



## EUROPEAN SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE FOR THE POSTAL SECTOR WORKING GROUP ON TRAINING AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

### JOINT DECLARATION ON TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN THE POSTAL SECTOR

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#### Introduction

- The development of skills represents one of the essential levers for implementing the Lisbon strategy (2000) that aims at Europe becoming « *the most competitive and most dynamic knowledge economy of the world, capable of sustainable economic growth alongside a quantitative and qualitative improvement in employment and greater social cohesion* ».
- Defined at the European Council meeting of Barcelona in 2002, the « Education and Training 2010 » programme has defined the aims, and supplied the general framework of the European policies in this field. The declaration of Copenhagen in 2002, supplemented by the declaration of Maastricht in 2004, specifies the priorities with respect to professional training, in particular stressing the importance of transparency, information, and orientation, the recognition of skills and qualifications, and quality assurance.
- The social partners of the postal sector take these objectives into account, and consider the development of skills as an essential factor in adapting and developing postal activities and to facilitate enlargement process. Several good practice examples have been selected since 2000. These selections have been used, in 2000 and 2001, in workshops for exchanges, and round-tables, as well as in publications. A web site was set up in order to maintain and to share in a wider basis all the results of this work. In 2004, a contribution has been made by the Social Dialogue Committee for the postal sector in the annual report of the framework of actions on life long learning of UNICE [Union of Industries in the European Community]/UEAPME [European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises], CEEP [European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest], ETUC [European Trade Union Confederation] signed in March 2002.

- This joint declaration takes its place in extending these initiatives. Highlighting the strategic role of training and the development of skills in the evolution of the sector, this declaration deals with:
  - The general context of change within the postal sector
  - The contribution of training and the development of skills in the success of the evolutions
  - The orientations proposed by the Social Dialogue Committee for defining and implementing the policies on training and the development of skills within the postal sector
  - The follow-up

## **1- CONTEXT**

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- The postal sector is one of the largest employers in Europe (1.8 million workers). It also represents an essential historical role in the economic and social life of Europe.
- The postal sector has, for several years, been faced with a movement towards fundamental transformation.
- This transformation is the consequence of the on going liberalisation of postal activities on the one hand, where the gradual opening-up to competition has been organised by two successive directives with the perspective of a possible full liberalisation in 2009.
- But it is also on the other hand the consequence of the introduction of competing new technologies, the development of which in the field of communication constitutes a major threat to the activity of traditional mail.
- The postal operators have adapted their activities and their organisation in order to confront these new challenges.
- One of the methods of this adaptation consists of broadening the scope of their activities, by diversification in particular in the express, parcels, transportation and logistic sector.
- But another method of adaptation is also - to an equal degree - to strengthen and develop the traditional activities of the sector.
  - Firstly, to modernise the infrastructures and the methods of handling, carriage and distribution of mail so as to improve the competitiveness and the quality of the services provided.
  - Secondly, to enrich the range of products and services offered, in the different fields, by relying on the use of new technologies, and by drawing, in particular, on acquired knowledge and on the proximity developed with the consumers.
- In all cases, the emphasis is on developing customer satisfaction, in particular through the use of appropriate and flexible organisations that favour fast and personalised response according to need.

## **2. - THE CONTRIBUTION OF TRAINING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS.**

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- In this context of the in-depth and sustainable change of the sector, the development of skills in a life long learning perspective must be considered as a priority investment.
  - The development of skills helps and supports the orientation of employees towards new activities and, in particular, the developing activities. In this way it assists the redeployments of activities and the professional mobility, aiming also at facilitating the transferability of skills.
  - It is also vital for constant adaptation at the place of work. In particular, it helps the learning of new technologies, and in this way supports the modernisation and diversification of the postal activities.

- The development of skills allows the polyvalence of employees, and their autonomy, to be improved: it helps the setting in place of flexible and responsive work organisations, always favouring rewarding professional paths.
  - Training and the development of skills can also contribute very directly to developing a culture and behaviour directed towards customer satisfaction.
- Training and the development of skills are, therefore, key factors of permanent adaptation of the activities, and of improving the flexibility of the organisations.
  - They also constitute an essential component of the employability of staff, and of strengthening staff motivation.

### **3. - ORIENTATIONS PROPOSED FOR DEFINING AND IMPLEMENTING POLICIES CONCERNING TRAINING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS WITHIN THE POSTAL SECTOR**

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- Several selections of good practices have allowed the policies and practices to be clearly shown which favour the development of skills according to conditions adapted to the needs of companies, and to the aspirations of staff. In 2006, these selections have been supplemented by a study carried out by the employers on the evolution of skills development needs and practices within the postal sector.
  - On this basis, the European social dialogue committee for the postal sector considers that the following six orientations may be regarded as a priority for assisting the evolutions of the sector
- The first orientation aims at **narrowly connecting training and the development of skills with the professional activities**. In particular, this involves promoting work organisations that encourage the polyvalence and the improvement of qualifications.
  - The second orientation aims at **promoting the validation of training and the recognition of skills**, in particular when these skills have been acquired through the professional activity, according to identical or closely-linked terms to those in the external labour market.
  - The third orientation aims at **staff being broadly and continuously informed concerning training, the development of skills and professional career paths**. The implementation of this orientation relies, in particular, on a high level of management involvement, with the active support of services specialised in training.
- The fourth orientation aims at **sharing the responsibility of the development of skills between the company and staff**. In particular, this orientation assumes assistance in training being accessible outside working hours. This orientation underlines the role of social dialogue in training and skills development issues
- The fifth orientation aims at **developing the anticipation of needs**. This involves encouraging management forecasting practices, and improving communication on evolutions that can be foreseen.
  - The sixth orientation aims at **diversifying learning and skills development approaches**. By mixing several forms of learning and using notably the possibilities given by the new technologies, such a diversified approach allows to adapt the actions close to specific needs and improves in this way the efficiency of learning and skills development.

#### 4. - FOLLOW-THROUGH

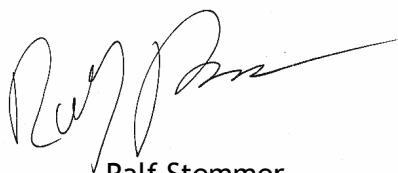
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The signatories agree that a review of this declaration takes place after one year. During this year there will be the following actions :

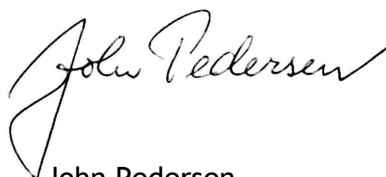
- A collection of contemporary good practices from employers and trade unions linked to the six orientations will be made.
- The social partners at national level will be invited to take the orientations into account.

A report will be made to summarise the results of the actions taken. The report will be discussed and validated by the Social Dialogue Committee for the Postal Sector.

Brussels, 22 June 2006



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