

Editorial *The Lisbon European Council gave the signal for a firm political commitment: to meet jointly the challenges of a new knowledge economy. This is a sign of confidence in a Union which has had the best macroeconomic prospects for a generation. The European Council set itself a new strategic objective for the next decade: to become the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, capable of sustainable economic growth bringing more and better-quality jobs and greater social cohesion. To achieve this objective, it adopted a global strategy for full employment, a method, operational conclusions for economic reform, and a strengthened European social model through investment in human resources. The Lisbon European Council was the occasion for the social partners to take stock of their activities to date. The contributions submitted to Lisbon by many sectors show the progress already achieved. The Commission's proposal for them to create a new framework for dialogue was one of the factors which made this possible. By structuring within new committees, social dialogue has gained in both legitimacy and effectiveness. There have been some remarkable developments recently. The agreement on working time for mobile staff in civil aviation, the commitment of the telecommunications social partners to access to vocational training and telework, and the present negotiations on telework in the commerce sector are among the most notable examples. Yet much remains to be done as a vast field of opportunity opens up to the social partners. In Lisbon they were invited to seek the means to modernise work organisation while respecting the balance between flexibility and security, and to enrich and negotiate agreements on lifelong training – an essential element in the European social model. The sectoral social partners are well-placed, in each of their specific fields, to respond to this invitation. It is time for sectoral social dialogue to take off.*

Odile Quintin
Acting Director General
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Main story

Tanning: a highly innovative code

On 27 March 2000 the "tanning" sectoral dialogue committee adopted a highly innovative code of practice. The code reflects the desire of the social partners, Cotance and ETUF:TCL, to modernise employment and work organisation as a means of making the sector more competitive.

The social partners are calling on their members to respect the code and to incorporate its content in national codes of practice, including for economic and commercial operations worldwide and for sub-contracting. The code of practice first sets out respect for fundamental social rights as defined in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions. These are the banning of forced and child labour, freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, and non-discrimination in employment. The code subsequently covers the need for reasonable working hours, decent working conditions and the payment of a fair wage. More specifically, workers must not be required regularly to work more than 48 hours a week and are entitled to at least one day off every seven days. Overtime must be voluntary, not exceeding 12 hours a week, not regularly required, and always remunerated. The working environment must be safe and healthy, applying the best professional practices in the field of health and safety. The dignity of the worker must be respected. In particular, any physical abuse, threat or sexual harassment will be strictly prohibited. Wages and benefits must respect the applicable standards and must allow workers to meet their basic needs and provide them with a disposable income. No sums can be deducted from wages as a disciplinary measure. The legal or contractual code does not in any way affect more favourable national provisions. The social partners will seek to ensure the progressive implementation of the code by companies and the inclusion of its terms in contracts with sub-contractors and suppliers. The application and evaluation of the code will be organised on a systematic and regular basis. Finally, the social partners will ask the European Commission to co-finance a dissemination and aware-raising campaign.

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Employment & social affairs



European Commission

Open Forum

Jim WILSON,
EEA Secretary



Founded in 1995, the European Entertainment Alliance – EEA (secretary: Jim Wilson) coordinates the activities of three independent organisations in this complex sector: the International Federation of Actors – FIA (general secretary: Katherine Sand), the International Federation of Musicians – FIM (general secretary: Jean Vincent) and the European Federation of Media and Entertainment International – UNI-Europa MEI (director: Jim Wilson), the latter also being one of the components of a bigger organisation, UNI-Europa. These three federations have a total of 5,000 members (almost equally distributed between the three) representing almost every European country, both inside and outside the EU.

In Entertainment, the Show Can't Go On without Cooperation

The image of the arts, media and entertainment may be one of glamour and, in some cases, high income. But in fact most who work in the sector do so out of love of their professions and many earn far less than workers in most other industries. They can work hard, long hours at jobs which are insecure to say the least. Industrial relations, complicated at the national level, are becoming increasingly complex at the European level.

