legislation and policy in the fields of employment, training, social protection, labour law, health and safety related issues,
- developing and taking agreed positions on issues of policy at the European level for the purposes of dialogue with the European institutions.

III. Tools

1. The social dialogue meetings (2 working group meetings and 1 plenary meeting per year).
2. One EU funded project per year. EPSU has submitted a joint social project with the theme “new forms of service delivery for municipalities, the contribution of social dialogue and good practice for well-being at work” in August 2014.
3. Active twinning / networking between Committee members
4. EPSU/CEMR secretariat presence and participation in national activities

IV. Themes for Action 2015 – 2017

The work programme covers a two-year period from 2015 to 2017. A two years programme gives the Social Dialogue Committee better opportunities to plan, complete and follow-up on the priorities for the period. Each year the Committee will review the programme and make any necessary adjustments as well as agree the activities / outputs for the following year.

1. Economic crisis and its impact on local and regional government

In our last work programme we had several exchanges on the impact of the economic crisis and agreed three joint statements, mainly intended to influence the EU political response.

The crisis is not over and we shall continue to work on this together. Furthermore, we realise that there will be growing demands for public investment linked to the ageing of the population and climate change. Indeed the Commission has recently strengthened its work on economic governance by issuing country-specific recommendations. In these recommendations local and regional government is mentioned as “level of governance”. So it will be important to monitor the impact on the economic governance on its social and employment consequences and impact. Against this background, EPSU and CEMR will:

- Look into the impact of the crisis in the area of employment, (re-)organisation and adaptation of the administration and services, through collecting statistics and information from each participating country. An initiative could be undertaken to see how local authorities (and are) evaluating this impact, for example on gender equality.
- Assess how the crisis is fuelling the development of alternative forms of work, i.e., temporary agency work, fixed-terms contracts, ‘false’ self-employment and consider the impact of this on quality of employment and services.
- Collection of ideas / examples of measures being taken at local and regional government level on cost saving and investment in the future
- Promote in the new system of economic governance a balanced reflection of sustainability of public finance in terms of both income and expenditure

2. Anticipating and adapting to changes: Implementing the CEMR-EPSU Joint Framework of Restructuring for local and regional government (<http://www.epsu.org/a/9193>)

The European Commission has recently published a “Quality framework for restructuring and anticipation of change” proposing ‘fiches’ for employees, employers and social partners with good practices on how to deal with restructuring. They should draw up frameworks for worker involvement to anticipate and prepare for change, and develop measures to help individual workers e.g. to increase their skills and mobility.

See here: http://ec.europa.eu/news/pdf/131213_en.pdf

The Social Dialogue Committee Local and Regional Government has been very involved in these discussions, and issued a joint response to the European Commission’s Green Paper COM (2012) 7 “Restructuring and anticipation of change: what lessons from recent experience” in March 2012 for the local and regional government sector (see <http://www.epsu.org/a/8763>).

In particular, the effects of restructuring within municipalities are strongly felt due to pressures on municipal finances and new forms of public service provision.

A project has been submitted under the theme: “New forms of service delivery for municipalities, the contribution of social dialogue and good practice for well-being at work”.

The objective of this project is that the outcomes will contribute to the European Commission report announced for 2016 analysing the non-binding guidelines of restructuring under the quality framework.

The Steering Group for the project will formulate action points to see what outcomes want to be achieved through the project in each of the four thematic priorities.

Four thematic priorities

✓ 4 seminars on each of the thematic strands of the project, which will focus on a field which is linked to the challenges of restructuring:

- a) Identifying new forms of service delivery in municipalities, technological developments and the impact on the workforce and employers

The following developments can be observed: municipal mergers are encouraged or enforced, municipalities share the delivery of their services, voluntary or third sector organisations provide public services, and changes in responsibilities and tasks at

local level take place. The transfer of responsibilities between state, regional and local level is of particular interest to be monitored at EU level. Also the new public procurement directives provide new possibilities to municipalities, such as a legal framework for public-public cooperation or for strategic procurement to consider social or environmental aspects, but their complexity may also require more legal expertise and advice and increase certain transaction costs.

Technological developments as e.g. open data and data management, including the upcoming new EU data protection regulation change the ways how municipalities organise their administration and their services for their citizens. In border regions, cross-border cooperation also plays a role how municipalities manage public services. All these developments have an impact on local and regional authorities as employers and the workforce.

The social partners should exchange experience on this issue during a one-day seminar.

b) Global challenges: climate change, energy transition, migration and their impact on municipalities and citizens

Global challenges such as climate change and related issues have an impact on the local level and require changes in the management of local authorities. These change processes should be organised on the basis of a shared understanding of the social partners. The 2030 European framework for energy and climate policies calls for a long-term reconfiguration in terms of energy production and consumption and causes modifications in the way municipalities organise energy provision and climate-related measures.

