



European Social Dialogue Committee in Local and Regional Government

2006/2007 Work Programme (*adopted 31.1.06*)

1. Objectives

The Committee's work programme covering the years 2006-2007 builds on the results achieved with the previous bi-annual work programme. It aims to promote effective interaction between the national and European levels of social dialogue and to strengthen the role of the social partners in shaping developments regarding employment and public services provision in local and regional governments.

The Committee's new work programme also aims at facilitating the integration of the local and regional public sectors of the new Member States and of the candidate countries by promoting the active participation of the social partner organisations from the countries concerned in the joint activities.

2. Themes for Action

In line with the objectives set out above, CEMR and EPSU have agreed to structure their actions in the years 2006 and 2007 around four broad and cross-cutting themes, which are listed below. Furthermore, and subject to agreement of the social partners, the Committee may address other issues of relevance to the sector that are not identified in the present document.

(a) Strengthening social dialogue in local and regional government in the new Member States and in candidate countries

The activities undertaken under the same heading of the previous work programme (joint study and conference organised with the financial support of the European Commission) helped to identify existing social dialogue structures and the common problems faced by national social partner organisations of local and regional government in the new Member States and in the candidate countries. Based on the result of these activities, EPSU and CEMR will organise in 2006-2007 workshops targeted at their affiliates from the countries concerned and aimed at strengthening their capacity by:

- Showcasing best practices of bipartite social dialogue in local and regional government in the EU Member States, e.g. how membership has been structured, the content of collective agreements and the types of services provided by the national organisations to regions/municipalities and their members;
- Exchanging experience on specific problems in relation to e.g. public sector restructuring, decentralisation, improving working conditions and the skills of employees, increasing efficiency in public services provision.

(b) Supporting the reform process in local and regional government

Many local and regional governments across the EU have introduced a series of management reforms aimed at improving the quality and efficiency of local public services. These reforms include investing in the quality of employment in the sector, e.g. through workers' information, consultation and participation procedures, investment in the skills and

education of employees, positive working conditions and high standards of health and safety in the workplace.

In order to support this process, both CEMR and EPSU will address at local and regional government level the following principles, included in the 2005-2008 EU Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs¹:

- ↵ Improving the adaptability and flexibility of employers and employees, including through the promotion and dissemination of new adaptable forms of work organisation, with a view to improve quality and productivity at work (Guideline n°21),
- ↵ Developing skills through training and life-long learning (Guideline n°23),
- ↵ Anticipating and managing the consequences of demographic changes, through the maximisation of employment opportunities for young people, women and older workers (Guideline n°18).

Actions in the above-mentioned areas will build on the EPSU/CEMR statement adopted on 19 May 2005 on the European Employment Strategy². It will also complement relevant initiatives taken by the European cross-sectoral social partners (UNICE/UEAPME, ETUC, CEEP) notably in the fields of life-long learning³ and active ageing as well as take account of forthcoming EU initiatives of relevance to their sector, such as the European Commission Communication on the Demographic Future of Europe⁴ and the Communication on a new EU Strategy for health and safety at work (2007-2013).

(c) Promoting diversity and equality in local and regional government

CEMR and EPSU will contribute to the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All by undertaking joint actions in support of the effective implementation of the existing EU equality and anti-discrimination directives⁵.

In the field of the fight against discrimination, EPSU and CEMR will look more specifically at measures to attract and retain certain specific groups (e.g. people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and third-country migrants) into local and regional public administration and services.

Action to promote gender equality will in turn focus on benchmarking experience and promoting the development of equality plans in local and regional government.

(d) Evaluating experience in various forms of service provision

Both EPSU and CEMR consider that local and regional government should have a high degree of autonomy in determining the content and form of the services they provide. Local and regional authorities provide public services in many different ways: in-house/self-provision, various forms of municipal companies, inter-communal cooperation, public-private partnerships (PPPs), outsourcing, privatisation, etc.

¹ These Guidelines were adopted at European level in July 2005 to guide the Member States' macroeconomic, microeconomic and employment policies in the 2005-2008 period. Their text is available in all EU languages at: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/employment_strategy/prop_2005/adopted_guidelines_2005_en.htm

² Full text available on the respective websites of CEMR and EPSU: http://www.ccre.org/champs_activites_detail_news_en.htm?ID=523&idca=3124
<http://www.epsu.org/a/1180>

³ Text available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/social_dialogue/docs/300_20020228_framework_actions_lifelong_learning_en.pdf

⁴ This communication will provide a follow up to the 2005 Green Paper on Demographic Changes, available at: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/social_situation/green_paper_en.html)

⁵ Detailed information on these Directives is set out in appendix 1.

