



EPSU meeting/ Belgian affiliates Defence sector, Brussels, 6 December 2011

Report

1. Introduction

In October 2011, the EPSU NEA committee for central administrations agreed to launch a network for defence personnel.

The meeting on 6 December aimed to set up this network and decide its main priorities. A further aim was to take steps towards setting up a European social dialogue in the central administrations sector, which is answerable to European and national authorities.

In most European countries, the defence sector is an exception to social dialogue and trade union rights in general. Moreover, many European armed forces are currently undergoing radical reforms, staff reductions and sub-contracting. All these changes are being implemented with a minimum of consultation or indeed none at all. There is a growing move towards bilateral or multinational collaboration, which requires the creation of a platform for discussion specific to defence.

Secondly, the EPSU is confronted with an organization for military associations, EUROMIL, to which we want to act as a counterweight.

2. Present

See Appendix A (EPSU list).

3. Minutes

a. Basis for structure of EPSU Defence network

Nadja gave a PowerPoint presentation on the context and framework of the launch of the Defence network (see Appendix B).

Ilse gave a PowerPoint presentation on the programme for the day and the various aspects of the network (see Appendix C).

b. Presentation of participants and priorities

Everyone around the table was invited to describe the problems that he/she was faced with. It was clear that the expectations of the participants were divergent. Some focussed on the new network, others were more interested in the follow-up to the discussions that took place in February 2011, when we devoted a first meeting to the staff of US bases in Europe.

There was consensus on:

- the need for a more precise view of the diversity of the situations in the different countries in the area of defence
- equal status for civilian and military personnel with regard to the network
- the difference between the problem of the staff of US bases in Europe and the specific situations of the employees in the various national defence systems
- the usefulness of coming together under the umbrella of the Defence network, so long as the agenda and the agreements on the method of work are precisely set out.

c. Problem of staff of US bases in Europe

The participants described the situations (essentially in Spain and Portugal). It was requested that new steps be taken through EPSU regarding the feasibility of setting up a European works committee for the staff of American bases on European soil.

d. Conclusions and working arrangements

Belgium undertook to devise a questionnaire to clarify the situations in defence in the different countries, so as to get a clearer idea of the differences and similarities. This will make it possible to set out a more precise programme of work. Belgium will seek other direct contacts as regards possible participants in the network.

In any case, the priorities for a future agenda are:

- social dialogue and trade union rights
- application of the European social directives (e.g. working time, rights to information and consultation, health and safety, gender equality, etc.)
- restructuring, staff reduction and its consequences (inc. sub-contracting, privatization)
- military (and civilian) staff working away from normal workplace

Spain undertook to convene the working party for May 2012.