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JOINT WORK PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

FOR THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL DIALOGUE OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

(2008 - 2011)

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The European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW), represents 2.3 million workers from 69 national trade unions of 27 countries.

The European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC), represents the employers from 32 national employers' federations of 25 countries.

Both organizations are recognised as a European social partner in the European social dialogue for the construction industry.

INTRODUCTION

The European social partners, EFBWW and FIEC confirm the importance of a strong and autonomous European social dialogue for the construction industry in order to develop a sustainable construction industry as encouraged in the Commission Communication on the future of the social dialogue (June 2002).

Within the framework of the European sectoral social dialogue both organisations have agreed on a joint work programme for the period 2008 - 2011. This work programme is indicative.

The joint work programme sets out a range of actions, agreed upon by the European social partners of the construction industry and focusing on the following four policy areas: employment, EU enlargement, health and safety and vocational training.

The social partners of the construction industry will seek, when possible, joint agreements on issues and developments which will affect the interests on the construction industry in Europe, and where the interest of both companies and workers are involved.

The joint work programme will be evaluated after two years (in 2010) by the EFBWW and FIEC.

I. EMPLOYMENT

EFBWW and FIEC underline the importance of a coherent European employment policy. Within the framework of the European Employment Strategy both organisations have identified several employment issues that will require joint actions, at European and national level. These are (1) flexicurity, (2) migration and cross-border mobility, (3) tackling undeclared work, (4) promoting genuine 'self employed' and combating bogus "self-employment" and (5) demographic trends.

1.1. Flexicurity.

The future debate on combining "flexibility" with "security" (flexicurity) concerns the European construction industry, therefore the debate will be carefully monitored by the EFBWW and FIEC, both organizations will:

- 1.1.1 investigate the situation concerning flexicurity in the different member states with a view to adopting a joint position.
- 1.1.2. Possibly elaborate a guide of best practices based on joint initiatives with proven positive results

1.2. Migration and cross-border mobility.

EFBWW and FIEC will take the necessary policy initiatives to achieve a positive form of mobility also in order to avoid mobility from being used for the purposes of unfair competition between companies in the national markets. At the same time, the EFBWW and FIEC will be vigilant in seeking to avoid a degradation in conditions of pay, employment and social protection. Cross-border mobility and migration trends will then also be monitored closely.

The EFBWW and FIEC will:

- 1.2.1. discuss the EU "examination and reflection" of the subsidiary liability;
- 1.2.2. update and complete the data in the existing joint database on "posting" so that the database is informative and so, effectively used by employers and workers.

1.3. Genuine self-employment and combating bogus self-employment

EFBWW and FIEC want that in all member states employed workers and self-employed workers must be distinguished. The criteria applied by the European Court of Justice should point the way in this area. At the same time, control measures and sanctions need to be tightened up in all member states. The EFBWW and FIEC are further demanding that the European Commission proposes a guidance for distinguishing self-employed from employed workers. The fine details and definitions are a matter for the national member states. The EFBWW and FIEC will:

- 1.3.1. discuss the outcome of the joint research project in the European social dialogue committee with the aim to conclude joint initiatives;

- 1.3.2 Propose if necessary appropriate measures to ensure the application of the joint initiatives.
- 1.3.3 Possibly organize a joint seminar to present the results of the research and the outcome of the social partners' discussion.

1.4. Demographic trends.

In order to respond appropriately to the demographic changes in the construction sector, in particular the "ageing" of the workforce and the difficulties to recruit young workers, in coordination with the "Training" and the "Employment" Working Parties, the EFBWW and FIEC will:

- 1.4.1. collect and disseminate examples of best practices on strategies and initiatives to recruit young people to the construction sector by enhancing the status of the occupations of the sector;
- 1.4.2. monitor closely the studies on this matter that will be undertaken by the European Commission (DG ENTR and DG EMPL);
- 1.4.3. possibly organise a joint seminar in order to discuss the outcome and the results of these studies.

II. EU ENLARGMENT

The European social partners of the construction industry regard the future enlargement of the EU as an important milestone for the social and economic development of the European construction industry. The EFBWW and FIEC wish to draw special attention to the often precarious socio-economic situation of the construction industry in the applicant countries.

EFBWW and FIEC will:

- 2.1. ensure a maximal participation of the national trade unions and employers' federation in the European social dialogue and its working groups for the construction industry;
- 2.2. encourage its member organisations to provide adequate instruments and assistance to their respective sister organisations to organise workers and employers in the best possible way, and to ensure that they become active advocates of the social dialogue;
- 2.3. ensure a follow up to the European conference on "promoting paritarian social funds in Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovak Republic".

III. HEALTH AND SAFETY

The EFBWW and FIEC see a continuing major need for action in the sphere of occupational health and safety in all construction activities. We also see this view confirmed in the research by the Dublin Foundation as well as in the new Community strategy on safety and health at work. Our joint activities in the years ahead will be strongly guided by the European initiatives. Furthermore, within our working party we will be focusing on the following key areas of action:

3.1 Promoting accident reduction programmes at national level

The EFBWW and FIEC will carry forward the work on the agreement on accident reduction programmes reached by them in Bilbao on 22/11/2004.