Migration can be linked to climate change, but people also move for other reasons to Europe. Different cultural backgrounds of the citizens require changes in communication and how services are organised, including a more diverse staff in public administration.

Local and regional governments play a crucial role in adapting and coping with these change processes, which also has various implications on employment: staff needs to be trained and communication with the citizens need to be adapted.

The social partners should exchange experience on this issue during a one-day seminar.

c) Recruitment of young workers and retention of older workers in local public services: developing new skills and life-long learning?

Recruitment of young workers and retention of workers or older workers is a particular challenge for municipalities that operate in a difficult economic context. To create a framework for attracting and keeping workers in a personalised manner requires a strategy for the local and regional government sector. Such a strategy has to identify barriers for attracting and keeping staff and give solutions to overcome these barriers. The social partners should look at how the sector can develop new career pathways and how life-long learning and career development can be managed. Examples of good practice should demonstrate how changes in human resource management can be made. Particular attention should be given to identify measures that show how employers and the workforce can take into consideration well-being at work and the contribution of social dialogue.

The social partners should exchange experience on this issue during a one-day seminar.

d) Contribution of social dialogue to support well-being and health and safety at work in local public services

The new Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014 – 2020 identifies key challenges and strategic objectives for health and safety at work and presents key actions and instruments to address these. In this thematic priority local government social partners should try to discuss how social dialogue contributes to the well-being at work, how implementation of existing health and safety rules can be improved in particular also in small municipal companies. The partners should aim at discussing how to improve the prevention of work-related diseases by tackling new and emerging risks without neglecting existing risks. For the public sector it will be of particular interest to take into account the ageing of the workforce.

The social partners should exchange experience on this issue during a one-day seminar.

The Social Dialogue Committee issued a joint response to the Consultation on the Strategic Framework on the necessity and nature of a Strategic Framework: <http://www.epsu.org/a/9745>

As clearly mentioned in this Communication, EU Social partners play an important role in designing and implementing OSH policies and promoting a safe and healthy work environment, in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy. They are also invited to contribute to the ongoing evaluation of the EU legislative 'acquis'.

The EC underlines that there is a need to improve ownership of this framework by EU Social Partners; by involving us in the design and implementation of specific initiatives at EU, national and local workplace level. It is suggested that the tripartite Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work and our Social Dialogue Structures should play a key role.

- ✓ All four thematic priorities linked to the challenges of restructuring in municipalities will be summarised through the production of a small pedagogical film that will serve to promote the social dialogue as an instrument in helping change processes in local and regional government. This film will be disseminated through the EPSU and CEMR website.
- ✓ A final pan-European conference in November 2016 in Spain (Barcelona) to present the final research, the film and outcomes of the thematic priorities, with up to 120 participants consisting of 2 representatives each from the employers and trade unions per EU country and candidate countries. Interpretation would be provided in 6 languages (English, French, German, Spanish, Swedish and Czech).

3. Follow-Up Multi-Sectoral Guidelines to tackle Third Party Violence

EPSU, UNI-europa, ETUCE, HOSPEEM, CEMR, EFEE, EuroCommerce, CoESS have signed multi-sectoral guidelines to tackle third-party violence and harassment related to work in December 2011.

The aim of the Guidelines is to ensure that each workplace has a results-oriented policy which addresses the issue of third-party violence. The Guidelines set out the practical steps that can be taken by employers, workers and their representatives /trade unions to reduce, prevent and mitigate problems. The steps reflect the best practices developed in our sectors and they can be complemented by more specific and/or additional measures.

<http://www.epsu.org/a/9745>

A joint report has been published on the implementation of these multi-sectoral guidelines in November 2013:

<http://www.epsu.org/IMG/pdf/Report-Follow-Up-Multisectoral-Guidelines-TPV-ALL-SECTORS-FINAL-22-11-13.pdf>

The Committee will provide further input on national projects tackling Third-Party-Violence.

4. Follow-Up and Updating the Gender Equality Guidelines

CEMR/EPSU Guidelines to drawing up gender equality action plans in Local and Regional Government adopted in 2007. (<http://www.epsu.org/a/3541>)

The Committee will work jointly to deliver an update on the gender equality guidelines and monitor further their implementation.

An implementation report has been published on the position of women in local and regional government in the framework of the “Future of Work Project” in October 2012.

<http://www.epsu.org/a/9031>

CEMR is also working on the delivery of a pilot project aiming to develop indicators to measure the implementation of the European Charter for Equality of women and men in local life.

This two-years project (from January 2014 to December 2015) is funded by the European Commission and is looking to engage local and regional governments to improve and ensure gender equality through action plans.

To support their efforts, this pilot project is expected to provide a toolkit to improve the use of the selected indicators which will help local and regional governments to achieve significant results regarding gender equality in terms of recruitment, safety and working conditions, salary, reconciliation, representativeness, integration, governance, etc.

<http://www.charter-equality.eu/methods-and-evaluation/pilot-project.html?lang=en>