



FINAL VERSION (EPSU AND CEMR)

Social Dialogue Committee for Local and Regional Government Work programme 2011-2013

A. Objectives

Represent employers and trade unions in the local and regional government sector in a social dialogue as intended in the Treaties, have discussions and make joint agreements on issues of common interest;

AND

Strengthen the European social dialogue in the local and regional government sector consistent with the recognition of the general principle of local and regional autonomy conferred by the Lisbon Treaty by:

- organising activities to maintain and reinforce the social dialogue between employer and trade union organisations in local and regional government in the Member States and candidate countries,
- promoting quality local and regional government public services based on values of social and environmental responsibility and accountability and exchange information on labour market issues and promote the interests and good practice in the local and regional government sector,
- responding to consultations and other initiatives by the Commission, Parliament and Council ,being pro-active and influencing legislation and policy in the fields of employment, training, social protection, labour law, health and safety related issues,
- developing and taking agreed positions on issues of policy at the European level for the purposes of dialogue with the European institutions.

B. Tools

1. The social dialogue meetings (4 working groups and 2 plenary meetings per year).
2. One EU funded project per year (next one in 2012 on one of the below themes, to be drafted 2011 and submitted in autumn 2011).
3. Active twinning / networking between Committee members
4. EPSU/CEMR secretariat presence and participation in national activities

C. Themes for Action 2011 – 2013

The work programme covers the three year period from 2011 to 2013. A three years programme gives the Social Dialogue Committee better opportunities to plan, complete and follow-up on the priorities for the period. Each year the Committee will review the programme and make any necessary adjustments as well as agree the activities / outputs for the following year,

1) Economic crisis and its impact on local and regional government

In our last work programme we had several exchanges on the impact of the economic crisis and agreed two joint statements, mainly intended to influence the EU political response. The crisis is not over and we shall continue to work on this together. Furthermore, we realise that there will be growing demands for public investment linked to the ageing of the population and climate change. Indeed the Commission has recently called for 3 trillion euro investment into the energy sector, a large amount of which is expected to come from the taxpayer. Against this background, EPSU and CEMR will:

- Look into the impact of the crisis in the area of employment, (re-)organisation and adaptation of the administration and services, through collecting statistics and information from each participating country. An initiative could be undertaken to see how local authorities (and are) evaluating this impact, for example on gender equality.
- Assess (through a joint study) how the crisis is fuelling the development of alternative forms of work, i.e., temporary agency work, fixed-terms contracts, ‘false’ self-employment and consider the impact of this on quality of employment and services.
- Collection of ideas / examples of measures being taken at local and regional government level on cost saving and investment in the future
- Promote in the new system of economic governance a balanced reflection of sustainability of public finance in terms of both income and expenditure

2) The “Future of Work”

In 2007 CEMR and EPSU commissioned the Working Lives Research Institute to carry out a study on the reform in local government across Europe.¹ The study noted that “*public authorities need to be in a better position to monitor and evaluate the different ways of providing local services and to assess the different risks involved, for example regarding the difficulties of defining quality criteria in public contracts, and indeed problems that arise from fragmented procurement processes.*” There are many good reasons why public authorities might chose not to put public services on the market, but there is seldom discussion on this. In the Committee’s conclusions we note this bias against public sector delivery and conclude that “*the study and discussion in the social dialogue committee should pave the way for further dialogue at different levels on:*

- *The direction of reform*
- *The role of social dialogue in change processes*
- *The ‘pros’ and cons’ of different forms of service delivery*
- *The concept of quality of service.”*

¹ “Supporting the reform process in local and regional government: Joint evaluation of the experience in different forms of service provision.” <http://www.epsu.org/a/4160>

The Committee also had an exchange in 2010 on increasing efficiency/productivity through promoting well-being at work (CEMR-EPSU workshop, May 2010) both EPSU and CEMR are interested to exchange ideas around the “future of the workplace”. EPSU and CEMR can build on these activities (and also bear them in mind when addressing upcoming EU policy initiatives, for example The Single Market Act and other 2020 initiative -see below).

Key issues will be:

Health and safety and working environment

The main issue for us will be to implement our third party violence guidelines.

