

EUROPEAN SOCIAL DIALOGUE FOR THE POSTAL SECTOR WORKING GROUP CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Joint Conclusions on Environment

I. Introduction

The postal industry moves goods and information all around the world. Providing employment to 1.7 million people in the EU and generating an annual turnover of approximately 1% of EU GDP, the sector is of major economic and social importance.

Due to the nature of its core business with thousands of circulating vehicles each day, its widespread buildings and its intensive use of paper, the postal sector has a particular responsibility to minimize the environmental footprint of its business. Ready to be a responsible player and inspired by the EU 2020 agenda with its target of sustainable growth, it is committed through active environmental policies and initiatives to address these issues and become an integral part of the solution.

The postal operators and the trade unions are aware of the many ways in which postal business activities affect the environment and they are working to limit the impact. They are integrating principles of sustainable development into policies and programme to minimise the loss of environmental resources. This is also the result of rising expectations in terms of sustainability and green solutions from the main stakeholders from the sector: employees, clients, shareholders/market, consumer associations/ NGOs and the general public

In this respect, sustainable development has become an essential element of the activities of the European Social Dialogue Committee for the postal sector and the social partners have commonly agreed to focus their 2011/2012 CSR work program on environmental issues. A questionnaire disseminated to the postal operators and trade unions from the 27 Member States as well as a technical workshop gathering environmental experts from within and outside the sector enabled to identify key initiatives put in place. These Joint Conclusions aim at highlighting the commitment of the social partners from the sector in environmental issues and at presenting some interesting practices put in place by postal companies and trade unions.

II. The contribution of the postal sector to manage the impact on environment

The initiatives presented below are the main output from the observations made in the framework of the CSR working group activities. The analysis of the collected data from the questionnaires and of the material presented during the CSR technical workshop enables to highlight a number of significant achievements.

Due to the nature of the postal sector's core business, the primary focus of operators' and unions' efforts is the emissions of carbon dioxide. However, environmental policies also cover a broad range of aspects such as water, waste, local pollution.

Enhancing carbon efficiency as a top priority

- **Vehicles**

One of the biggest sources of emissions from the postal sector is the large fleet of vehicles it uses.

Many postal operators are reducing their emissions by developing a sustainable fleet with high energy efficiency and alternative fuels, with in particular an increasing use of electric vehicles, bikes, mopeds. Other measures put in place to reduce transport emissions include fuel conservation and reorganising mail routes.

- **Buildings**

Buildings account for a high amount of postal providers' CO₂ emissions. In addition to post offices, operators possess many other premises such as sorting centres, hubs, warehouses, headquarters...

Postal operators are adopting a range of measures to reduce the emissions from postal buildings. Interesting practices are conducted in terms of ensuring that buildings satisfy energy efficiency conditions; requiring new buildings to use improved technology such as solar energy and specifying that energy will be generated from renewable energy sources.

- **Subcontractors**

It is a responsibility of the NPOs to make sure that their numerous sub-contractors also share and respect their commitment.

The objective is to give guidance on sustainability, identify relevant purchasing areas and give environmental aspects a higher consideration in major purchasing decisions.

Offering green products and solutions for customers

Operators and unions offer a growing range of carbon-neutral, carbon-reduced and environmental friendly products and services to help customers to reduce their carbon footprint and to generate value.

Among these environmentally preferable products is in particular the CO₂-neutral delivery for mail, parcels and express items.

Other initiatives to improve the carbon efficiency are the use of carbon offsetting schemes by postal operators and unions to reduce their CO₂ emissions. Under these schemes, the CO₂ emissions produced are balanced out through investments in environmental organisations or projects such as wind farms or solar installations so that product or service's net emissions are calculated at zero through offsetting and are 'carbon neutral'.

Strengthening the commitment from all stakeholders

- **Employment/ workplace**

Postal operators and unions encourage energy efficiency at the workplace and the greening of the workplace. The development towards a green economy can have a potential for the creation of green quality jobs and the way existing jobs are performed.

- **Management system**

The postal operators' use of ISO 14001 as environmental management system is a measure to improve operational efficiency and minimize the environmental impact of the postal business activities.

- **Training and employees' engagement**

The objective is to provide employees' with adequate green skills, knowledge and ideas in order to improve postal operators' environmental performance.

Necessary training for postal employees based on management, e-learning and basic training courses combined with tailor made on-the-job-training is implemented by a large majority of operators. Training drivers in energy-efficient eco-driving practices is in particular a core initiative which has enabled to train thousands of employees. The intention is also to offer opportunities for employees to engage in initiatives that contribute to environmental protection. What is key is the awareness and acceptance of green change amongst employees.

- **Communication**

Constant communication with managers, employees, social partners, customers, suppliers is key to raise awareness about environmental impact of business and drive internal and external initiatives.

- **Stakeholders dialogue**

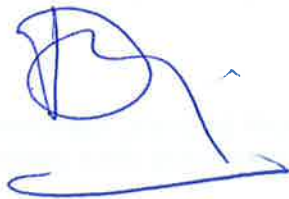
Postal operators and unions engage in dialogue with each other and with key stakeholders to find common interests, set up partnerships and regular contacts, share practices and better understand stakeholders' issues through surveys, questionnaires. They also work together with external parties to develop sustainable solutions and foster technical innovation, especially regarding latest fleet technologies and standards.

III. Conclusions

- Social partners acknowledge that the postal sector has a particular responsibility in mitigating the environmental impact of its activities; an engagement which requires concrete initiatives from all stakeholders. Beyond its activities, the postal sector dimension and its implication in the society also provide the sector with an important part to raise public awareness about the environment. The study done by the SDC within its 2011/2012 work program shows an active commitment from the postal companies and trade unions which is to be highlighted. There are many measures that providers can – and do - take to reduce their environmental impact and prevent pollution in all of their activities
- Environmental policies are levers of a sustainable economic performance and enable an effective cost-reduction based on the optimisation of resources consumption; they are key

to the long-term viability of postal companies The development towards a green economy can also have a potential for the creation of green quality jobs.

- The commitment of all employees is crucial to ensure the success of the postal operators' environmental policies. Therefore the Social Dialogue Committee considers that social partners can play a role in the on-going developments of this area in supporting communication, dialogue and change in attitude of employees and employers. Promoting sustainable jobs through investments in new low-carbon and resource efficient technologies and innovation. The social partners support the inclusion of environmental issues in social dialogue.
- The increased consideration of postal operators and trade unions for their environmental impact directly contributes to the general effort against climate change. Social partners of the sector commit to continue to follow the main developments in this area and to ensure a constant dialogue between all stakeholders.



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