

EUROPEAN SOCIAL DIALOGUE FOR THE POSTAL SECTOR WORKING GROUP TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Joint Declaration on Matching Skills and Jobs in the European Postal Sector

Context and main challenges

The liberalisation of the European postal market and the competition faced by the National Postal Operators (NPOs), coupled with the ongoing decline of mail volumes, has resulted in deep and continuing transformation of the sector. The NPOs have adapted their activities to the new context introducing new technologies and diversifying in products and services to better meet customers' needs and to face the changes. In most cases this has been done with the involvement of the trade unions who have recognised the need for positive action to challenge the threat in employment and responded positively. The Social Dialogue has in most cases accompanied the changes still playing an important role in this respect.

For the postal sector this evolving situation could mean, on the one hand, the creation of new jobs while developing the need for new competences. On the other hand, that the classic activities of the sector have been deeply impacted upon and have been required to adapt to the new context.

This situation, with particular regards to the impact on jobs and skills and the evolution of training programmes, has always been, and continues to be, at the core of the analysis, research and work of the SDC "Training & Skills Development Working Group", since its creation. For this research the Declaration of Copenhagen was the basis of the Training working group that concentrated its attention on skills and jobs considered as key for the sector.

The SDC Joint Declaration Training and Skills Development of 2006 took into consideration the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy. It identified six orientations to more clearly define and support the implementation of policies to develop skills and competences aligned with new Jobs.

In this context, the initiative of the European Commission "New Skills for new Jobs" (2008) is to be considered as a key reference for the SDC Training working group. In the years 2012-2013, by means of the project funded by the European Commission "Matching Skills and Jobs in the postal Sector: Reflections of the European Social partners", the challenges of skills' needs and skills' and jobs' matching in key areas of the sector, from an employer and trade union perspective were examined on the basis of a change management approach. With this study, the key competences required in new and classic activities of the sector have been investigated. Analysis was also undertaken of

the situation concerning competence certification and their transferability within and outside the sector.

Main shared findings

The project of 2013 “Matching Skills and Jobs in the European postal sector: Reflections of the European Social Partners” enabled the Social Partners the opportunity to collect and share a number of practices implemented by postal operators and trade unions.

The practices and experiences discussed show that the Social Partners are aware of the increased need to follow, adapt and enhance the competences of employees in the current context. In this sense, it is essential to further develop tools to better anticipate skills and jobs needed in the future. At the same time, in view of the diversity of these experiences, Social Partners recognise that a single solution, a single approach to skills and jobs matching cannot be applied for all the European NPOs. The project has also highlighted the need to continue investigating the matter with particular regard to areas of the sector where changes and development could be of more specific importance.

This project, in the framework of the work which has been conducted for several years by the European Social partners, has enabled both parties to draw some shared key findings and principles:

- The social partners of the European postal sector, perhaps more than in the past because of the pace of change in the sector, are aware of the importance of skills needs anticipation, skills and jobs matching, training and re-skilling policies and programmes to face the changes in the sector. The parties also encourage early engagement and involvement of social partners in this work. This awareness goes hand in hand with the diversification process within NPOs’ where new services and products have been developed in order to respond to the changing market conditions and customers’ needs. The adaptation of skills and competences can be considered as an essential answer to manage the changes in and challenges for the sector. The availability and development of skills which meet market demand is relevant in order to produce a suitably qualified workforce.
- In this context, training and skills development should seek to answer the employees’ needs so that they can become responsible for their professional career. It should also ensure the performance of the employees and strengthen the competitiveness of postal operators. The Social Partners are convinced that the development of skills as well as the skills and jobs matching play a key role in internal and external mobility of the employees, under a framework of lifelong learning.

- Re-skilling, up-skilling and redeployment measures are necessary to support the orientation of employees towards new activities within the company/sector or outside the company/sector. The classic activities of the postal sector will be managed by means of updated competences. This means that training, re-training and skills needs anticipation should be seen under a change management and lifelong learning framework. New skills and new competences will be needed for emerging areas of activity of the sector like IT, e-commerce activities, insurance and financial services. For these developing activities, besides re-skilling and up-skilling, the postal sector needs to be able to attract people with the necessary skills.
- Skills and performance assessments of employees are growing in importance for matching skills and jobs and should be seen as a continuous exercise. Nevertheless, to ensure adequate skills and job matching, the employee's full potential should be investigated. The analysis of the employee's potential is particularly important for elderly employees as it allows the opportunity to retain knowledge and experience in a succession plan context whilst at the same time acknowledging the challenges of an ageing workforce. This also provides for younger employees to develop a considered and appropriate career path.
- The development of competences should be integrated into an overall approach of professional evolution. Indeed, organized career paths can give employees the opportunity to acquire diversified experiences and to develop a wider range of competences. The professional evolution and the enhancement of skills should go hand in hand, ensuring the adequate articulation between training and mobility, providing an appropriate commitment to the shared objectives of the employers and trade unions.
- In the respect of the different roles, the Social Partners recognise that there is a joint responsibility among companies, trade unions and each employee in implementing training and re-training programmes and measures. Under this approach additional and innovative means of training, with, in particular, e-learning, mentoring and tutoring should be developed and fully utilized.
- There is a growing awareness and more experience on the recognition, validation and certification of skills, and their transferability, within the company/sector and outside the company/sector from the Social Partners of the postal sector. They are considered as an important tool to provide job security, to better support the employees' redeployment and to enhance their employability.
- The importance of skills development in order to better face changes and challenges of the sector is also reflected in the role of the Social Dialogue in supporting skills and jobs matching. The increased

development of training and re-training programmes as well as the effective cooperation and communication between all stakeholders are important in the development of training measures tailored to skills requirements and in order to foster innovation and job creation.

The Social Partners warmly invite all the postal operators and the trade unions to implement the principles contained in this Joint Declaration, to make their respective experiences available, by means of the SDC postal sector website, and to further raise awareness and draw attention on the matter.

Next Steps

In this context, the Social Partners jointly commit:

- to continue working through Social Dialogue on Matching Skills and Jobs, being inspired by the 2013 project outcomes which have been jointly developed and shared.
- to continue monitoring the evolution of skills and jobs matching in particular in terms of improving the employability of employees under a change management approach.
- to investigate in more details, also by means of the European Commission financial support, specific areas of activities of the sector which emerged as key from the 2013 training project.
- to disseminate among key stakeholders the results of the 2013 initiative on skills and jobs matching as well as the outcomes of future investigations.
- to make all the collected material available as widely as possible and to encourage its use.
- to continue promoting the key role of Social Partners to support the role of training and the strategic importance of matching key skills and jobs.

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Dominique BAILLY
President SDC Postal Sector

Jens SAVERSTAM
Interim Vice-President
SDC Postal Sector