



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG

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

SECTORAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE CIVIL AVIATION

Meeting of the Ground Handling Working Group 26 June 2007 Concise minutes (adopted on 12 October 2007)

The meeting was chaired by Ms Sillanpää, replacing Ms Durst (DG EMPL/F.1).

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with the following modifications and additions:

- P 4 should read **ETF presentation of a position paper on a possible revision of the ground handling Directive, discussion of a joint contribution to DG DG TREN**
- A new point should be added **Review of next work programme in view of its adoption at the July Plenary meeting**

2. Adoption of the minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of 7 February 2007 were adopted with the following modifications of the footnote on page 2 (EFT request): "Following the meeting, ETF and the DG EMPL representative discussed the principles for observers' participation in sectoral dialogue committee meetings. The Commission reminded of the following rules: Observers may participate provided that both sides of industry have agreed to this, prior to the meeting. Observers do not make formal statements. They are not reimbursed by the Commission."

3. Information on the joint project on training and qualification in the ground handling sector

ETF informed that the project application supported by both sides had been accepted by the Commission. The project would run between September 2007 and September 2008, starting with a survey on best practices at different levels, to be presented at a conference in Spain 16-17 June 2008 (80 participants) where a joint statement on education and training would also be adopted. Seven countries would be included in the survey. Proposed countries were ES, DE, FR, UK, ET, SE and IT since ETF affiliates in these countries were particularly active on this issue. A steering group would be set up to monitor the progress of work, starting with the

selection of a contractor for the study. The tender specifications had been included in the grant application and would be sent to the working group members. Provisional dates would be: launch of tender 17 September, reception of tenders by 5 October when the contractor would be selected, 12 October first meeting of the steering group.

The **employers** considered that the parameters should be clarified in the terms of reference and not left to the consultant. If positive/negative effects of the Directive were to be illustrated, another mix of countries might be more appropriate. It could also be interesting to examine emerging global players versus local, traditional players.

The steering group would be set up the week after the selection of the contractor. For the terms of reference, it was decided to send in comments to the draft by mid-August and to agree on a new text by the beginning of September.

4. ETF presentation of a position paper on a possible revision of the ground handling Directive, discussion of a joint contribution to DG TREN

ETF introduced its position paper stating that social consequences of further liberalisation would need to be tackled by the social partners, as described in the first part of the document.

The **employers** considered that the views on further liberalisation differed, even within organisations. Both operating costs and guaranteeing the proper functioning of airports would need to be addressed. While account should be taken of employment and safety conditions, this was not the objective of the proposal. The ECORYS report to be published after summer would state that both salaries and safety had been affected although this was denied by some companies. Also, independent actors were taking over qualified staff.

A common denominator was the lack of correct implementation of the Directive in various member States. A complaint body should be set up. Furthermore, it could be noted that increased competition did not automatically lead to lower prices.

ETF agreed that the situation was worsening in spite of some good examples. Common problems were unattractive salary levels and difficulties to find qualified staff.

The **employers** considered that wages were not the main issue, but rather the increased flexibility requirements, both with regard to tasks and to working-time arrangements.

ETF felt that the main issue was productivity. The objective of the Directive was to open up for competition and make business. Business was also in the interest of the workers. However, it was necessary to examine the limits. Flexibility must be compatible with safety and social aspects. This was what the flexicurity debate was all about.

The **employers** stated that it would be interesting to explore to what extent developments were linked to other aspects than liberalisation (on-line check-in ...). Also, safety incidents would need to be documented.

DG TREN reminded that the upcoming report would deal with aspects related to quality, employment and safety/security in the framework of the Directive. However, the study would not fundamentally question the direction of the Directive. Nor would it be the only basis for Commission action. A new database comprising EU27 would contribute to the global picture. The timing of the ETF paper was good but it should also include clear evidence of the negative effects of liberalisation, such as reporting on real occurrences of safety incidents (insurance claims ...). The security issue was very high on the agenda and would be further discussed, also with regard to the definition of the concept: actual occurrences of people getting injured or killed, versus the feeling of insecurity (for instance engendered by changes).

Both sides agreed that safety incidents often are not reported, since companies wish to keep their contracts and workers their jobs. The employers suggested the setting-up of a whistle-blower system, possibly by trade unions (cfr pilots). Both sides stated their support to the Just Culture approach and proposed to examine how this could be implemented for ground handling. This would be further discussed in the context of the July plenary meeting and next year's work programme.

With regard to a possible joint contribution, the **employers** were not willing to agree to a joint paper on the basis of the ETF contribution, in particular since certain organisations were not represented at the meeting.

5. Analysis of the EU ground handling tender process and selection criteria, with a focus on the social dimension

Mr Schmitz recalled that clarifications were needed with regard to the Directive's provisions on tendering, in particular as concerned transparency into the selection process and the possibility to include social considerations in the tender specifications. He proposed that both sides should identify which provisions they considered as open to divergent interpretation, as the basis for a joint contribution to DG TREN. The idea would not be to produce a position paper but solid arguments based on implementation and case law.

ETF agreed to the idea, its key issue being social considerations in tender procedures.

DG TREN agreed that clarifications would be useful on certain points. A contribution from the social partners would be welcome. A possible interpretative Communication would not, however, change the direction of the current Directive.

Both sides agreed to the principle of identifying examples and working jointly on a contribution. This would be further discussed under the point of next year's work programme.

6. Analysis of the effects on safety of sub-contracting 'en cascade' in view of a possible joint statement

The social partners stated that this point should be based on a contribution from AEA which had committed to produce a text. They asked the Commission to clarify what rules would apply in case an organisation regularly did not take part in the committee meetings. The Commission considered that this point could usefully be discussed at a secretariat meeting to which all organisations would be invited.

It was decided to get back to the point on subcontracting *en cascade* at a later stage, once a document had been provided.

7. Review of next work programme in view of its adoption at the July Plenary meeting

The following points were agreed for the next work programme of the ground handling working group, and would be proposed at the July plenary meeting:

- Joint project on training and qualifications in the ground handling sector
- Joint identification of key issues in order to clarify certain provisions of the current ground handling Directive
- Joint analysis of the effects of sub-contracting "en cascade" in view of a possible joint statement
- Joint economic and social analysis of current trends of the ground handling supply chain

8. AOB

No further points were discussed.

Participants

<u>Employers</u> Ms Holve (ACI Europe) Mr Vermeir (IACA) Observer: Mr Schmitz (IAHA)	<u>Workers</u> Mr Ascenzi (ETF) Mr Ballestero (ETF) Ms Belenguer (ETF) Mr Carmona (ETF) Mr Collier (ETF) Mr Mansi (ETF) Mr Ramel (ETF) Mr Sekai (ETF)
<u>European Commission</u> Ms Sillanpää (DG EMPL/F.1) Mr Ktenas (DG TREN/F.4)	