A great deal is said about defending European culture and bringing Europe up to speed in the information era. But employers and public policy makers have given far less attention to the opinions and interests of those workers on whom success in this areas so much depends.

It is only through developing consultative structures through which the interplay of concerns of all the partners in the creative process can be taken into account that Europe can move on to the next level. Cinema has been called the collaborative art. But in fact all cultural and media workers have an unusually important role to play in making every work or transmission a success.

Most performers (represented by FIM and FIA) and a growing share of technical, craft and other support workers (represented by UNI-MEI) work freelance. Many are legally "independent workers" or are employed by subcontractors in such a way that traditional employers are hard to identify. An increasing number are dependent on intellectual property regimes for part or all of their remuneration. Such people may seem unusual members for trade unions,

but in fact without organisation of some kind many of them would be left with little defence. Training, health and safety issues, even social provisions and many other issues which would automatically be taken care of by employers elsewhere, need special attention here.

In spite of their vulnerable position, workers in the entertainment and media are above all anxious to defend European culture confronted by globalisation. Without that, not only will there be fewer jobs left in the sector but an important dimension in European integration will be lost.

In this context social dialogue takes different forms. EU provisions did not take the needs of the fragmented industry into account. But EEA has been able to adapt social dialogue for some positive experiences. The first formal dialogue in the sector was started last year between EEA and PEARLE, the European employers' group for live performance. Sessions so far have dealt with such issues as training, work across national borders, and health and safety. Two jointly-managed projects on means of financing live performance and encouraging employment have begun. A conference for theatre technicians is planned for May. Informal meetings have also been going on for several years with the European Broadcasting Union, led primarily by UNI-MEI (together with the journalists), focusing on training, equal opportunity in employment, intellectual property and other issues. It is expected that this soon will also become a formal committee within the EU framework, probably with commercial broadcasters joining in a bit later.

Cross-sectoral

Meeting of the Social Dialogue Committee of 2 March 2000

The first meeting of the year of the Social Dialogue Committee was held on 2 March. It was devoted to preparations for the Lisbon summit which was concentrating on employment and the knowledge-based society.

Following a very constructive debate that shed light on a whole series of common elements, Odile Quintin, Acting Director General of the Employment and Social Affairs DG, presented the following conclusions:

- all the social partners welcomed the positive approach of the Portuguese presidency in planning both long- and short-term objectives and actions;
- there was agreement on the need for real coordination and integration of the three

processes (Luxembourg, Cardiff and Cologne) without creating a host of new processes. On the contrary, the Luxembourg method should be maintained;

- strong emphasis was placed on the knowledge-based society and promoting employment in this field, as well as on lifelong training;
- there was consensus on the importance of a mechanism for observing industrial changes, including territorial aspects, even if the procedures for such a mechanism had yet to be defined;
- the importance of adapting social protection constituted a major element in the European social model.

Although the social partners did not submit a joint contribution at cross-sectoral level for Lisbon, Odile Quintin noted that studies were planned in preparation for the European Council and Forum at Santa Maria da Feira in June. Four specific examples of progress were

also identified:

- the creation of an ad hoc working group on training;
- the prospect of joint measures on sexual harassment in line with those already achieved in the field of racism, with a technical seminar scheduled for May;
- the drawing up of a joint reflection on the 31 October 1991 agreement in the light of the Lisbon summit, without altering the Amsterdam Treaty as such;
- a possible joint approach on reform of the Economic and Social Committee.

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Sectoral social dialogue takes off

The sectors made their contributions to the Lisbon summit of 23 and 24 March. The theme was "Employment, economic reforms and social cohesion – Towards a Europe based on innovation and knowledge".

Fifteen sectors submitted their contributions to Mr Guterres, Portuguese Prime Minister and President of the European Council: agriculture, civil aviation, footwear, commerce, construction, graphics, cleaning, fishing, postal services, private security, personal services (hair-dressing), sugar, tanning, telecommunications, textiles and clothing.

All these sectors want, in their own way, to lend their full support to the strategy proposed by the Portuguese presidency for a Europe of innovation and knowledge.

