



## EUROPEAN SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE FOR THE POSTAL SECTOR WORKING GROUP ON TRAINING, HEALTH & SAFETY

### Joint Declaration on Training in the Digital Era

#### The Context

The profound transformation of the postal sector in recent years is partly due to a significant decline in mail volumes and the diversification of products and services offered to customers. All this occurred in an open market that encouraged postal operators to modernize their businesses by adapting to emerging and various market needs.

Naturally, the transformation process led to new opportunities and new challenges, not only on the aspects related to the market, but also those related to work organization, labour market, training and employment.

New technologies are increasingly influencing how work is done in postal companies as well as changing the consumer needs. New products, services and commercial methods such as e-commerce, in addition to technical and organizational changes, pose new challenges relating to the skills' needs in evolving work organizations.

These important changes in the postal sector have also been shaped by the contribution of the trade unions which have accompanied the process of modernization, sharing the needs of diversification and organizational innovations. The partnership and dialogue between the social partners, at various levels, has therefore played a key role in supporting and encouraging a period of strategic transformation for the sector.

In this context, the significant value of training and re-training of employees has been of fundamental importance to the transformation process. In this regard, the social partners of the European Social Dialogue Committee for the postal sector (SDC - hereinafter the Committee), formed by the National Postal Operators gathered under the umbrella of POSTEUROP and the national postal trade union organizations, united under the aegis of UNI Europa Post & Logistics, have implemented several initiatives through the "Training, Health & Safety" and the "Postal Sector Evolution" SDC working groups.

In particular, the "Training, Health & Safety" working group, signed in 2006 a Joint Declaration on Training and skills development, and, subsequently, signed another joint declaration in 2014 related to the study co-funded by the European Union "Matching Skills & Jobs in the European



Postal Sector". The signed declarations testify the awareness of the SDC social partners on the strategic importance of training and retraining of employees to accompany the change process in the sector and support the diversification of products and services.

The study "Mobilizing Social Partners in a new context" implemented by the "Postal Sector Evolution" working group, which investigated the role of collective labour agreements in supporting the change in the sector also underlined the role that training plays in this transformation.

More recently, in line with training and skills development, the Committee has finalized the project "Promoting Social Dialogue in the Postal Sector in an enlarged Europe", co-financed by the European Union and conducted from 2016 to 2018. With this initiative, it was possible to investigate the level of knowledge on European social dialogue among its members, also obtaining first-hand information on how employers and trade unions are managing the impact that new technologies, in particular digitization, have on training and retraining programs for employees, the impact on work organization, skills and training needs.

## **Main Shared Findings**

The European social partners hold a similar level of understanding of the role and functions of the European Social Dialogue Committee for the postal sector. Knowledge of its activities, of its formal acts and of the opportunities offered to all its members is also comparable.

The European social partners agree that, although at different levels, awareness of the importance of social dialogue at the national level is common and steadily increasing, especially when it is compared to fifteen years ago. In this regard, the social partners acknowledge that the SDC deliverables contribute to the national discussions. Over the years, the SDC has gained in reputation among European stakeholders and the members themselves thanks to the activities carried out and the joint declarations signed.

The European social partners consider that the modernization and diversification of postal services is a process that will continuously impact the customers, the postal companies and their employees. For this reason, sharing experiences among social partners on training and re-training can encourage solutions' based activities at national level. The SDC can facilitate that exchange. Such exchanges should also support capacity building among SDC members. In this sense, the sharing of good practices could be fostered by a good level of participation of all national social partners to SDC activities, in particular from Eastern European countries. SDC social partners acknowledge that there is no one-size-fits-all solution and that solutions must be sought case by case.

The Committee acknowledges that the trend to move employees from the postal sector to the parcel sector to meet the growing importance of e-commerce is a common feature for several postal companies. This trend must be seen as an organizational challenge which is necessary to adapt to the new market reality and to the changing customers' needs.

The SDC underlines that often, postal companies diversify into new activities mainly with the support of their existing workforce through the framework of national social dialogue. Training, re-training and up-skilling in a lifelong learning perspective are essential for the employees to



acquire the necessary skills, to develop new competences and offer new services, especially in a more digitalized world and changed market reality.

The European social partners have identified that digitalization has an important impact on job functions and missions at all level of the organizations with consequences also on working conditions. In response, most postal companies provide specific training programmes to digitally up-skill the current workforce.

The European social partners agree that in the future the transformation process will require both training programs to be implemented with classical methodologies as well as modern and innovative methodologies, in particular, to further develop the digital skills of employees. Training courses and methodologies should be adapted to the needs of the sector.

The European social partners, in line with the conclusions of the study "Promoting Social Dialogue in the postal sector in an enlarged Europe" believe that the analysis of digital skills for the performance of typical postal activities can contribute to a better understanding of the impact that new technologies have on the sector and on postal employment in terms of working conditions and work organisation patterns. This in turn points to the need to pursue an in-depth reflection on training and retraining methods to enable the highest degree of up-skilling as possible and to make use of the new digital skills in the most appropriate way.

## Next Steps

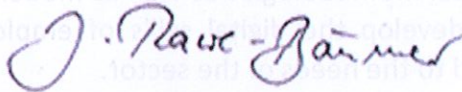
For the reasons described above, the European postal social partners jointly commit to:

- Further promote among its members the knowledge of the European Social Dialogue Committee for the postal sector, stimulating their participation in its activities.
- Further encourage the dissemination and presentation of SDC conclusions and deliverables at national postal level. SDC members are aware of the importance to bring the outcomes of European training activities and reflections at national level and to influence where possible, those outcomes in national social dialogue practices.
- Continue to focus on the role of training, retraining and up-skilling of postal employees throughout the course of its work, in line with the past funded projects and related Joint Declarations;
- Concentrate their efforts on identifying digital skills useful to the new jobs that are characterizing the sector as well as to all other classic activities of the postal sector;
- Analyze the impact of digitization on the companies' organization, working conditions and work environment;
- Encourage the diffusion of the conclusions and recommendations of related projects around Training to the national hoping to stimulate a fruitful social dialogue on these matters. Disseminate, also through the Committee's website, all the material collected in order to facilitate the exchange of experiences among its members;
- Consolidate information exchanges with the Directorates General of the European Commission of reference and with relevant stakeholders for a better understanding of the process of change in the sector;
- Continue to monitor in the future, also through initiatives that could have the support of the European Commission the impact of digitization on training and retraining in specific

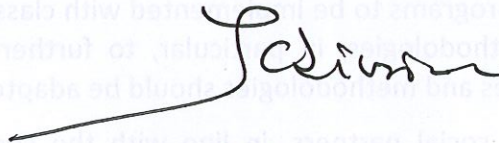


sector activities that require new and advanced skills, contributing in this way to stimulate best solutions for the sector.

Brussels, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2019



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