- 3.1.1 Practical procedures will be defined for the agreed key areas of action, so enabling the affiliated organisations to take concrete steps. These include better coordination of prevention measures at work.
- 3.1.2 The Guide to working at a height has proved very useful. Steps to improve its distribution should be taken.
- 3.1.3 One or more publications are to be brought out aimed at informing the affiliated organisations and other occupational health and safety actors and enabling them to organise related activities.
- 3.1.4 Also being looked into is how the experiences gained with the programme can be documented and the information made available to others.

3.2 Effective implementation of the European chemicals policy (REACH) for the construction sector

The European chemicals policy formulated via the REACH Regulation has major consequences for the construction sector, the firms and the individual workers. In order for implementation of this policy to be a success in terms of occupational health and safety, activities specific to the sectors concerned are needed

- 3.2.1 The EFBWW and FIEC, as European social partners for the construction industry, will press for sector-specific implementation of the REACH Regulation with an eye to the users and their information needs.
- 3.2.2 What the user needs above all is thorough information about the properties of substances and products, and how to use the products safely. Consequently, the EFBWW and FIEC will examine the feasibility of a project to create a tool for providing this information.
- 3.2.3 Under this project, an electronically based information tool which can be used in all European countries is to be developed in cooperation with the national prevention services in the construction sector and also the relevant manufacturers' organisations.

3.3 Sector-related activities under the new Community strategy for 2007 - 2012

The new Community strategy on health and safety at work is marked by a comprehensive view of factors relevant to occupational health and safety. Accordingly, the actual execution of the strategy and future activities are not spelled out in detail. References to the necessary concentration on sectors at particular risk also remain general in character. More detail will therefore need to be added in the coming years.

- 3.3.1 The EFBWW and FIEC see an express need for special measures tailored to the construction sector and will also formulate and demand such measures from the European Commission.
- 3.3.2 The elaboration of a guide on "Health & Safety management systems" is envisaged. The aim of such a guide is to promote a culture of H&S and to facilitate its practical application, in particular by SMEs.
- 3.3.3 The application of the occupational health and safety directives in the construction sector must be investigated more specifically. A conference to take stock of the implementation and compliance with these directives should be organised.
- 3.3.4 The specific consequences of certain social developments for the health of construction workers need to be studied or previous research continued. This chiefly concerns the demographic changes, new forms of employment and labour migration in its different forms.

3.4 Ongoing activities in the framework on the social partner agreement on stress (psycho-social hazards)

A significant increase in stress-related illnesses is being confirmed by reports from the sickness insurance funds and from academic studies. Even though stress related illness of a person is normally related to different aspects of psycho-mental stress, like stress at work, stress due to family or personal worries, stress due to traffic, etc. EFBWW and FIEC see the need to identify those aspects which are work-related. On this basis, specific proposals for an improved well being at the workplace could be formulated. This is the idea of the general agreements of the European Social Partners, at cross-sectoral and sectoral level. FIEC and the EFBWW want to take the following steps concerning this agreement :

- 3.4.1. For a better understanding of the phenomenon, EFBWW and FIEC will collect and provide information on topics like.
 - Concepts of psycho-social hazards
 - Tools to measure and assess psycho-social hazards
 - Prevention activities
- 3.4.2. EFBWW and FIEC will inform each other about national prevention activities and will examine thoroughly whether a documentation of good practices is worthwhile.

IV. VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The European social partners of the construction industry agree that a vocational training policy is one of the most important instruments for developing a sustainable construction

industry and for facilitating the mobility across the EU. They also recognise that in this area the exchange of best practices can provide a significant added value to their respective members.

4.1 Recognition of qualifications

FIEC and EFBWW will:

- 4.1.1. define and undertake initiatives aiming at promoting and facilitating the recognition of qualifications across the EU, in particular in the fields of :
 - a) European Qualification Framework (EQF) : on the basis of existing and on-going studies the feasibility of a "Sectoral Qualification Framework" for the construction sector will be examined, as well as its practical application for the profession of "mason"; according to the outcome the practical application to further professions can be envisaged;
 - b) European Credit for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) : FIEC and EFBWW will examine the possible practical application in the construction sector of this European system for the transfer, accumulation and recognition of learning outcomes;
 - c) Europass : FIEC and EFBWW will examine the possible practical application in the construction sector of this Community framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences.

4.2 Demographic changes

On the basis of existing and on-going studies and in coordination with the "Training" and the "Employment" Working Parties,, FIEC and EFBWW will:

- 4.2.1. examine the implications of demographic changes (difficulty in hiring and maintaining young people, lack of skilled labour, population getting older,...) in training and education needs. The following actions will be envisaged:
 - a) feasibility of a study at European level;
 - b) elaboration of publication presenting "best practices";
 - c) development of an on-line game for young people (cfr. example on the following website : <http://www.ffbatiment.fr/information-batiment/2-Un-choix-pour-les-jeunes.htm>).

4.3 Energy efficiency

The growing demand for energy efficient buildings has significant implications on the training needs and policies, in order to allow companies and their workers to cope with such demand.

FIEC and EFBWW will:

- d) 4.3.1. facilitate and promote the exchange of experiences and best practices and examine the needs for EU actions in this area.

4.4 Thematic visits

With the aim of promoting the exchange of best practices on some specific issues mentioned in this working programme, FIEC and EFBWW will:

- 4.1. examine the feasibility of organizing joint thematic visits in some of the Member States.