



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG

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

European Social Dialogue Committee in Local and Regional Government 2006/2007 Work Programme (adopted 31.1.06)

1. Objectives

The Committee's work programme covering the years 2006-2007 builds on the results achieved with the previous bi-annual work programme. It aims to promote effective interaction between the national and European levels of social dialogue and to strengthen the role of the social partners in shaping developments regarding employment and public services provision in local and regional governments.

The Committee's new work programme also aims at facilitating the integration of the local and regional public sectors of the new Member States and of the candidate countries by promoting the active participation of the social partner organisations from the countries concerned in the joint activities.

2. Themes for Action

In line with the objectives set out above, CEMR and EPSU have agreed to structure their actions in the years 2006 and 2007 around four broad and cross-cutting themes, which are listed below. Furthermore, and subject to agreement of the social partners, the Committee may address other issues of relevance to the sector that are not identified in the present document.

(a) Strengthening social dialogue in local and regional government in the new Member States and in candidate countries

The activities undertaken under the same heading of the previous work programme (joint study and conference organised with the financial support of the European Commission) helped to identify existing social dialogue structures and the common problems faced by national social partner organisations of local and regional government in the new Member States and in the candidate countries. Based on the result of these activities, EPSU and CEMR will organise in 2006-2007 workshops targeted at their affiliates from the countries concerned and aimed at strengthening their capacity by:

- Showcasing best practices of bipartite social dialogue in local and regional government in the EU Member States, e.g. how membership has been structured, the content of collective agreements and the types of services provided by the national organisations to regions/municipalities and their members;
- Exchanging experience on specific problems in relation to e.g. public sector restructuring, decentralisation, improving working conditions and the skills of employees, increasing efficiency in public services provision.

(b) Supporting the reform process in local and regional government

Many local and regional governments across the EU have introduced a series of management reforms aimed at improving the quality and efficiency of local public services. These reforms include investing in the quality of employment in the sector, e.g. through workers' information, consultation and participation procedures, investment in

the skills and education of employees, positive working conditions and high standards of health and safety in the workplace.

In order to support this process, both CEMR and EPSU will address at local and regional government level the following principles, included in the 2005-2008 EU Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs:

Improving the adaptability and flexibility of employers and employees, including through the promotion and dissemination of new adaptable forms of work organisation, with a view to improve quality and productivity at work (Guideline n°21),

Developing skills through training and life-long learning (Guideline n°23),

Anticipating and managing the consequences of demographic changes, through the maximisation of employment opportunities for young people, women and older workers (Guideline n°18). Actions in the above-mentioned areas will build on the EPSU/CEMR statement adopted on 19 May 2005 on the European Employment Strategy².

It will also complement relevant initiatives taken by the European cross-sectoral social partners (UNICE/UEAPME, ETUC, CEEP) notably in the fields of life-long learning³ and active ageing as well as take account of forthcoming EU initiatives of relevance to their sector, such as the European Commission Communication on the Demographic Future of Europe⁴ and the Communication on a new EU Strategy for health and safety at work (2007-2013).

(c) Promoting diversity and equality in local and regional government

CEMR and EPSU will contribute to the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All by undertaking joint actions in support of the effective implementation of the existing EU equality and anti-discrimination directives. In the field of the fight against discrimination, EPSU and CEMR will look more specifically at measures to attract and retain certain specific groups (e.g. people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and third-country migrants) into local and regional public administration and services.

Action to promote gender equality will in turn focus on benchmarking experience and promoting the development of equality plans in local and regional government.

(d) Evaluating experience in various forms of service provision

Both EPSU and CEMR consider that local and regional government should have a high degree of autonomy in determining the content and form of the services they provide. Local and regional authorities provide public services in many different ways: in-house/self provision, various forms of municipal companies, inter-communal cooperation, public-private partnerships (PPPs), outsourcing, privatisation, etc.

Under this part of the programme, the social partners aim to exchange experience on the various forms of service provision and to reflect on recent developments, with particular attention to the situation in the new Member States. For this purpose, the parties plan to commission a background research study with the support of the European Commission. The aim of this study will be to identify core services delivered at local and regional level by public administrations, using criteria of general interest in the assessment of various forms of service provision, and to highlight the common problems that the social partners are facing in the sector.