Of particular note are:

- the agreement on working time for mobile staff in the civil aviation sector, signed by the sector's social partners just before the Lisbon summit, which should be accompanied by a request to the Commission to convert the text into a proposal for a directive;
- the commitment of the social partners in the telecommunications sector to access to vocational training and telework, particularly pertinent with regard to the knowledge-based society;
- current negotiations on telework in the commerce sector, which should be completed this year.

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employment was held in Brussels to confirm the social partners' commitment to developing their dialogue, and to discuss a number of more concrete questions relating to work relations.

This year's conference, held in Lisbon on 14 April, brought further progress in this direction as participants looked at a number of new subjects such as employment and the social dimension of electronic commerce. The conference was attended by around 140 of the sector's employers' and union representatives. The Portuguese Government was represented by Mr Paulo Pedroso, Secretary of State for Employment and Vocational Training. European Commissioners Ms Anna Diamantopoulou, responsible for Employment and Social Affairs, and Mr Erkki Liikanen, responsible for Enterprises and the Information Society, also addressed the conference.

At the end of the Lisbon conference, Euro-Commerce and UNI-Europa Commerce signed a joint declaration expressing their desire to continue and strengthen their social dialogue on employment. The agreement also refers to current negotiations on telework and the signing, in the near future, of a framework agreement on older workers.

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Agriculture

During their "Conference on employment in European agriculture", which took place in Saint-Raphaël (France) on 12 and 13 April 2000, the social partners (GEOPA-COPA and EFA) presented their White Paper on vocational training to the public. This document is in itself a guide to best practice and will be a valuable document for the years to come.

Picking up on the main points of the ARE project (Agriculture-Regions-Employment), the White Paper is an inventory of vocational training systems and best practice, an evaluation of the ARE project, and a basis for the future activities and objectives of the European social partners.

The document's overall strategic aim is to establish a link between employment policy and training policy in the agricultural sector at European level. With this in mind, the social partners assessed the opportunities for an innovative employment policy aimed at creating and protecting jobs in the European regions.

Three core issues were examined in this connection: the financing of vocational and further training, innovative practices in training, and possible approaches for an agreement on the certification of individual qualifications. A number of other subjects were also studied, including the various structures of vocational training systems in the Member States, scope for organic production and agrotourism, and new methods of work organisation.

The rapid pace of structural and technological

change in agriculture and major changes in policy, such as EU enlargement, make the White Paper all the more valuable. The social partners will find it a useful tool in helping them to meet the inherent challenges of their sectoral dialogue. For this reason, it will be read not only by the social partners in the Member States but also in the candidate countries, and in universities, research institutes and training bodies.

This White Paper will hopefully have a long-term impact, to the extent that the European social partners have stressed the need for a practical follow-up to the in-depth analysis carried out in 1999 and the spring of 2000. All the findings included in this document will be fully integrated into the work of the social dialogue committee in 2000.

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Electricity

The social partners in the electricity sector (Eurelectric, EPSU and EMCEF) met on 23 February for the first time within the framework of their recently established sectoral dialogue committee. The discussions focused on a study on the consequences for employment of electricity market liberalisation. Undertaken by the Commission in close cooperation with the social partners, the research adopts a largely qualitative approach. It identifies the vocational profile of categories of workers likely to be affected by electricity liberalisation, and looks at the measures already taken. The social partners decided to hold an extraordinary plenary meeting in October in order to discuss the study findings.

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Commerce

EuroCommerce and UNI-Europa held a major conference in Lisbon on 14 April 2000 on employment in European commerce.

The European social partners for commerce, EuroCommerce and UNI-Europa, have been committed to social dialogue since the 1980s. Over the past five years this dialogue has become particularly strong – and the two organisations are determined to keep it that way.

In November 1998, an initial conference on

Insurance

After being on hold for over a year, social dialogue in the insurance sector has now been relaunched. On 9 March 2000, representatives from UNI-Europa (trade unions) and the European Insurance Committee (CEA), BIPAR and ACME (employers), met in Brussels for the first plenary session of the sectoral social dialogue committee.

