

EUROPEAN SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE FOR THE POSTAL SECTOR WORKING GROUP ON POSTAL SECTOR EVOLUTION

Joint Declaration on the role of Social Dialogue in the transformation

1. Context

The postal sector has experienced over the last few years a broad transformation both in terms of intensity and of duration, in particular due to the decrease of mail volumes driven by e-substitution and in a context of postal liberalisation. Faced with these evolutions, national postal operators have had to diversify and modernise their activities in order to adapt to technological changes and changing consumer behaviour.

These evolutions are occurring within the labour-intensive sector with an important physical presence across all countries. This changing environment has brought about both new challenges and new opportunities. It has had important social consequences varying amongst countries, in particular in terms of employment, competences and organization, for postal operators and postal workers alike.

These consequences are even more important as the need to find new levers of diversification has led postal companies to further evolve in new and competitive markets.

In this context, the success of the postal transformation has been supported and facilitated by the involvement of social partners and constructive social dialogue, at all levels.

For this purpose, it was essential for the Social Dialogue Committee (SDC), consisting of National Postal Operators' representatives under the auspices of POSTEUROP and national postal Trade Unions' representatives under the auspices of UNI Europa Post & Logistics, to understand better the role of social dialogue in this transformation process through an EU co-funded project conducted in 2015-2016. Moreover in view of growing importance of new activities in the sector, the project also aimed at training the European social partners on new services, in particular e-commerce and other innovative ones.

On the basis of this project in which postal operators and trade unions from 16 EU Member states were involved, the Committee brings to the fore the following joint points.

2. Main lessons learnt

The European social partners have noted that national collective labour agreements signed in the postal sector, mainly at company level, are numerous and cover a wide range of measures. Effective social dialogue, in particular through the negotiation of agreements, contributes positively to accompany the process of transformation.

The Committee has noticed that the agreements encompass several variables, such as employment and working conditions, wages as well as the status of employees. These measures have been used diversely and to different extents by postal operators and trade unions. The Committee observes that the content of the labour agreements results from trade-offs between social partners which take into consideration the interests of both parties.

The European social partners have identified that these agreements are enshrined into a broader dynamic context and depend on the stage of the operators' transformation as well as on their overall strategy.

The Committee has found that agreements set a wide range of concrete measures to be implemented as well as follow-up measures. They have observed that there are specific measures to monitor the respect and the implementation of the agreements.

The European social partners highlight that social dialogue is not limited to the conclusion of agreements, which enable to set fundamental principles in support of the transformation process, but also that day-to-day social dialogue at all levels is essential.

The Committee notes that effective social dialogue and the conclusion of collective labour agreements at national postal operator level has enabled employers and trade unions to avoid a "race to the bottom" in terms of employment levels, wages and labour conditions. Collective labour agreements and their negotiation paved the way for the transformation and adaptation of postal activities to occur in a socially acceptable manner as social partners' respectively derived trade-offs between competitiveness and increased flexibility imperatives.

The European social partners received consistent training on new services. This training has enabled them to identify that there is a real need for continuing with this topic and that social partners should be more aware about the development of new activities in the sector, in particular digital and e-commerce services. Training on such new activities could be an important tool to increase awareness of the social partners on the matter.

3. Recommendations

The European social partners emphasize the rapid pace and intensity of postal sector transformation. They highlight that in such a labour-intensive sector, social dialogue is an element of high importance for the transformation process both to anticipate and support the evolutions. It takes place at all levels, the European, national and local ones, depending on the nature of the transformation process.

The Committee underlines that social dialogue should take into consideration the interests of all the stakeholders to arrive at the right balance between increased flexibility and good working conditions.

The European social partners stress that social dialogue should fit into a wider and continuous process in line with the broader context and the strategy of postal operators.

The Committee reinforces the importance of ensuring the respect, follow-up and concrete implementation of social dialogue outcomes.

The European social partners support the deployment of collective agreements in accordance with national law and practices.

The Committee considers it is important that social partners are well informed of the evolution of activities and the strategy of postal operators. In this framework, it underlines the need for an adequate follow-up of the impact in terms of jobs and skills of the ongoing evolutions.

The European social partners stress in particular the importance to maintain the awareness, knowledge and competences of social partners in relation to the development of new services. For this purpose they encourage the development of tools to follow the current developments in the sector. In addition they invite all stakeholders to use the tools, in particular the online training, developed in the framework of the Social Dialogue Committee project.

Lastly, the European social partners aim to encourage effective social dialogue at all levels as well as the implementation and wide coverage of collective bargaining at national level to accompany in a socially responsible way the imperative of postal transformation. The Committee will carry out its actions on the following points:

- Monitor the main social evolutions in the sector,
- Observe the social impact of the diversification of postal operators,
- Monitor changes in skills and other requirements,
- Follow-up the development of new services and their social impact.

Brussels, 1st December 2016



Dominique BAILLY
President European Social Dialogue
Committee Postal Sector



Brian SCOTT
Vice-President European Social Dialogue
Committee Postal Sector