Under this part of the programme, the social partners aim to exchange experience on the various forms of service provision and to reflect on recent developments, with particular attention to the situation in the new Member States. For this purpose, the parties plan to commission a background research study with the support of the European Commission. The aim of this study will be to identify core services delivered at local and regional level by public administrations, using criteria of general interest in the assessment of various forms of service provision, and to highlight the common problems that the social partners are facing in the sector.

3. Implementation of the work programme

Following an agreement on the themes of the work programme and on the indicative timetable for its implementation (as set out in annex 2), the parties will fix the task, remit and working languages of the individual working groups.

ANNEX 1

Relevant EU legislation and cross-sectoral agreements on equality

GENDER EQUALITY (Articles 2; 3-2; 6; 141 of the EU Treaty and ECJ case law)

- **2002 Equal Treatment directive** amended the 1976 equal treatment directive as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions. This directive covers both direct and indirect discrimination and harassment, it provides for positive action measures and equality plans and promotes social dialogue. The deadline for its transposition is 5 October 2005.
- **Cross-sectoral agreement on a Framework of Actions on gender equality by ETUC, UNICE and CEEP of 1 March 2005.** This agreement promotes an integrated approach towards gender equality and seeks to contribute to the implementation of the Lisbon strategy for economic growth, more and better jobs and social cohesion as well as of the EU legislative framework on equal treatment between women and men. 4 priority areas are identified for follow-up work at national and EU levels by social partners including work/life balance, equal pay, access to decision-making, gender stereotypes. Member organisations of the signatories are bound by the agreement.
- Other EU directives cover the issues of equal pay for work of equal value, social security, burden of proof as well as parental leave and part-time work (the latter two were cross-sectoral collective agreements transposed in EU directives).

OTHER GROUNDS OF DISCRIMINATION (Article 13 of the EU Treaty)

- **The Equal treatment Directive (ETD), 2000:** anti-discrimination legislation covering training and employment conditions on the basis of **age, disability, race and ethnicity, religion and belief, sexual orientation** (gender being covered by other specific directives)
- **The Race Equality Directive (RED) 2000:** bans discrimination on the ground of race in relation to all working conditions (including pay and promotion) as well as access to employment, social protection, public services and membership to organisations (e.g. trade unions or employers' organisations).
- Protections cover direct and indirect discrimination, victimisation (where an employee has made a complaint), and harassment is defined as a form of direct discrimination. Of importance, the burden of proof is also shared between employer and employee. It also provides for positive action measures.
- Member States were required to transpose the RED Directive by July 2003 and the ETD directive by December 2003. Progress is variable between Member States. A number of member states have exercised options for delaying the age legislation until 2006 (e.g. UK), while others have not completed the transposition. The new members were required to enact the directives prior to accession in May 2004. Importantly both directives can also be implemented via the social partnership route.
- A Community Action Programme, designed to establish baseline data to enable policymaking, share best practice, build equality knowledge capacity and provide training, underpins the transposition of the Directives in Member States (CAP 2001-2006).

Annex 2: Indicative timetable for the implementation of the work programme 2006/2007

Theme	Action	Meeting	Timetable
Supporting social dialogue in the new Member States	➤ Activities to support capacity building of the social partner organisations in the countries concerned (working group on 20 March to make suggestions for national and EU activities)	Working group	2006 (20 March)
	➤ Exchange of experience (e.g., on HRM and social dialogue)	Working group	early 2007
Supporting the reform process in local and regional government	➤ Collection of information on addressing demographic ageing (including active mentorship, training and life-long learning, flexible working patterns for older workers and measures to attract young people into administration)	Working group	2006 (6 June)
	➤ Exchange of experience on new forms of work organisation to promote the adaptability of workers and quality in public services delivery	Working group (plenary size)	2006 November
	➤ Adoption of a statement on social dialogue and employment in local and regional government	Plenary	/early 2007
Promoting diversity and equality	➤ Exchange of experience in implementing equality plans and other gender equality objectives, with a view to identify of best practices		2007 (EU Year of Equal opportunities)
		Working group	2007
Evaluating experience in various forms of service provision	➤ Submit a joint budget application to the European Commission for a comparative study	Project steering group Conference	From 2006 (June) to mid 2007

Schedule of meetings

Working group		Plenary meetings
2006/ First half:	20 th March 6 th June (plenary format)	31 st January
2006/ Second half:	September* November*	December 2006/early 2007*
2007:	Two per semester*	January* December*

* Dates still to be fixed