



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG

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

European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on Local and Regional Government, Plenary meeting 14th December 2007, Brussels

1. Assessment of the work programme 2006-2007

The committee approved the report of the current work programme.

2. Presentation and adoption of the 2008-2010 work programme

The paper was adopted as presented to the Committee. This time we will have a **three-year programme**, which will give us more time to develop activities and some flexibility to add new issues.

The Committee agreed that the programme as presented is a good working basis. It was stressed that it is important to build mutual confidence in the Committee and to achieve common views on issues.

A number of additional points were made regarding issues to be born in mind as the work programme develops over the three-year cycle:

- ✓ The place of the public sector in society in general, and relationship between the public and private sectors
- ✓ the impact of privatisation and outsourcing on health and safety and quality of employment (which will be a question for the current joint project on restructuring)
- ✓ The initiative by certain EU mayors in support of a positive EU framework on public services
- ✓ The importance of issues such as social criteria in public procurement and equal pay and equal pay for work of equal value

In discussion it was pointed out that some of these points touch on the ‘political’ dimension of local and regional government.

A table outline the activities for 2008 was also presented to the Committee and is attached.

3. Presentation of guidelines to develop and implement gender equality plans

The gender equality guidelines were presented and adopted by the Committee. The final ‘tidied-up’ version will be distributed towards the end of January 2008.

Members of the Committee expressed their satisfaction with the guidelines, both in terms of content and in terms of the working group that drafted the text.

4. Commission's second stage consultation on Active Inclusion:

Michele Calandrino, European Commission, DG EMPL presented the Commission's work on active inclusion.

Mr Calandrino said that the starting point for the Commission in the inclusion debate is the 1992 Recommendation on minimum income schism. The concept of "disadvantaged groups" is broadly taken to mean those people dependent on social security schemes.

He added that public services (SSGI) provide valuable "cash-in-kind" support for people suffering from social inclusion, and that the Commission wants to give more visibility to this contribution. The social economy is also seen by the Commission as a potential source of employment for disadvantaged groups.

The Commission proposes to develop a quality framework for SSGI, to include the development of common principles, monitoring and evaluation (as also outlined also in the recent Communication on SSGI). He added that such a framework would (also) prevent negative consequences of liberalization, and that it would include, for example, ways if integrating quality criteria in public procurement.

In response to questions, Mr Calandrino:

- ✓ stressed that the Commission wanted to develop the discussion on quality criteria for SSGI step-by-step and "bottom-up," which is why support would be given to local exchanges etc to develop policy and share best practices (through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) process). The proposed Local Observatories could play an important role in this process.
- ✓ clarified that the minimum wages are used by many Member States as a reference level in the setting of minimum income schemes and that the Commission's was not proposing any new policy in this area
- ✓ Said that the Commission had not made any link regarding the quality of employment in SSGI and the quality of services provided
- ✓ Reminded the Committee that the deadline for responses to the consultation is end of February 2008; and that the next step would probably be a Council Recommendation towards the end of 2008

Following working group sessions on the consultation paper from the Commission, the Committee agreed that it should try and draft a joint contribution to the consultation paper from the Commission. There were some doubts however as to what the focus of a joint contribution might be. The groups proposed that the Secretariats should consider this question and prepare a text for discussion (by email if possible) with members of the Steering Group. The text would then be circulated to all members for comments.

5. Update on the joint CEMR/EPUSU project on "Supporting the reform process in local and regional government: Joint evaluation of the experience in different forms of service provision"

Richard Pond, Working Lives Research Institute presented an update of the project to the Committee.

Mr Pond said that not all countries chosen for the research have been able to provide case studies and so other countries may need to be included. Also, some of the case studies suggested by members did not appear to meet the criteria agreed, in particular regarding the role of LRG social partners in change / restructuring processes. Some flexibility would be probably needed in the next months.

It was proposed to have a full discussion on this at the next meeting of the project steering group (early February 2008).

6. Promoting social Dialogue in new Member States: recent experiences

Kalle Livamaagi presented the Baltic 2007 social dialogue project, organised by EPSU members but with the participation of CEMR colleagues. The project had been very useful and had revealed interesting developments – for example 12 new local collective agreements in LRG in Lithuania.

A summary report of the project will be soon available and will be circulated.

Also interesting to note are the social dialogue materials of the EC website:
See http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_dialogue/videos_en.htm

7. Close of the meeting

Anders Hammarback closed the meeting by thanking colleagues for their support during his two year chairmanship of the Committee in 2008. Ake Hillman will now take over the position.