



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 Telecom

Plenary meeting on 08 June 2009, Brussels

Minutes

1. Approval of agenda and minutes of the last working group meeting

UNI europa (Mr. Guillot) chaired the session. The agenda for this meeting and the minutes of the last working group meeting on 14 April 2009 were approved.

2. Good Work – Good Health project

UNI europa expressed its satisfaction at seeing the project approved for funding by the European Commission, but stressed the necessity to be rigorous and diligent in its implementation. The Commission offered its congratulations to the social partners on their project. ETNO gave an overview of the next steps of the project, which parts from the premise that good work is good for health. The work will be guided by an expert reference group composed mainly of health and safety experts, but will also engage external researchers. The project manager will be provided by BT, and Ms. Machilsen (ETNO) was also thanked for her work on the project.

3. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The contact persons on Corporate Social Responsibility of ETNO and UNI europa presented their joint analysis of the way forward in light of the 2007 Joint Statement.



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They suggested three actions: 1) give more publicity to the 2007 Joint Statement, especially by translating it; 2) collect examples of good practices from companies; 3) examine the organisation of a conference to disseminate the results with the help of the European Commission.

ETNO expressed its desire to focus on the social and economic aspects of CSR, while UNI europa pointed out the importance of not precluding discussions on climate change and environmental issues. ETNO referred to its declaration on climate change and sustainable development (Sustainability Charter), and emphasized that other stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations would have to be included in such discussions, so they could not be held in the framework of bipartite social dialogue. ETNO was also of the opinion that the Commission had not been involved enough in the area of CSR, and pointed to an unanswered letter about the absence of Commission representation at the signing of the 2007 Joint Statement.

The Commission responded that it would investigate the issue of the letter, and that it could examine the request for translations, but mentioned the severe limitations to its own resources in this area. The idea of a conference on CSR would be welcome in the framework of a project proposal, and it was agreed that this issue would be put on the agenda at the September working group meeting.

In response to a question about the collection of best practices, ETNO mentioned its Sustainability Report, which already includes such examples, but that otherwise there is no decision yet on how to proceed.

UNI europa emphasized the importance of the document, but lamented the lack of awareness-raising, mentioning the example of Portugal and the Lisbon conference. Good practices and transparency on issues such as managers' salaries are an integral part of CSR, and negotiating enterprise-wide global framework agreements would help significantly in that.

ETNO did not wish to reopen the 18-month negotiation that led to the 2007 Joint Statement, nor enlarge the scope of it, as the role of the social dialogue committee is not to promote agreements between UNI europa and individual companies. Neither are discussions on salaries or managers' salaries appropriate, since ETNO does not have a mandate in this respect. There is enough substance for follow-up work already without adding other, more controversial topics. For instance, in Portugal the results of the Lisbon conference will be disseminated, which has not happened yet due to staff changes.

The Chair underlined the importance of a constructive approach by both sides, based on the 2007 Joint Statement, on which there was consensus.

4. Any other business

Various speakers underlined the importance of including the Good Work – Good Health project as a regular agenda item. Both sides agreed to therefore discuss the project and CSR as the two main agenda items at the working group meeting on 21 September 2009. At the working group meeting on 26 October 2009, the issues of skills and training, and the topic of work organisation and call centres, will be the main agenda items, as well as an additional short update on the project.

Thanks were extended to Mr. Tulstrup (ETNO) for his work in the sectoral social dialogue committee.

5. Skills and jobs - Commission information point

Ms. Dapergola and Mr. Hubert (European Commission) gave a presentation on the comprehensive sectoral analysis of emerging competences and economic activities in the European Union for the telecommunications sector, and on the proposed EU sector councils on employment and skills.



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The ensuing discussion focused on the hierarchy of skills, on the differences between sectors, on contradictions within the study between recommendations, such as to provide

training in the EU while encouraging the recruitment of skilled workers from outside the EU at the same time, and on technological change.

The Commission pointed out that there is no hierarchy of job profiles implied, since the classification only follows an international statistical standard. Each sector and each job profile are analyzed separately, but the challenge is to make the results operational. The sensitive topic of recruitment from outside the EU was the result of an expert workshop and is only one point among many, where the demographic challenge was also a factor. The proposed sector councils on employment and skills are designed to address the challenge of training people to enable adaption to change. There is also a current call for proposals addressing restructuring.¹ There will also be a restructuring forum organised by the Commission on 7 and 8 December 2009.

The Chair pointed out that the topic of skills and training will be on the agenda of the October working group meeting and suggested to contact the Commission for more detailed information on the skills councils as the working group should get involved in this.

6. Employment summit – Commission information point

Mr. Tricart was introduced as the new Head of Unit for Social Dialogue at the European Commission. He gave an update on timeline of the new Commission Communication on Sectoral Social Dialogue, which will depend on political developments. The Communication will highlight the successes of social dialogue, which are directly attributable to the social partners. An example of this is the Good Work – Good Health project, for which Mr. Tricart offered his congratulations. He also pointed to the long tradition of such research in the telecommunications sector: in 1956, a study entitled "La névrose des téléphonistes" already appeared in the journal "Presse Médicale" (vol. 64, no. 13, p. 275).

At the same time, while the Commission is not without responsibility, Mr. Tricart emphasized that in autonomous dialogue the challenges are also attributable to the social partners. Although it is not for the Commission to give marks, he encouraged the committee to define clear and operational objectives and to evaluate its work.

Mr. Tricart then gave an overview of the Commission Communication "A Shared Commitment for Employment", which intends to mobilise all actors for keeping people in employment, to facilitate the entry of young people into the labour market, and includes measures on mobility, skills and the management of restructuring, among other financial measures worth €19 billion.²

ETNO welcomed Mr. Tricart and pointed out the good company culture that exists in the sector, which is important for the Commission to mention, instead of just talking about high roaming charges. ETNO emphasized the commitment to making progress in social dialogue, such as is demonstrated through the Good Work – Good Health project.

¹ For the text of the Call, see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=630&langId=en&callId=205&furtherCalls=yes>

² For the full text of the Communication and its annexes, see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=2798&langId=en>

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=2799&langId=en>

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=2801&langId=en>

UNI europa detected a challenge to the committee, since important issues are often discussed, but sometimes time is wasted. Working methods have been adopted in the committee that don't lead to agreements in the short term. UNI europa mentioned that the Commission did not take the views of the committee into account on the regulatory environment and underlines the importance of the ICT sector especially regarding climate change. Investment in the telecommunications sector is a necessity, such as for true high-speed Internet, and both employers and unions agree on this.

The Commission (Mr. Tricart) welcomed the committee's activities on CSR, where it is possible to build on experiences. A timely consultation of sectoral social dialogue committees should be ensured in the future, for instance through committees' involvement in the impact assessments of the Commission. The next liaison forum in September will be dedicated to this topic, which will also pose a challenge with respect to the administrative capacity of the secretariats. The Commission also would welcome comments and proposals from the committee on a variety of issues, such as the 2010 Communication on Green Jobs, or the post-Lisbon strategy. In closing, Mr. Tricart called on the committee to build on its long history, and pointed out the common interest between the Commission and the social dialogue committee, since both have to justify the added value of the European level to their stakeholders and to the public.

The chair (Mr. Guillot) thanked the Commission for the support and expressed the hope that the SSDC will get more involved in the decision-making process in the future. Referring to the Commission's call to for reactions on the crisis, UNI europa mentioned that certain elements of the joint declaration on CSR can be used to address today's situation. UNI europa invited members to think about a possible contribution on the question of employment and its link to the crisis during the summer break.