

Signing Agreement Information and consultation- Britta Lejon, TUNED spokesperson

Dear Madam Minister, Dear colleagues

It is a pleasure and honour to sign on behalf of TUNED this Agreement on information and consultation rights of employees and civil servants in central government.

In many ways, we can claim it is a landmark agreement for the workers we represent, for the quality of public administrations we are committed to, and for the future of EU social dialogue which is vital to a social and democratic Europe.

The agreement sets out common minimum standards for the fundamental human rights of workers and their trade union representatives to be informed and consulted. Workers will be better placed to deal with their employers, to influence them on changes in the work place, on working time, health and safety or work/life balance.

By setting out new EU minimum standards in central government, it closes a 10 year-old gap in EU legislation that until now only applied, to a large extent, to private sector workers. It puts on an equal footing millions of public workers with workers in the private sector. It is a concrete translation of the key EU principle of equal treatment.

True, the situation differs across EU member states and the Agreement will therefore have a differentiated impact. In some countries, those new EU standards will bring additional legal protection and safeguards against risks of deterioration of information and consultation rights. In others, it will help regain fundamental rights that have been taken away in the past few years. Under no circumstances can the agreement be used to weaken existing rights at national level and under all circumstances will better rights prevail.

The agreement makes no distinction between civil servants and contractual employees. For the first time, it recognises the role of trade unions. This a key achievement.

The agreement aims at rebuilding trust, more solidarity and in the end better services that we all need. When workers feel valued and listened to, they work better and deliver a better service. Recent dramatic events, the refugee crisis, the terrorist attacks as in Paris, show the crucial role well functioning central government administrations play to deliver protection, justice, security and shelter.

The Agreement is important for the future of the EU social dialogue which, it is not a secret, has seriously slowed down for the past few year. This agreement, I hope, will contribute to its relaunch as called for by Commission President Juncker. This agreement is of our own initiative but it also represents a clear response to the EC consultation on the consolidation of information and consultation directives..

Importantly the Agreement is in line with the mandate we agreed with EUPAE : to improve social dialogue especially on restructuring.

Some parts of the text could have been broader, clearer but this is the consensus we have reached at this juncture taking into account 27 national industrial relations systems. The negotiations started last February but before that we have had many months of talks including with EC officials on the basis of many surveys on labour relations.

A monitoring clause every two years will allow a review and if need be improvements.

We are pleased that in the end the employers agreed to negotiating a directive. We know that it has been difficult to accept for some. Be sure that a directive is the best way to ensure a level playing field so that all workers benefit from the same minimum rights., whilst leaving sufficient flexibility as to how governments can implement it by legislation or by a social partners' agreement.

A directive will also be a strong instrument for the Social dialogue Committee to gain influence on the Commission's recommendations on administration reforms in the EU semester. This is an important development of the last few years. Public Administration are no longer outside the EU remit and there is no reason why an effective social dialogue would stop at the doors of the EU institutions.

Our work does not end today. We will closely follow the transposition phase by the Commission. We hope the transposition will be done as quickly as possible. The Commission will carry out a representativity test and then an impact assessment. We are confident those two tests will be passed successfully.

I would like to thank the Minister for her leadership, for her time, it is the third time that you are with us over the past year/ I thank Caroline, Naccar Eddine, Simon for their determination, I know that some discussions have been difficult, some time with us, some time within EUPAE, this was worth the effort. I don't forget Mr Le Goff who started the negotiations with us as deputy DG and has now become Director General.

I thank our TUNED colleagues for their contributions, patience and perseverance. I also thank CESI, Klaus and Agathe, this year marks the 10th year anniversary of our cooperation agreement between EPSU and CESI. We were right to form a united trade union delegation for central government. It has been key to deliver the good result. And I thank the EPSU secretariat, Jan Willem, Diane and Nadja. I also thank Stefano Martinelli from the Commission for his untainted support and for organising this meeting at very short notice.

I sign.