- In 2011 we will carry out our project with the other sectors on the implementation of EU project on third party violence guidelines (2010-2011). This will comprise 3 workshops + conference.
- After this we will assess progress in implementation (2011-2013)

Equality

In each EPSU and CEMR’s previous work programmes equality has featured as a central element. As well as following up our guidelines on gender equality action plans, we need also to continue our work on non-discrimination and integration of migrants. Actions and outcomes could include:

- ✓ Follow-up CEMR and EPSU Equality Guidelines: look at the way to address issues highlighted in guidelines;
- ✓ Organize national roundtables on Equality: scoping exercise of what policies exist in our member countries and the gaps that could be filled; recommendations based on the outcome of the roundtables/link with CEMR Equality charter and EPSU policy;
- ✓ Migration: looking at the recruitment policies and practices, training for migrant workers in public administrations and adaptation of services for migrants, exchanging views and mapping of migration stereotypes: depending on the outcome with the possibility of a common anti-racism campaign;
- ✓ Exchange on positive measures in the workplace to recruit and retain migrant workers and vulnerable groups (youth and older workers);

Skills and life-long learning

The recently published “New skills and Jobs” Flagship Initiative COM(2010) 682 final/2 encourages adaptation of the workforce to the changing environment: e.g.: ICT and technological changes, Lifelong Learning, adapting of skills in public administration and mapping the potential skills needed in various EU Member States. Skills development is of great interest to both EPSU and CEMR. As a result, the Social Dialogue Committee will look into various options for concrete outcomes in this field.

Climate change and the ‘greening of the workplace’

The committee will also explore the issue of climate change and the consequences for local and regional government.

3) Communication on the Single Market Act (SMA) COM(2010) 608

The Communication sets out 50 policy proposals, and comments are sought by the Commission by end February 2011. Key proposals for EPSU and CEMR include public procurement and proposals on social services of general interest (SSGI):

- ✓ Review the procurement directives (2011-2012). Here we will focus in particular on building on the EC social procurement guide and exploring possibilities to clarify and strengthen the EU's approach the integration of social (and environmental) criteria into procurement. We will consider the possibility to organise a multi-sectoral workshop with sectors (textiles, catering, security, cleaning) who have developed a guide relevant to their sectors, look at the positive and negative aspects. From this we may be in a position to develop, with experts in procurement from both parties, a common guide / recommendations for our sector on social criteria in procurement. A common training initiative may also be a possibility.
- ✓ Legislative initiative on concessions (2011). The evaluation of the existing situation has yet to be finalized. We would expect such an evaluation and any subsequent impact assessment of new proposals should take into account social (especially employment) and quality aspects.
- ✓ The Commission aims to publish (2011?) a communication and 'other measures' on public services, to include a 'toolkit' on financing, procurement, public cooperation, evaluation, and universal access. An early exchange with the Commission should be organised on this to explore in more detail any relevance for our Social Dialogue Committee. This proposal in the Single Market Act links with the current discussion on Social Services of General Interest (SSGI) and the development of EU quality frameworks. We will insist a link is made with the Commission's plans to implement the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, set out in COM (2010)573, which states that all "*EU legislative and decision making...must be in full conformity with the Charter*".

Both the Single Market Act and the Communication on industrial policy COM (2010) 614 refer to a forthcoming (2011) consultation of social partners on a European framework for restructuring. Access to training and skill developments will be one of the key elements.

More generally, the Committee should develop expertise in its ability to assess EU policy initiatives and the possible impact on (and input from) local and regional government, thereby feeding into the Commission's own impact assessment process (and also 'fitness tests').

4) "Innovation flagship" of the Europe 2020 strategy

With the recently published Europe 2020 strategy (comprising 3 priorities, 5 targets and 7 "flagships") the Union has outlined its goals for the next 10 years. CEMR and EPSU are monitoring closely the various Flagship Initiatives which are being published, and looking for ways of involving the local and regional government administration. Alongside the public services elements of the Single Market Act, of particular relevance for the modernization of the local and regional government sector is the "Innovation flagship" COM(2010)546. The innovation flagship notes that "*Against ...backdrop on fiscal austerity, the public sector needs to innovate more than ever*" And it contains a number of proposals to support this, including:

- ✓ European Social Innovation projects, backed with ESF for social entrepreneurs and the public and third sectors
- ✓ A research programme, to include "public sector innovation scoreboard"
- ✓ A proposal to develop the 'knowledge economy' and labour market strategy for caring sector
- ✓ Proposals to support innovation partnerships on climate change, water, quality of life of ageing population

An early exchange with the Commission should be organised on this to explore these proposals in more detail and our possible involvement.

5) Sectoral Social Dialogue

The Commission has as different EU Presidencies emphasized the development of the social dialogue and stressed that there should be support for social dialogue both by the Member States and the EU. The social partners should be empowered to fully play their role under changed circumstances. The social dialogue should be promoted, while respecting the diversity of national solutions and principles like transparency and democracy. The Committee will also focus on the life of the Committee with the purpose of strengthening the Committee; for instance through more participants and more active participation in the meetings and decisions. This could be explored in various ways:

- CEMR and EPSU need to continue to strengthen participation in the Committee and to make the link between EU and national/local social dialogue.
- Our members in the different countries should be encouraged to draw up national plans setting out on a regular basis what has been done in the area of social dialogue, what they see as important, how trade union - employer representatives relations are developing, how they see their involvement in the EU social dialogue.
- CEMR and EPSU must explore options how to systematically assess the impact of the Committee's work in terms of the follow-up and implementation of agreed positions.