

Social Dialogue Committee for the Graphical Sector

Work Programme 2016-2018

Introduction

The European social partners of the graphical industry have had regular meetings and exchanges of information and have cooperated during the past in various ways. In the last 3 years this cooperation intensified with the establishment of a European sectoral dialogue committee in 2013. Additionally, the social partners successfully conducted an EU funded project on skills in the European printing industry in 2014.

Due to the success of the Sectoral Social Dialogue over the past 3 years, the social partners decided to continue the process of cooperation at the plenary meeting of the social dialogue committee in October 2015.

The European sectoral dialogue of the graphical industry will tackle subjects of importance to the sector as a whole, but will not interfere with the autonomy of the national social partners in determining terms and conditions of employment in their national contexts.

This three year work programme serves as a guideline for the activities of the European social partners for the years 2016 to 2018.

Background

The graphical industry is part of the wider manufacturing sector that focuses in particular upon the reproduction of communication material. Its products range from newspapers, books, periodicals, business forms, greeting cards, identification documents and other materials. The printing activity relies on associated support activities, such as bookbinding and plate-making services. Processes used in printing include transferring data from a plate, screen or computer file to a medium, such as paper, plastics, metal. The most prominent printing techniques range from offset, gravure, screen to flexographic printing. More recently printing companies have made a significant move towards integrating digital printing into their activities, opening their market to new features such as personalisation of print, short run or "on demand" printing, and web to print services. In recent years printing companies have also enlarged their scope of activities to include the integration of value added services, such as database management for clients and the production of e-documents or websites.

The graphical industry in the EU comprises some 117,000 companies employing 640,000 people, and generates a turnover of some 85 billion Euros (2012 Eurostat figures). The industry is dominated by small and medium sized enterprises with 95% employing not more than 20 people in Europe.

The graphical sector is increasingly affected by the growth of electronic media, imports from low cost countries, structural overcapacity, and concentration at the level of paper and ink suppliers. This requires significant restructuring or adjustments in the offer of companies, adaptation in available skills, in a general context of pressure based not only on low margins, but also increasingly on environmental considerations. The image of print products is suffering. They are not only seen as traditional, but the fact that print products are paper-based leads to environmental considerations from consumers that are in fact at odds with reality. Print is not seen as a renewable recyclable resource, but as a forest destroying environmentally questionable product.

Furthermore the graphical industry has been severely hit by the economic crisis and is not recovering, with turnover not expected to increase to pre-crisis levels in European countries.

Work programme

For the years 2016 to 2018, the social dialogue committee of the graphical sector will address the following issues.

1. The technological, social and economic situation and trends of the sector at EU level

The graphical sector is in an on-going state of change and evolution, and as such it is important for Intergraf, UNI Europa Graphical and their respective members, to have a complete picture of the technological, social and economic realities of the European graphical sector in its entirety. Such an overview must be informed through an accurate picture of the situation of the sector at national level, and it is crucial that the social partners at national and European levels are regularly updated on the situation of the European graphical sector if we are to improve our ability to anticipate change and develop a clearer vision on the possibilities for future developments in the graphical industry.

In order to improve understanding and raise awareness of the situation in the European graphical industry, Intergraf and UNI Europa Graphical will use their social dialogue meetings at European level to organise regular exchanges of information on the situation in the graphical industry and discussions on the current and future trends of the sector. These exchanges of information will be organised on the basis of presentations and discussions of national reports. Expert opinions from research institutes or other bodies will be requested when necessary.

In addition, Intergraf and UNI Europa Graphical will prepare within their social dialogue meetings the terms of reference of a study aimed at exploring different possible scenarios for the future of the communication industry as a whole and the possibilities for the development of graphical companies within it.

Depending upon the discussions that take place within the social dialogue, Intergraf and UNI Europa will decide on the best form that follow-up work should take. Different possibilities can be envisaged, such as dissemination of the information, preparation of publications and reports, joint opinions/declarations, conferences, around specific themes, etc.

2. Skills and Follow-up of the joint EU project “Future skills in the graphical industry”

It is crucial for the sector's social partners to analyze the current and future needs for skills in the sector. The social partners therefore agree to further explore possibilities to cooperate on the issues of skills in the graphical industry.

In order to increase cooperation on skills the social partners will:

- Establish a forum for educational experts to exchange views and meet regularly.
- Establish strategic plans to ensure that companies and workers have access to the skills needed in the future.

In order to for the process to be as inclusive as possible the social partners invite EGIN (the European Graphic Industry Network) to participate in the planning and execution of skill related activities.

The social partners will closely monitor the development of skills needs of the sector in order to anticipate changes in skills requirements, and will discuss the education and training needs and exchange best practices.

Discussions on skills needs will cover the entire spectrum of current traditional printing activities as well as new services increasingly offered by printers, ranging from database management up to the creation of electronic documents, websites, interactive links between print and electronic media, etc. Challenges are particularly seen for the industry in the consumer behaviour with the move from paper to a digital information medium. This has major effects on advertising and requires a greater flexibility in the delivery of information from the side of the publisher and the print buyer in business to business operations.

Both organisations will continue to promote the report drafted during the 2013-14 project on “Future Skills in the Graphical Industry” and make them available to all stakeholders.

Intergraf and UNI Europa Graphical will explore the idea to continue their work on the subject of skills in the graphical industry.

- Monitor developments in the graphical industry in the area of “skills”
- Explore further possibilities of cooperation between Intergraf and UNI Europa Graphical as well as the European Graphic/Media Industry Network (EGIN)

3. Follow-up of the 2010 joint EU project on “Best practices in socially responsible restructuring of printing companies”

Intergraf and UNI Europa Graphical will re-examine the 2010 report on Best practices in socially responsible restructuring to see whether the advice given in the report is still of relevance to printing companies. Depending upon the results of this evaluation the social partners may:

- Update and review the materials developed within the framework of the 2010 project;
- Develop other tools or actions to support social partners of the industry at all levels in dealing with restructuring in a socially responsible manner.

4. State aid and unfair competition

It has been a point of concern among Intergraf’s and UNI Europa’s membership that European structural and social funds could be used as illegal state aid which would result in unfair competition.

As a result the European social partners decided to investigate the use of EU funds in different EU member states and monitor complaints raised with the European Commission.

5. Image and Environment

The topic of environmental sustainability of print products is important when it comes to the future of print and its public acceptance.

The European social partners have agreed to work on related issues to promote the environmental sustainability and the use of print. The social partners will


- Cooperate in campaigns
- Work on EU related topics such as the EU Timber legislation

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Signatures:



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