

EUPAN/TUNED conclusions

Improving trust in central government administrations through effective social dialogue

In the framework of the Test Phase on Social Dialogue, and more specifically of the project “Improving trust in central government administrations through effective social dialogue”, financed by the European Commission, EUPAN and TUNED commissioned the Working Lives Research Institute to conduct a study (the Trust Study) on the role of social dialogue in anticipating and managing change in central government administrations.

Having regard to the Trust study and following on from the Trust conference in Prague in April 2009, EUPAN and TUNED have jointly drawn a number of conclusions:

Social dialogue: the key to successful change and improved trust

Central government administrations across Europe are experiencing significant changes in the way they manage and deliver their services, as shown in the Trust report there have been a variety of drivers for change.

In view of the significance of these changes, and taking account of the impact of the global economic crisis, the issue of trust in central government administration comes into sharp focus.

In this respect, it is important to focus on how social dialogue can be a useful means in anticipating and managing changes in central government administrations.¹

The Trust study, based on 15 EU and candidate countries, shows a diversity of social dialogue practices in this field, ranging from dealing with the social impact of changes to involving employees and their representatives in defining goals and strategy. However, the various case studies can lead to the following general conclusions:

- A key feature of central government administrations is the ability to plan ahead for the general interest. Social dialogue is an interesting tool to help achieving this;
- In central government administrations, the link between politics, legislation and responsibilities of social partners is more salient than in other sectors;
- A constructive social dialogue and early and regular involvement of employees and trade unions facilitates the anticipation of change and implementation of reforms;
- Change processes require sufficient time and an open and transparent process of information and consultation. Collective bargaining can be a means of facilitating such processes;
- Good communication during the change process supports the mutual understanding of the reasons for and the implications of changes for both management and employees;

¹ It is noted that social dialogue refers to a continuous process including discussions, consultations, negotiations and joint actions undertaken by trade union and employer organisations.

- Structured and well-resourced social dialogue makes it easier to respond quickly and effectively to changes;
- Anticipation of change and the implementation of reforms are facilitated by a constructive social dialogue at the appropriate levels and stages of the process;
- Evaluation of reforms benefits from involving trade unions and citizens, also with a view to developing more open and transparent administrations.

Training and competence development

Given the challenges facing central governments, EUPAN and TUNED recognize the importance of competence development in order to anticipate and manage change, to continue to offer high quality public services, and to improve the attractiveness of central government workplaces.

With a view to enhancing the adaptability of managers and employees to new challenges, EUPAN and TUNED recognise that in addition to training at national level there may also be a European dimension to training and competency development. They recognise that cooperation with European Institutes and networks in this field, for instance DISPA², can be of added value in relation to future work in this field.

They also recognize the added value of social dialogue in relation to improving the efficiency, the mutual trust and the relevance and availability of competency development programmes to all employees.

They consider that social partners' ongoing efforts, at national and EU levels, in identifying skill and competence needs are useful for planning changes.

Equality and diversity

Equality and diversity has been both drivers and responses to changes. Focus on equality and diversity plays a vital role in attracting and retaining a competent workforce and in improving the quality of central government administrations.

In harmony with the joint statement drawn up in Gateshead in 2005, the joint conference held in Copenhagen in 2007 and the EU legal framework in this field, EUPAN and TUNED, in the context of the Trust project focus on the issue of equality and diversity.

EUPAN and TUNED recognise that social dialogue can facilitate the promotion of equal treatment and prevent possible negative consequences of change on equality and diversity.

In this regard they note that social partners, at national and EU levels, have developed a number of actions such as equality plans, equality audits, and review of recruitment practices, which are worth reflecting further upon.

Follow up

² Network of Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration

EUPAN and TUNED recognise the added value of social dialogue to support changes which are driven by the interest of citizens and which respect employees and managers who are entrusted to implement these changes.

Based on the above conclusions, they invite the social partners at national levels to include the important topics of competence development, equality and diversity in implementation of changes.

In view of the ongoing Test Phase on Social Dialogue, EUPAN and TUNED consider that the report and the joint work within the framework of the Trust project has provided useful experiences and material for their subsequent cooperation.

EUPAN and TUNED underline the added value of their dialogue at EU level in order to support good practices at the national level in the field of change management.

Taking note of the discussions about the Directive establishing a general framework for informing and consulting employees in the European Community (2002/14/EC), EUPAN and TUNED will consider how to further cooperate on the information and consultation of employees in central government administrations.

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Signed by

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