



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 Working group meeting on 12 October 2009, Brussels Accident Prevention and Exchange with other Sectors Minutes

Mr Potykiewicz (POSTEUROP) chaired the accident prevention working group meeting, and Mr Wortmann (POSTEUROP) chaired the exchange with other sectors working group meeting.

1. Accident prevention working group – 2010 work programme

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed a new representative on the employers' side, Ms Tassain, who is a health and safety expert at La Poste.

Mr Spada (POSTEUROP) gave a presentation on possible topics for the 2010 work programme of the accident prevention working group.



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POSTEUROP suggested four topics, of which two should be chosen for the 2010 work programme. Either slips, trips and falls could be covered, a topic on which POSTEUROP has already conducted a study, or the topic of external workplace violence could be taken onboard. In the same manner, the working group could either organise an expert follow-up seminar on accident prevention, or launch a benchmarking exercise in occupational safety.

UNI europa would like to use the joint declaration on accident prevention that was signed in June 2009 as the basis, and have that disseminated and published as widely as possible, notably through translating it into at least French, German and Italian. With respect to the list of proposed topics, UNI europa was surprised that some topics that were discussed at the April working group meetings didn't make their way into the employer proposal, while other in the list were not discussed previously. The topics suggested in April by UNI europa were (1) musculoskeletal disorders (MSD), of which slips, trips and falls are only a small part; (2) stress and work environment, including work organisation; and (3) third-party violence, as violence in all its forms is important, and cooperation with other sectors would be possible based on the cross-industry framework agreement.

POSTEUROP recalled the intensive discussion at the April working group meeting, where a consensus was reached on including MSD as a result of slips, trips and falls in the work programme. In addition, as POSTEUROP has already conducted a study on the topic, a duplication of work can be avoided. The commitment to that remains, and

choosing this topic would move towards the interest that UNI europa had expressed regarding health protection. With respect to stress, POSTEUROP doubted that the working group on accident prevention could adequately cover this topic. Regarding the issue of third-party violence, a decision was taken some time ago to not participate in the multi-sectoral initiative, but to continue observing the outcome. POSTEUROP also clarified that what it called external workplace violence is the same concept as third-party violence.

UNI europa requested to improve the wording of the item on slips, trips and falls, so that the link to MSD becomes clear. POSTEUROP was also asked to provide clarification on what it meant by the avoidance of duplicate work, and on the proposed seminar. With respect to third-party violence, attacks by animals are an additional concern of UNI europa.

POSTEUROP responded that there is an internal POSTEUROP working group on slips, trips and falls that has undertaken a study and is compiling a catalogue. The proposed expert seminar would have two purposes: (1) to discuss what was the outcome and follow-up to the first seminar, and how has that information been applied in the different postal companies; (2) to strengthen the dialogue between experts on accident prevention.

The Chair asked for the development of a consensus around the 2010 work programme, which will have to be approved by the 1 December plenary meeting.

Regarding the dissemination of the June 2009 joint statement, the Commission suggested financing translations through a project application by the social partners in response to its calls for proposals. The Commission's internal translation resources could not easily be used for this purpose.

UNI europa suggested that translations made by postal companies could be made available.

POSTEUROP stated that it could possibly conceive a project that would cover the translation of all joint statements of the social dialogue committee, but this would have to be discussed more. Regarding the work programme, POSTEUROP preferred the topic of slips, trips and falls, and the benchmarking exercise. As the first topic is seen as a broader move of the working group's interest towards health protection, MSD should not be specified by name. The following wording was proposed:

"Slips, trips and falls and their consequences for the health of employees"

UNI europa accepted this proposal, provided that MSD are not excluded from that debate. UNI europa will monitor the topic of third-party violence and may come back to it for 2011, but for now also agreed to the second item of the 2010 work programme, the benchmarking of best practices.

Following a request from UNI europa, the Chair assured that documents, such as presentations, will be circulated in advance. The 2010 work programme of the accident prevention working group will now be submitted to the December plenary meeting for approval.

2. Exchange with other sectors working group – 2010 work programme

The Chair gave an overview of the development of the working group, and recalled its one previous meeting with another sector (road transport). During the last few years, the social dialogue committee and the working group members have focused on the evolution of the postal sector, but the interest in learning from other sectors remains. The Chair proposed a discussion on the 2010 work programme, the criteria for selecting sectors, and the approach to the exchange with those sectors.

UNI europa gave an overview of the committee's functioning and its future remit from its point of view.



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The social partners exchanged their views regarding the objectives of the working group, the sectors to be contacted, and the structure of the work. It was agreed that the objective was to learn from other sectors and their social dialogue committees.

POSTEUROP pointed out two different approaches regarding the selection of sectors: (1) work with the sectors with the best examples, regardless of the economic sector; (2) contact those sectors that have most affinity to postal services. The latter is especially useful for covering new entrants that are often not part of the postal services social dialogue structures, but rather are represented by different players, such as transport.

UNI europa pointed out the main activities of workers in the postal sector, namely collecting, sorting and transporting mail, so that the transport sectors appear most relevant for an exchange.

POSTEUROP proposed to analyse sectors regarding their activities based on the working groups (training, accident prevention, work organisation), and to choose sectors that are closely linked to the postal sector. In addition, the working group could look at sectors that have gone through change processes in the past that are similar what the postal sector is experiencing now.

UNI europa agreed that an exchange with a sector like transport could contribute to learning from their experience, also with respect to new entrants into the postal market. As a result of the discussion, the telecoms and road transport sectors seem most relevant, with financial services with a slightly lower priority

Based on the list of current sectoral social dialogue committees provided by the Commission, and keeping in mind both criteria (closeness to postal services and restructuring), POSTEUROP also suggested civil aviation, gas, electricity, steel and shipbuilding.

UNI europa proposed to investigate how active each sector's social dialogue committee is, and highlighted that its concept of change differs from that of the employers UNI europa is focusing on the safety and health of workers, so that they have a job that they can come home from safely in the evening.

The Commission pointed out that the joint texts adopted by each sectoral social dialogue committee can be found online at the texts database.¹

The Chair suggested establishing two lists. For the "change" criterion, the relevant sectors would be civil aviation, telecoms, steel, shipbuilding, gas and electricity. For the "related to postal services" criterion, the sectors would be road transport, banking, insurance and commerce. As the list of working group members will change, once the final membership is confirmed, a first task will be to narrow down this list, and then contact those sectors. The Commission and Eurofound could help in this respect. The Chair also committed to prepare a presentation on the working group's programme for the December plenary.

UNI europa will determine the names of its working group members after 18 November 2009, and will send a summary statement POSTEUROP. UNI europa also highlighted the need for the presentation at the December plenary to be a joint presentation by both sides, to which POSTEUROP agreed.

The Chair called for sufficient preparatory work to be done before the plenary, and closed the meeting.

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en>