

Peter Waldorff speech to the 7th EPSU Congress - NEA report of activities

Dear colleagues, I am pleased to report on the activities of the EPSU Standing Committee for national and European administrations

Our two main priorities have been to strengthen social dialogue capacity, with a view to establishing a formal committee, and make the case for the fundamental role national administrations play for social and economic development.

Needless to say that establishing a real social dialogue has been, and remains a difficult nut to crack: absence of an employers' organisation, at times a lukewarm Commission, two competing self-claimed trade union organisations, and our own internal particularities. But some progress has taken place.

On the employer side, the informal cooperation of EU Directors General for public administration has been involved in key collective bargaining issues. Mobility, wage systems, including performance related pay, pensions, career systems, recruitment policy, public service performance are all monitored, surveyed, benchmarked. In view of the limited trade union inputs in this process, I'm afraid to say, this sometimes resemble a "mutual infection" process. Some employers start realising this as well as the limits of cutting and pasting private sector methods onto the public sector.

As part of the informal social dialogue process, the Belgian Presidency, back in 2001, took the initiative to invite EPSU on an equal footing with two other organisations, USSP-CESI and Eurodedop.

It meant we first had to re-establish the facts right as to which European trade union was legitimate enough to take part in an EU social dialogue, however informal it is.

End of last year, we published a study on trade union representativity. It was done by the European Trade Union Institute with contributions from the Committee. The pending Commission's study, called for by EPSU, will confirm our findings. EPSU is the most representative organisation in the state sector, covering all EU and

acceding countries. And what's more it has been growing while the others are losing members. So we're on the right track.

Second, some tough decisions had to be taken on our participation in the existing informal social dialogue. Assurance in writing by the Belgian EU Presidency, and later confirmed by Denmark in 2002, that the current format would not prejudice on the future composition of the trade union delegation was welcomed and was actually the precondition for us to take part in this process. But it became apparent this would not be enough.

As an alternative strategy we have called for and held separate meetings with the employers. We discussed telework; ICT and competence development; mobility of civil servants.

Most recently we met Italy's Minister for public administration as well as Dutch and Irish officials to start some concrete work on lifelong learning and training. Under the Greek Presidency, last year, we turned the table around and invited EU Directors General to a conference on administrative cooperation, jointly organised by EPSU and Greek colleagues from Adedy. It was addressed and co-financed by the Greek Minister for Public Administration.

These separate meetings and conferences have first strengthened our own capacity building inside the Committee, with each of its members playing a decisive role. The EU stage has become more real to a number of colleagues as a result. And this is a major achievement. I, as well as the EPSU secretariat, am grateful to them for their active involvement, which sometimes took place under acute national conditions.

Second, they have shown that employers recognise EPSU as the leading voice of EU state sector employees.

It has also been a learning process for the employer side which is not always very well-read on the EU decision-making process and the role of social dialogue. This has paid off. Employers realise they are losing out. As more labour regulation becomes subject to collective agreements rather than mandatory law, by not being organised they cannot influence the process. We have been pressing for CEEP to take on more of a sectoral role in the state sector.

But separate meetings cannot, and will not, replace a formal sectoral social dialogue. EPSU's absence in meetings has shown the limits of the informal process.

But patience is wearing thin on both sides, and there is no doubt that union divisions suit the employers, or at least some of them. In the end separate meetings have not led to writing USSP-CESI and Eurofedop off the scene.

However, last April, I am pleased to say, following intense pressure from EPSU, the Commission issued a proposal on the issue of trade union representativity. It proposes to all unions involved to find a solution similar to the one found in local and regional government. It takes into account EPSU's largest representativity. Importantly it puts the pressure off our back. It is on this basis that we reengaged, last May, in the informal social dialogue process with the Troika of Directors General.

But this also means we'll need to find an EPSU internal solution and overcome national obstacles. Social dialogue is a two-way process and has potential to contribute to developing stronger bargaining power at national level.

Colleagues, national administrations are increasingly entering the remit of the EU. The draft Constitutional Treaty includes a new legal basis for administrative cooperation. It recognises that the effective implementation of EU law, essential for the good functioning of the EU, is a matter of common interest. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, provides for citizens' right to a good administration.

We have managed to build up a committed and well-functioning Committee. It has been great to be the chair of this Committee.

Thanks for your attention.

- [Log in](#) to post comments
- [Printer-friendly version](#)

Sectors

[National and European Administration](#)