
Social Dialogue Committee for Local and Regional Government Work programme 2008-2010

A. Objectives

- represent employers and trade unions in the local and regional government sector in a social dialogue as intended in the Treaty, have discussions and make joint agreements in issues of common interest,
- organise activities to strengthen social dialogue between employer and trade union organizations in local and regional government in the Member States and particularly in the new Member States,
- promote quality local and regional government public services based on values of accountability and social responsibility and exchange information on labour market issues and promote the interests and good practice in the local and regional sector,
- respond to consultations and other initiatives by the Commission, Parliament and council and be pro-active and influence legislation and policy in the fields of employment, training, social protection, labour law, health and safety related issues,
- take agreed positions on issues of policy at the European level for the purposes of dialogue with the European institutions.

B. Themes for Action 2008 – 2010 and priorities for 2008

The work programme covers the three year period from 2008 to 2010. A three years programme gives the Social Dialogue Committee better opportunities for planning, complete and follow up on the priorities for the period. Halfway in the period the Committee will take stock on the work in order to make eventual changes in the planned activities and priorities.

1. Promoting Social dialogue and contribute to the Commission's aim to strengthen social dialogue in the new member states and candidate countries

The commission has as different EU Presidencies emphasized the development of the social dialogue and 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.

CEMR and EPSU fully support the Commission's view in this respect and want to underline the fact that the social partners are autonomous and are hereby willing and interested in promoting the social dialogue in the new member States by informing about social dialogue practices and common objectives at EU level.

CEMR and EPSU plan to organize a workshop on social dialogue in connection with a meeting of the social dialogue committee placed in one of the new member states in 2008 with the financial support of the Commission. Other joint activities will also be discussed and launched during the period of 2008 – 2010.

The Committee will appoint a joint working group with representatives for the new member states and involved organisations for this first priority issue with the purpose to discuss and plan the activities.

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.

2. Evaluating experience in various forms of service provision

In 2007 CEMR and EPSU commissioned the Working Lives Research Institute to carry out a project on reform in local government across Europe. The main focus of the project is change in service delivery. The first phase of the project and subject of their report are the main trends in changes to service delivery and drivers for change across Europe. The project concentrates on developments in 10 states which have member organisations in CEMR and EPSU.

The project will run until mid 2008 and thereafter CEMR and EPSU will evaluate the research results for a discussion on the possibility of further step in this joint project.

The steering group of the Committee will discuss and plan eventual further step for later discussions and decisions at a plenary meeting at the end of 2008.

3. Harassment and violence at work

CEMR and EPSU have had a first exchange with the Commission on the possibility of multi-sectoral cooperation on third-party violence in follow-up to the cross-sectoral agreement on this subject. The Commission will organize a technical seminar in early 2008 and the outcome of this seminar and the on-going discussions between CEMR and EPSU will decide on which path to take in this matter.

The Committee will reserve a one working group meeting in spring 2008 in case of positive development in the multi-sectoral discussion on third-party violence or alternative to expose the problem of third-party violence in the sector, the groups it concerns and to find best practices.

4. Gender quality and reconciliation of work and family life

As well as giving follow-up to guidelines on gender equality plans, the Committee would consider other specific issues such as “work-life balance”. This issue contains several different elements and need therefore a thorough discussion to point out which elements the Committee wants to be a part of the work the coming period.

CEMR and EPSU have both responded to the first-stage consultation of the European social partners on reconciliation of professional, private and family life (December 2006). The sectoral committee is prepared to contribute to the further debate on measures to achieve a better reconciliation of work and family life.

The Committee will appoint a joint working group with the purpose to discuss and follow up the guidelines on gender equality plans and to discuss and plan activities on reconciliation of work and family life.

C. Responding to consultations and other initiatives

- Lisbon strategy.

In 2008 the Commission will launch a new cycle of the Lisbon strategy including new Integrated guidelines for Growth and Jobs and new National Reform Programmes. A follow-up of the development of European guidelines on flexicurity will be an issue for coming discussions between CEMR and EPSU.

- Lifelong Learning (III).

The cross-sectoral social partners agreed a framework of actions on III and may well negotiate an agreement on this subject. A recent Action Plan from the Commission on life-long learning noted that access to III is not increasing, and indeed there are signs that it has fallen during the last two years.

- Active inclusion.

The European Commission has launched the second stage consultation on active inclusion of those furthest from the labour market. The active inclusion concept put forward by the European Commission, consists of an integrated approach to help those most in need. To note, the cross-sectoral social partners may negotiate an agreement on integration of disadvantaged groups into the labour market.

- Promoting diversity and equality in local and regional government.

2008 will be the European Year of Multi-Cultural dialogue and this could provide a framework for an initiative from the sectoral social dialogue committee in view of that the cross-sectoral social partners may negotiate an autonomous framework agreement on integration of disadvantaged groups on the labour market. CEMR and EPSU are currently in contact with the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions regarding a network they have established on the integration of migrants (CLIP) bringing together 25+ European cities. One of the themes of the network is diversity employment policies of local and regional government, and an interim report on this is expected in February 2008.