

CEMR-EP / EPSU joint statement on telework

I. Introduction

Local government throughout Europe is facing many challenges as it strives to provide modern, efficient and effective services to the communities it serves. In order to meet these challenges, local authorities must be prepared to take advantage of all opportunities available, including technological and organisational innovation.

Telework is a possibility presented by such innovation. It is a new method of working rather than a new employment status, and can provide opportunities for employers and workers alike. For employers it can provide financial savings, productivity gains, flexibility in service delivery and an additional tool for managing labour market issues. For employees it can provide more flexibility in the way work is carried out, overcome barriers to mobility, reduce commuting time and expense and assist individuals to reconcile their professional and family life. However, many jobs require personal attendance at a particular workplace and telework requires particular skills from workers and managers.

II. The Inter-sectoral Framework Agreement on Telework

The European inter-sectoral social partners UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC, together with European Commissioner Diamantopoulou, signed a Framework Agreement on Telework on 16 July 2002. The agreement aims to establish a general framework at the European level to be implemented voluntarily by the members of the signatory parties, in accordance with the national procedures and practices specific to management and labour. Members of the signatory parties within the acceding member states are also invited to implement the agreement.

III. EPSU/CEMR-EP Guidance

Telework is now a feature of the European local and regional government sector and, given the rate of technological change, is likely to grow in the future. Within some Member States the social partners have already implemented agreements or guidance on telework. Some others have not.

The social partners, CEMR-EP for the employers and EPSU for the trade unions, therefore welcome the inter-sectoral agreement. It provides a framework by which the rights and duties of employers and employees can be established and articulated. This framework can help facilitate the efficient and fair management of telework.

This inter-sectoral agreement is now available to the parties. EPSU and CEMR-EP will encourage their members to use the agreement when discussing the introduction or management of telework, devising policies or concluding agreements on telework in the local and regional government sector, in accordance with the national procedures and practices specific to management and labour. CEMR-EP and EPSU will monitor developments and undertake a first assessment in 2005.

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