At this plenary session, the various organisations involved in social dialogue presented a number of their activities linked to the work programme. BIPAR reported on its actions in

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the Central and Eastern European countries while the CEA explained the results of a joint project between employers and unions undertaken in Belgium in the field of the new skills required by the sector. ACME and UNI-Europa presented very different points of view on the enterprise culture in telephone platforms and working conditions in these platforms.

The presentations sometimes led to lively debates between employers and unions, while at the same time allowing the two parties to establish an initial contact.

The participants agreed to meet again in the autumn to assess the progress achieved this year. It is now up to the committee's permanent secretariat to stimulate activities so that social dialogue in this sector can really get going again.

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Sugar

Between 1997 and 2000, the social partners in the European sugar industry drew up a vocational training project on safety, entitled "Active/interactive security in the sugar industry". The project is now being widely promoted.

Available in the 11 European Union languages, this training tool aims to achieve maximum safety in all European sugar refineries.

The project has already been presented to the various sectors of European social dialogue, in particular at the liaison Forum on 16 September 1999.

The sector's social partners, CEFS (employers) and SETA-UITA (unions) are planning to organise a presentation day during which the project will be presented to all members of the industry. Scheduled for 23 June 2000, the event will be attended by representatives of staff and management.

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Telecommunications

The employers and unions (UNI-Europa Telecoms) in the telecommunications sector adopted a joint declaration as their contribution to the Lisbon summit.

The aim of this declaration is to highlight the importance of certain areas of European social policy for the sector's social partners, while drawing the attention of European institutions and heads of state and government to the key

role of the social partners in these fields.

The joint declaration concerns the training of workers in the new technologies and the modernisation of work organisation. The employers and unions undertake to work together so that every company can become a genuine knowledge-based business by the end of 2001. All employees of the telecommunications companies which signed the declaration will have the opportunity to obtain basic training in the new technologies. In a knowledge-based company, this training should be available via the Internet, thereby permitting learning through use of the technology itself.

The employers and unions also believe that the introduction of new forms of work organisation is crucial for the sector. Telework is one new form of organisation which is essential to modernising the sector. To complete the initiatives already taken in companies at national level, the European social partners undertook to adopt, by the end of 2001, the common guidelines on telework as applicable at European level.

This joint declaration, backed up with clear and precise undertakings, is a major contribution to social dialogue on the part of the telecommunications sector. By 2001, major changes for companies and employees should have been introduced at the instigation of the European social partners.

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Textiles and clothing

The Euratex and ETUF:TCL social partners have agreed, in the framework of their social dialogue committee, to launch an initiative (a workshop) on training, qualification and employment needs.

The social partners believe they have an important role to play in maintaining and improving the employability of workers.

In cooperation with the experts, the social partners are also in the process of putting the finishing touches to a manual of best practice and recommendations on employment for women. The textiles and clothing sector employs a majority of women (60% in textiles, 70% in clothing) and the manual aims to increase awareness among all the players at national level. Companies must make equal opportunities an integral part of their human resources policy, underlining their importance for the sector's image and the quality of products and services.

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Wood

The first plenary meeting of the new "wood" sectoral dialogue committee was held on 6 April 2000 in Brussels.

The meeting had an ambitious agenda. The sector's social partners, CEI-BOIS (employers) and EFBWW (unions), debated the communication on competitiveness in the wood and derived products sector, education and training programmes in the European Union, and preparations for a study on educational needs. The social partners are also considering drawing up a joint declaration on social dumping in the wood processing industry.

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Highlights 1999

The annual report on European social dialogue in 1999 was published in May, entitled "Highlights 1999". It reviews the key events at cross-sectoral and sectoral level and includes the full text of a number of joint documents and declarations which marked European social dialogue in 1999.

This publication, available in French, English and German, can also be consulted on the Internet at the following address:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/soc-dial/social/index_en.htm

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